

**“After These Many Years and So Many Miles...This Is What I Know”**

**Rev. Bill Haley**

I have been in many countries now. Eighty? Ninety? I've lost count. And some more than once, and some of those quite a few more times than once.

I say that not to boast in any way. There are far more places that I haven't been than I have, and many others have been in many more.

I write this to say I have been deeply formed by the world. Deeply. Inescapably. Irreparably. Thankfully.

At the end of my first world trip from 1994-1995, I made a commitment to get in the majority world at least once a year for the rest of my life. By God's grace, I've been able to keep that commitment save for one year.

In these places I see the deeply real, the deeply true, the way the world actually is beyond my own experience, and I don't want to forget it.

And it's too easy to forget it. Inevitable really unless you stay awake to it. Thus the commitment.

And so I now return from Kathmandu and Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world, the second poorest in Asia, where more than half of the world lives. Kathmandu and Nepal has shaped me more than many places. It was in the Himalaya that I really, soberly, with perhaps more sincerity than I'd ever known before, put my faith in and gave my life to Jesus, having seen so much by then. Like in Israel and Ireland, something deep comes alive in me and stirs in Nepal.

This short trip felt something like 'look back and take stock and look ahead' trip. Flying away, I began to ponder simple truths that I'd been reminded of on this journey. The simple truths that I don't want to forget from the world travel that are all too easy to forget if you quit doing it. The simple truths that flooded to my mind and heart precisely because once again I was in the heart of the world the world actually is for most of the world. I was in another part of the real world again and so again remembered the way the real world actually is. Simple truths, the things I know.

So this is what I know, this is what I think, this is what I was reminded of that I don't want to forget. This is what I've learned from the world, after so many years and so many trips. (For obvious reasons, they start a little more geared to what I've just seen, but then broaden out. Were I returning from Congo or Kenya or Palestine, the list would start differently but end up heading in the same direction. In this way, this is not a final word, but a start.)

## **What I Know:**

The vast majority of the world is not white.

The most effective missionaries are indigenous.

The best way to reach the world is to reach the city.

Traveling in the developing world is an exercise in patience, and faith.

A person can't pray too much.

Hinduism allows for much darkness, with great effect on many lives.

The caste system is a diabolical thing, in any form, systemic or subtle. It's everywhere. A few places it's systemic. Most places it's subtle. Both are diabolical.

Human beings can be utterly gorgeous, and utterly wicked. Wicked. And gorgeous.

The Himalayas are *really* high, Hinduism is *really* old, India is *really* huge, and Nepal is *really* poor.

The great hope for Nepal is Jesus, and his followers.

Each and every person is an image bearer of God. Every person matters, the addict passed out on the sidewalk as much as the President of the United States or one's own child.

Majority world slum living is very *very* difficult, heart breaking, and no human should be subjected to it. It's brutal. It is sub-human. A lot of people live in them.

Jesus loves every person on this planet, personally. He knows 7.3 billion names. More than a billion of those names are Indian. Another billion of those names is Chinese. God must really love India, and China.

India and Nepal and other Hindu nations have been remarkably resistant to Christianity. There's a lot more operating there than sociology.

Pilgrimage, done rightly, is one of God's most powerful tools for personal transformation and spiritual growth.

The degradation of the earth is an utter shame, and when it happens in any form both the earth and people miss a major part of their fundamental vocations. The difference is that the earth is not culpable.

The systemic trafficking for sexual slavery of young girls between the remote areas of Nepal to the urban areas of India is one of the most grotesque, saddest things on the planet. It makes you want to puke. If my heart breaks, what must God's heart do?

There would be less brokenness in the world if Christians were more faithful to the Christian vocation and the whole teaching of the Bible. It's all too easy to be selective.

The hope for this world is Jesus, and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Generally speaking, women get the short end of the stick in *every* culture.

If you start talking to a 'foreigner', within seconds they become less foreign, and most often will surprise you.

God—Yahweh—is Real, and can do real miracles in the physical world. He can provide remarkably, in ways that make God's reality undeniable.

The Earth is really, really old. In Kathmandu I bought a fossilized ammonite—a sea creature—that was gathered from the Tibetan Plateau. The Tibetan Plateaus is 18,000 feet above sea level. When I was young, I wasn't allowed to believe that the earth was old. There are fossilized sea shells at the top of Mt. Everest. Like Genesis 1 says, it was all under water at some point.

There are deep truths found in all the major non-Christian religions, some more than others. While these truths are all found within Christianity, sometimes the others do a better job highlighting them, and have things to teach us.

The Bible is true wisdom. And it is also simply true.

There is less clarity on who goes to heaven and who goes to hell and how then we like to think. We must share the truth and good news of Jesus as much as we can, and let God decide who's in and whose out. That's not our job, thankfully.

The deepest vocation of a Christian is to love like Jesus loved and not less. Period. When we do that we follow Jesus, we are a disciple, and even moreso we image God. This is our deepest vocation.

Most people in the world work very very hard. Lazy people are rare. They may be disproportionate in certain places, but overall, most of the human population work their tails off. Many just to survive and hope their kids have a better life.

In the scheme of things, our life is very very short. Very short. It's almost funny how short. Blip! In the scheme of things. This is in part why Jesus' promise of eternal life is big deal. A very very big deal.

On the one hand, our world—Earth—is really big. On the other hand, it is a speck. Smaller than a speck actually. Except it's huge.

20th century, American, Protestant, Evangelical Christianity is exactly that. It's a pretty small slice of the Christian church. Tiny actually.

The church in the majority world has a lot to offer the church in the minority world. But we have money, and that can be helpful.

There are times in life when words fail. This is good, and the older we get the more that should happen.

Christians of all people must be those who conscientiously engage the brokenness of the world at personal cost and love the hard to love. That's what our founder did. It's not complex.

God. Is. Faithful.

Nobody chooses where they are born. This has a lot of implications.

God loves us, and is with us, everywhere, all the time. This is deep truth. We're the ones who get distracted. And that does not change the fact that God loves us, and is with us, everywhere, all the time. Amen! Praise God!

“Be not afraid.”

Most of us have not known suffering, comparatively. But still pain is pain. And everyone has known pain, and suffered. It helps to remember others who have known more suffering, much more, and there are a lot of them. *That* is the reality of the world.

Every country has its blessings, and curses. Every one. It's important to know both, especially for one's own.

A little kindness can go a long way. Sometimes a really long way. And it's not that hard to do actually.

Duty Free shops are a sad commentary on a lot of levels.

The poor matter.

Prayer matters, in whatever form.

Jesus was and is Real.

The Kingdom. The Kingdom. The Kingdom.

It is good to be on pilgrimage. It is even better to return home.