HAMMOND FIRST BAPTIST PULPIT

Sunday Evening Sermon January 11, 1970

"Jesus First"

By Dr. Jack Hyles

Chapter 4

"...And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him" Luke 4:20

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" Matthew 6:33

In the fourth chapter of Luke when our Lord went to the synagogue in His own hometown, the Bible has a very striking statement when it says in Verse 20, "And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him."

In *Matthew, 17:8*, we find the story of the transfiguration. "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." What a tremendous text that is: They looked up and saw no man, save Jesus only.

In *Acts, 8:35*, there is the wonderful story about the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip who led him to Christ. And the Bible says: "Then Philip . . . began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus."

These are wonderful texts. "The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him." That is the way it always ought to be. "They looked up and saw no man, save Jesus only." That is the way it always ought to be. And, "he began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." That's the way it always ought to be. The Grecian people came one time looking for Jesus. They simply said these words, "Sirs, we would see Jesus," *John 12:21.*

Rome. Rome is in Italy, in Europe. But what they needed was Jesus Christ. Whether it is in Galatia, north of Jerusalem, or in Rome in Europe, the need is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about the Church at Cenchrea over in Greece, just about 50 or 60 miles from Athens. Their need was the Lord Jesus Christ. Then there is the church at Ephesus in Asia. Their need was the Lord Jesus Christ. Then there was the church at Philippi; their need was the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a church of Colosee, (back to Asia Minor), and their need was Jesus Christ. There is a church at Thessalonica in Greece, and their need was Jesus Christ. There is Titus on the Island of Crete, their need was Jesus Christ. There is John on the Isle of Patmos, but their need was Jesus Christ. There is the Book of Hebrews, to all of the Hebrews scattered all over the known world; their need was Jesus Christ.

You can check the entire New Testament and you will find it doesn't matter who the people were. It doesn't matter where the nation was. It doesn't matter what the circumstances were. The need was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know what we need tonight in America to solve our problems, to change our hippie fad, to change our dirty lives, to change our rotten politics, and to change our slide toward hell? Do you know what America needs? She needs Jesus. That is what she needs. That is the need. Whether you are in London, England, (a country that's leading us to the Devil, a country following Sweden's example), do you know what they need in England? They need Jesus Christ.

Oh, but you say, "I'm from Canada." A lady is back there from Canada. You say, "We're more staid." Yes, you are. You're more staid. They call that "backslidden" where I come from, but they call it "staid" in Canada. Canada needs Jesus Christ. What do they need in Germany? Jesus Christ. What do they need in Soviet Russia? Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter who you are, you need Jesus.

But you say, "Brother Hyles, I come from a very staid background. I'm from London." Okay, you need to get born again from London. You say, "Brother Hyles, I come from the old country." Okay. You need to get converted. Old country, new country, big country, little country, smart country, dumb country, wherever you come from, if you don't get born again, you are going to go to hell like anybody else. The need of everybody, whether Thessalonica or Rome or Galatia or Jerusalem or Ephesus or Philippi, wherever it is, the need is the Lord Jesus Christ.

They asked this morning on the broadcast interviewing Brother Hand about our bus ministry, "What do you think the secret is to your church?" Well, Brother Hand gave a very good answer, except I wanted to jump up so badly and say, "Jesus is exalted! That's what the secret to First Baptist Church's success is. We exalt Jesus!"

Listen, this church has been built around the person of Jesus Christ. You say what you want to say, but there is an attractiveness in the preaching of Jesus that people still want to hear. They ask me all across the country, "In these days of dying churches and congregations going out of business, why is it you have big crowds at First Baptist?" I'll tell you why. It is the exaltation of Christ; that's the reason. You show me anywhere in America where a man of God anointed by the Spirit of God will exalt Christ, and I'll show you a place where folks will come to hear him do it.

The Bible says in *John 12:21*, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." As I have said to you visiting Moody Bible Institute students so often—and God bless your hearts; I love you—but you preachers from Moody Bible Institute, don't you believe it when anybody tells you that you've got to talk about Strong here and a little deep theology here. The honest truth is America is choking on deep theology.

Billy Sunday used to say, "I hate botany, but I love flowers. I hate zoology but I love animals. And I hate theology but I love God." And what the world needs is a simple exaltation of Christ. That's what Matthew did. That's what Mark did. That's what John did. That's what Luke did in Acts. That's what Paul did in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus and Philemon. That's what Paul did. That's what Peter did in I and II Peter. That's what John did in I John. That's what Jude did in Jude. That's what John did in Revelation.

There is nothing wrong with this nation that a generation of preachers filled with the Holy Ghost and people who again would exalt Christ in the simplicity of the Gospel could not cure. You know, there's a Scripture over in *II Corinthians 11:3* that says, "The simplicity that is in Christ." The simplicity that is in Christ.

I was teaching a class in a certain school not long ago and I said, "You would not want Jesus to teach here. He wasn't deep enough for you. He talked about a certain man who went forth to sow. He talked about a fellow that went down and fell among thieves. He told stories. He was a story teller. You wouldn't like that."

Look, there is a real trend in America toward revival in every place. It is not where some fellow gets up and says, " Let's gather around the Word" and all ten of you gather around the Word. I will tell you what. Let's gather around Christ!

Somebody said, "The Bible is Jesus on paper." It is not enough to gather around the Word. We have got to gather around Jesus! Check your Bible. If you gather around the Word properly, you gather around Jesus.

You say, "Let's go over here into Revelation and this toe over here. This third toe of the beast has some dirt underneath the toenail and we will check over here. Now that is the third toe. Okay, let's go over here to Judges. There are

three toes on this fellow. He lost two in the battle of the Midianites. Let us see. The Midianites, the word "median" must have a symbolic meaning because that means average. Average. Let's see the average place in the Bible.

Let's go over here about half way through. That leads me to believe the word "halfway" should be in the Bible. Let's see. Jonah went to Joppa, and "Joppa" in the Hebrew means "jumping overboard." "Board" symbolizes Christ in the Bible. There are boards in the tabernacle. Let us go over here and look at the boards in the tabernacle. They are set on gold.

Talking about gold, we need more folks to give more money to God. Because in the Hebrew it says give "hilariously." Talking about hilariously, we ought to suffer hilariously. Now, let's go back to the third toe on this beast over here in Revelation....The church is dying tonight with that kind of Tom Foolery. What they need is a simple presentation and exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ!

Paul wrote the Church of Colosse and said, "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence" *Colossians 1:18.* As we start 1970, you mark it down in your little book, ladies and gentlemen, this church will grow in direct proportion to the way she magnifies the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't read the Bible like a calculus book. Read it like a love story! Did you ever stop to think of that? Of course, you didn't, because most of you didn't realize until tonight that He was mentioned in the first verse of all these books. There is something else also, for all types of people – not only for all areas and all countries, but also for all types of people. Follow me. The church at Berea, for example, is steeped in the power of the Roman empire. Paul started by saying, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." And to the people at Syria, who remind me more of this generation than any other people in the Bible, their need was Jesus Christ. Do you know what hippies need? Jesus Christ. Do you know what alcoholics need? Jesus Christ. Do you know what the modern, so-called "cultured" atheists need? Jesus Christ. Do you know what the fallen man needs? Jesus Christ. What the dope addict needs? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ! That's the need!

When I went to college they gave me a set of verses, about 20 of them, to deal with the hard cases when going soul winning. They did not give me a set for the soft cases, but I guess they should have. If I did what they said in the soul-winning course, I'd have to carry a four-drawer filing cabinet soul winning with me. No, they don't need your cute arguments. They need Jesus. That's what they need.

Tonight I see Doug Hiles sitting back there. I won Doug Hiles to Christ several years ago. Doug had some problems, doctrinal problems, but I just told him about Jesus. That's the great need.

The church of Corinth, was sensual, worldly; they needed Christ. The church at Thessalonica, was impetuous, looking for Christ to come now, they needed

Christ! The church at Ephesus, big, active, virile, needed Christ! The church at Colosse, worshiping angels, needed Christ. The Church at Philippi, happy, joyous people, needed Christ! All throughout the Bible, all types of people need the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you say what you want to say, but ladies and gentlemen, if you're not saved tonight what you need is not a trip to the psychiatrist. Your need is not a trip to the psychologist. Your need is not a college education or some school with a major in philosophy. Your need is a trip to an old-fashioned mourners bench and a face-to-face confrontation with Jesus Christ. What's your need? That's the need of all lost people! It's Jesus Christ.

By the way, for all purposes Jesus is the need. You heard me do this again and again. I won't go into the Old Testament except what I have so often done. In Matthew, Matthew shows Jesus as the King of Kings, but he starts off the first verse with "the generation of Jesus Christ. In Mark, he shows Jesus as the suffering servant but he starts off saying, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." In John, he points to Jesus as the Son of God, but he starts off saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

In Acts, Jesus Christ is shown as the power of the church, but Luke starts off talking about Jesus Christ. In Romans, Paul shows Jesus as the Gospel of Christ, but he starts off talking about Jesus Christ. In Corinthians, he shows Jesus as the Restorer of the carnal nature, but he starts off talking about Jesus Christ. In Galatians, he shows Christ as the ripped veil, but he starts off talking about just simply Jesus Christ. In Ephesians, he talks about Jesus being our Heavenly One, but he starts off talking about Jesus Christ. In Philippians, he talks about Christ being our sufficiency, but he jumps right into the subject of Jesus Christ.

In Colossians, he talks about Christ being the shadow, but he starts off with a simple acknowledgement of Jesus Christ. In Thessalonians he shows Jesus as being our coming Savior, but he starts off with an exaltation of Jesus Christ. In Timothy, he talks about Christ as being our glorious appearing Christ, but he starts off with a simple exaltation of Christ, our hope and Saviour. In Titus, Jesus is our blessed hope, but he starts off with a simple statement about Jesus Christ. In Philemon, he is the one who forgives the straying servant, but he starts off by simply saying, "a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

In Hebrews, he lists forth Christ as better than all the angels, prophets, priests, and kings, but he starts off saying that God has spoken to us these latter days by His Son Jesus Christ. In James, he tells that Christ is the Restorer of the carnal nature, the Fulfiller of the law, but he starts out saying, "James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ." In Peter, he lays the foundation that Christ is the Revelation, the Rock of our Salvation, but he starts off saying, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." In I John, he shows Christ as being the assurance of our

salvation, but he starts off saying, "That which was from the beginning...the Word of life." In Jude, he presents Him as our security, but he starts off saying, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ." In Revelation John shows Him as our coming King, but he starts off saying, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

I am a bit weary of Christian people being ashamed of Him who died for us. I am a bit weary of people coming to churches like this, and listen, I am sick of this: Brother, you sin against God Almighty. Just because you've got a degree or just because you've been to college: I've been to more colleges than most of you who criticize, I've taken the same courses you've taken, I've sat under the same professors under whom you have sat, I've read the same books that you have read, and I know all the books. But I will tell you that I have come to this conclusion: If you reach people, you're going to have to reach them, not with pious platitudes, not with book reviews, not with illuminated sermons, not with exegesis of Scripture, not with deep, deep, deep thoughts and reasonings, but with a simple presentation that man is a sinner. Christ died for sinners and Christ is the answer. That's the need of the world!

Oh, God give us again, in America, a generation of preachers who just get up and preach Him. Christ is the answer! You second-rate theologians. Some of you students who visit First Baptist Church. You little penny-ante students. God pity your pinheads. You say, "Well, they're not deep enough." Why, brother listen. We fished at your depth years ago. I don't care how deep you are. The question is, to where are the fish coming? Did you ever go fishing?

I'll tell you what brother, if the fish are an inch from the water, I'm going to put my hook that far under. Preachers all over the country—a lot of them are in Hammond right now—are talking tonight about the belly of the beast in Daniel 2. They're talking about 32 inches around that waist: 52-31-41—that's a man's figure. They're talking about it. And the honest, simple truth is, they are fishing deep, but all the fish are in shallow water. If I were you, I would find out where the fish are. I don't think we ought to do wrong to reach people, but I do think if we're going to reach the common man, or any man for that matter, we are going to have to reach him with the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some of the NBC fellows asked me today in private conversation, "Why is it your church is booming and people are coming by the thousands while other churches are dying? Why is it?" I said, "We preach to men's hearts." None of this was televised. We were just talking a bit. The fellow said, "Now look, don't you try to reach the elite?" As far as I'm concerned, I've got a church full of the elite. You see, the word "elite" is a very relative term anyway.

So I said, "What you mean is this (a fellow said it one time, 'Brother Hyles, the way you preach, you'll never reach the city councilmen.' And I said, 'There are not but nine of them, and if we got all of them, we wouldn't break any attendance record.' I said, 'There are thousands of steel workers who need the Gospel and they will listen to it. Our message is a message of Christ to those people.'"

By the way, we probably have as many city councilmen on our side as any church in town.) I talked to a city councilman last week and he looked at me, shook my hand and said, "You're doing the greatest work of anybody in the City of Hammond." Now he was talking about our church, not me. In fact, outside my office one day during the Christmas holidays a man knocked on my door, and Mrs. Plopper said, "Somebody's waiting to see you." He walked in and said, "Here is a gift from the Mayor." The Mayor gave me a Christmas present. Isn't that something? (It said something about "tax overdue." I forget exactly what it was.) No, I am not kidding you: The Mayor sent me a Christmas present.

Now, what am I saying? I'm saying that whether the Mayor or the City Council does or does not, we ought to exalt Christ. So Matthew, Mark, John, Luke, Paul, Peter, Jude, all of them, just jumped right in exalting Jesus Christ. And that is why we ought to put Him first. That is why *Matthew 6:33* says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...."

Jesus first. Jesus first in Matthew. Jesus first in Mark. Jesus first in John. Jesus first in Acts. Jesus first in Romans. Jesus first in Corinthians. Jesus first in Galatians. Jesus first in Ephesians. Jesus first in Hammond. Jesus first in Chicago. Jesus first in school. Jesus first at your work. Jesus first at your home. Jesus first in your personal life. Just Jesus first.

Now, there are several areas where He wants to be first. In the first place, He wants the first years. He wants the first years. I was so interested last week that Dr. Wilks noticed our young people. But who wouldn't? Young folks, hardly a week passes that someone doesn't come to me when I'm traveling somewhere and say, "Dr. Hyles, I visited your church and the thing that impressed the most was that great crowd of fine, young people neatly dressed and well behaved." Those young people. (What I didn't have time to tell them is what made you so well behaved. I've poured you over hot coals and made you walk over spiked boards and threatened to kill you at sunrise and put electric current under the pews where I can push a button and so forth.) But that's what they say.

Many of you folks may criticize the way I handle young folks. I say, "Sit still, you hear me! Don't you move!" A lot of you say, "He shouldn't do that." Well, wait until they turn out before you start criticizing me. You wait until you see how they end up.

Our young folks aren't laid up like some of you folks here tonight, surly and critical. While the trio was singing, you laughed and made fun. There are seven things the Bible says God hates, and two of them are proud looks. God pity that kind of a phariseeism. These kids over here have been taught to say, "Yes, sir; and no, sir." You say, "That's southern." Yeah, southern Jerusalem. I don't care if it came from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, it's right to do!

God knows what this world needs is a baptism of decency and simplicity of the simple Christian life, of the exaltation of Christ and the kind of life that magnifies

Him and emulates Him. Some of you folks trying to copy a dead professor ought to copy a live Christ!

And so, young people, the first years of your life – the first years – be courteous, dedicated. Put Jesus first in the first years.

There is something else: God wants the first day. The first day. And I want to say something about this. We've gotten away from this a great deal in this great cosmopolitan area where folks work on Sunday. If any of you work in the steel mills and have to work on Sunday, I'm not being critical. But I'll say this much: If you don't have to work on Sunday, you shouldn't work on Sunday.

Now, I know Sunday is not the Sabbath and I don't believe Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. In the New Hampshire Confession of Faith adopted by most Baptist churches it says, "Sunday is the Christian Sabbath." That is not true. Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath. Colossians 2 says that when Jesus died he nailed the Sabbath to the cross. There has not been a Sabbath since Jesus died, for He is our rest and He is our Sabbath. The Sabbath was a shadow pointing to Jesus. Now, He's here, there's no need for the Sabbath anymore. Sunday is not the Sabbath.

But I'll tell you what. I still believe it is the Lord's day. And I've just got enough old-fashioned blood in me to where I just still think Sunday ought to be a different day than in the rest of the week. I'll say this, and I'll say it very kindly: I still don't like to see young folks get out and play ball on Sunday afternoon. Now, I'm not going to say you commit a sin if you do. I just think that there ought to be a day of the week that's different.

I still like to see people not shop too much on Sunday. I like to see the stores closed on Sunday. (The main reason is, we need the parking here at First Baptist.) I can't say this is in the Bible, but I'm glad my mother taught me as a kid that Sunday was God's day and that it ought to be handled that way. I can still see her, as you've heard me say, pointing her finger in the face of that Catholic priest who came by to get me to play ball on a Sunday afternoon, because I was a pretty decent ball player and he wanted me to play on his Catholic team.

The Catholic priest stopped out in front of the house and said, "Hey, Jack, it's time for ball!" My mother went out and put her nose on his nose and her finger on his finger, and she said to him, "You leave my boy alone!" She gave him – we used to call it "a blessing out" where I came from. She gave him an old-fashioned Texas blessing, and all he said was, "M'hmm, uh-huh, and bye-bye."

I still believe that Sunday ought to be different. I think God wants the first day of the week. I think God wants the first fruits of your income. The tithe is the Lord's. One dime of every dollar. In fact, the first dime of every dollar belongs to God. Check your Bible over and over again. You have robbed God. How

have you robbed Him? "You've robbed me in tithes and offerings," said Malachi *Malachi 3:8*. Over and over again, Moses said the tithe is God's. Bring the first fruit to God. Every time a Jew gathered a crop, one bushel out of ten bushels went to God. Every time that the animals had little ones, one tenth of the little ones belonged to God.

I was out in the little town of Lamar, Colorado, preaching in an area-wide meeting. I said something about, "If your old sow has a litter of ten pigs, one belongs to God." By the way, if she has a litter of nine pigs, one belongs to God, too. (And, by the way, if your old sow has a litter, don't bring me a little pig! Rear the thing first and then bring it to me, would you, please?)

So I was in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, preaching a year or two later. A fellow walked up and handed me a twenty-dollar bill. I said, "What's it for?" He said, "There was a man in my church that got convicted that night about the tithe and it so happened that his old sow had just had a litter of pigs and he gave me one. It was worth $200 to me." He said, "I'm giving you the tithe on that."

I've said, if your old sow has ten pigs, I want one. I want one. Now, I don't eat pork myself, but I can sell it and buy some good beef with it! I want one. If your old heifer has some little young ones, I want one of them. Now, if your cat has ten kittens, Brother Streeter wants the tithe off them. That's the 1,000 block of 170th Street. I am saying the tithe belongs to God. I thank God that, as a kid, I was taught that one dime of every dollar belongs to God.

Now look, you are not right with God if you don't tithe. You are wrong in your heart. You are a robber of God's money. One-tenth of your income is not yours to give to God. It's already God's! You don't give a dime to God unless you give more than a tenth. If all you give is a tenth of your income to God, you haven't given God a thing, because, let me tell you, a tithe shouldn't be given to God. A tithe is the Lord's.

You say, "I can't afford to tithe." God didn't say do it if you could afford to. God said, "Do it!" You are wrong if you don't. The tithe is the Lord's. God wants the first years. God wants the first day. God wants the first fruits. By the way, my Bible says, you'll never see one of God's righteous people begging bread. I've had a lot of folks come to my office wanting help. Most of them don't even go to church. John Colsten will tell you this is true – he works with that department. How long has it been since you've had a tithing deacon come to you asking you for food for his family, John? Never have. How interesting. The people that are hungry are the people who say, "I can't afford to give to God."

God says, "His seed will not beg bread." You show me a man that will work and that will give God what is His and I'll show you a man that God will provide for. A tenth of your income belongs to God. That means you folks who get an allowance. That means you ladies that get a grocery allowance. That means you men that work. One dime of every dollar. The first dime, before income

tax, before Uncle Sam, before withholding, before social security, before insurance, belongs to God. Then God wants first place in your life.

I started to speak on, "God Is a Jealous God." God is a jealous God. He wants first place in your life. *Matthew 6:33*, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." First place is what He wants. 1970 is here. A new decade, a new year -- 1970. It is hard to get used to writing it on the checks; 1970 is here. May we start it off like they started it off in 24 of the 27 books of the New Testament. Jesus first. Jesus first. First years of your life. First day of the week. First fruits of your income or your increase, and first place in your life.

A wise man said, "Shall I offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing?" Every preacher that has ever lived has told this story, I've told it here several times and I close with it. It is a true story. A missionary came back from Africa. The missionary saw ladies worshiping the Nile River. They believed that they could appease their gods by bringing their babies and offering their babies to the crocodiles in the river. The missionary who saw this told me years ago.

He said "Jack, I stood on the banks of the river, and I saw these ladies. One lady had two little babies. One was scrawny, skinny and sickly. The other was a picture of health, a beautiful, rosy-cheeked baby. There were the crocodiles of the river. There was the river worshiped as God by this lady. One of these babies she was going to throw as a sacrifice to her god. She put the babies on the ground. On this side was the little, scrawny, sickly one. On this side was the beautiful, healthy baby. Then she took up the little beautiful baby, rosy cheeked, and threw it in the river in the mouths of the hungry crocodiles."

The missionary ran down quickly and said, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" But it was too late. This heathen lady had given her baby. Then the missionary said, "Why? The little baby couldn't have lived long. Why didn't you save the healthy baby and sacrifice the skinny, sickly one?" And the heathen lady said, in her own way, "Sir, I do not know what god you serve or what god you worship. I do not know about your god, sir, but my god deserves my best." And with that she took her little sickly baby and went back to the woods.

Your God deserves your best, too. He deserves your best. First years of your life. First day of the week. First fruits of your income. First place in your life. Put Jesus first in 1970.

Let us pray.