

Open Air Witness 5 – A Northern Lad

A Northern Lad – How Did He Grow Up?

Today, I'll tell you about a northern lad. He grew up in the north of the country. He grew up in a single parent family. He was the oldest of his siblings and when he was growing up, there was no social security or benefits system. He had to do manual labour all through his teens to help support his mum and his younger brothers and sisters. In other words, he knew all about long hours and hard physical work.

He also grew up on a rough housing estate. A local man who knew the area said that nothing good could come out of that housing estate. What's more, that housing estate was ruled over by a very tough gang who could and would fill you in as soon as look at you and get away with it. It was a hard upbringing.

A Northern Lad – Who Was He Like?

I would suggest that this northern lad was like many a young lad growing up in the north of this country in the early part of the last century, not so very long ago.

In the end, this northern lad died a cruel death that he did not deserve and he died young. It's common knowledge that years ago, many northern lads in this country died cruel deaths that they did not deserve and they died young. They died in the coal mines, the shipyards and other industries of the time or in the world wars. Those wars of course were fought to keep another tough gang at bay. The lads of that time had that in common with this northern lad of whom I speak. He knew all about real life and the hard things that can come upon you.

A Northern Lad – Who Was He?

The question is who was this northern lad?

Some of his neighbours fell out with this northern lad. They tell us who he was. This is what they said, according to the Gospel of Mark.

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him” Mark 6:3.

Now you know. That northern lad was ***“Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”*** John 1:45 ***“(as was supposed)”*** Luke 3:23. Nazareth had a bad reputation, like some parts of our towns and cities today. That was why the local man said ***“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”*** John 1:46. He was expecting a *NO* answer.

However ***“Jesus of Nazareth”*** did come out of Nazareth. He was definitely a good thing. In fact, Jesus of Nazareth was such a good thing that some years ago a young man from the Far East spoke highly of Jesus of Nazareth. This young man from the Far East was a devout follower of one of the great Eastern religions of the world. He was not a Christian believer. [From message by Bill Bright, *Campus Crusade* ~ 1968]

A Christian believer asked this young man from the Far East ***“Who do you think was the greatest leader of all time?”*** This young man from the Far East said ***“The greatest leader of all time would be Jesus of Nazareth.”***

The Christian believer then asked this young man from the Far East *“Who do you think was the greatest teacher of all time?”* This young man from the Far East said *“The greatest teacher of all time would be Jesus of Nazareth.”*

If this young man from the Far East was right, if Jesus of Nazareth was the greatest leader of all time, if Jesus of Nazareth was the greatest teacher of all time, a couple more questions come up.

Why then did some folk fall out with Jesus of Nazareth? Why then did Jesus of Nazareth die a cruel death that He did not deserve? The answer is the same then as it is now. Folk did not like what Jesus of Nazareth said about them. Nothing’s changed in two thousand years on that score. That’s why some folk don’t want to hear us now.

A Northern Lad – What Did He Say That Upset People?

What then did Jesus say that upset folk, then as now?

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus spoke to a crowd of people about the very tough gang that ruled over His housing estate that He grew up on. They were Roman soldiers. Their master and commander was the Roman Governor for that area. His name was Pontius Pilate. Maybe you’ve heard of that name.

Jesus spoke of when Pilate sent his soldiers against the locals with drawn swords. They drew blood. Some locals got killed. The locals that the soldiers killed were Galileans, from around the Sea of Galilee in the north of Israel. Other Galileans who knew the victims thought they must have been really bad people. They were wrong.

Those folk got upset when Jesus said *“Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* Luke 13:2-3. What Jesus said was true.

The Gospel of John says of Jesus that *“he knew what was in man”* John 2:25. Jesus knew what was in the Galileans then. He grew up with them. Jesus knows what is in the Guisborians* now, because He is really *“Jesus Christ, the Son of God”* Mark 1:1. Jesus knows what is in you now. That points to the other question I raised. *i.e. locals

A Northern Lad – Why Did He Die a Cruel Death That He Did Not Deserve?

Why then did Jesus of Nazareth die a cruel death that He did not deserve? The complete answer is that Jesus of Nazareth died so that you won’t have to die as a sinner, like the Galileans of Jesus’ time died without mercy. Jesus said in the Gospel of John *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.”* John 6:50-51.

Jesus died so you won’t have to die forever as a sinner like the Galileans. Jesus lived again so you can *live* forever because Jesus said that to eat *“the living bread”* is to believe on him. Jesus said *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”* John 6:47 and *“his testimony is true”* John 21:24.

We invite you to come to Jesus and believe on Him for *“everlasting life”* today because as Jesus said *“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*