



The Storyteller Radio Broadcast

Allen Jolly (Cree)

My name is Allan Jolly from Moose Factory, Ontario, Canada. I've lived in Moose Factory for about 50 years, and I was actually born in a place called Rupert House, and it's on the Quebec side of James Bay. It's another community about 60 miles, well maybe about 90 miles, to the east of Moose Factory.

I came to Moose Factory when I was nine years old, and I came here for the purpose of starting my education. I went into the Indian residential school that was here in Moose Factory, Ontario, and up until that time, I lived with my parents; we lived off the land. We were hunters, harvesters; we survived by living off the land.

That was the only life I knew, right up until the time I was nine years old. In fact, I used to think that that's the way things were always going to be, that I was always going to live in the bush with my mum and dad, and that I would grow up to be a man and get married and have my own family, and I would continue that way of life that we lived and that we enjoyed so much.

I never thought or dreamed that one day that life was going to be disrupted, but that's what happened.

When I was nine years old my parents finally, reluctantly, agreed to place me in the Indian residential school here in Moose Factory, Ontario.

I was a little bit older than most kids; usually, a lot of kids went to the residential school when they were about six years old, so I was nine, a bit older, but the reason why I started at nine, was cause my mum wouldn't allow me to go by myself, so she thought it would be good if my younger brother next to me, Joe, that we would wait till he got a bit older, and so when he was about seven, him and I went into the school together.

I still remember that day, that was a real tough day for both of us, and even for my dad. He was the one that took us there to the school, and I know for a fact that it really broke his heart to leave us there in the school.

Being in the residential school, we stayed there for ten months of the year, from the end of August right up until the following June. We didn't see our parents throughout those ten months except for the one time when my dad came into the village in Moose Factory to get additional supplies before Christmas, so he dropped by the school just to say hello to us. Other than that, we didn't see our parents for ten months.

And I just want to say that when we were living off the land, I never really heard that much about God, and I remember we use to ask mum now and then, "Mum, is there a Heavenly Father?" And mum would quickly answer and say, "Yes, there is a Heavenly Father."

I remember, to this day, that the response that she gave and the way she just sounded, as if she didn't really know for sure herself, but anyway she did say, "Yes, there is a Heavenly Father." And she told my brother and I, "And if you boys are good, that's where you're going to go someday, to be with God in Heaven."

Living off the land, like I said, was a good life; we enjoyed that life. It was the only life we knew, and it was a harsh life in some ways. And, when I think back to it, it seems to me that we didn't have time for much to do anything else, like, especially, spiritual things. We never really thought about God or talked about God that much; it seems like every day was just taken up just doing our chores and just trying to survive that day, and just trying to find food, or, at least for my dad, who was the hunter, to be able to kill small game or large game so that we would have food, you know, from day to day.

So, like I said, when I think back to it, we never had much time for anything else, and certainly we didn't really talk much about God at that time.

So when I went into the residential school at nine, it was the first place where I ever heard about God being spoken of, and I didn't realize it then, but the school was run and operated by the Anglican Church. So it was the clergy, people that were working there, the principal and some of the supervisors. So we had to go to church Sunday, Sunday mornings, and that was where I heard about God being spoken of.

Now, when I started there, I only spoke Cree, I didn't speak English at all. I didn't really understand English, and my mum used to tell me that's the reason why I needed to go to school, so I could learn to speak English.

So when I started at nine years old, the only language I spoke was my mother tongue which was the Cree language, I didn't understand English, but I was able to pick up English throughout that first year, and then, when we use to go to church on Sunday, when I heard God being spoken about, and I was really interested because I thought, 'Well, maybe now I will finally learn about God.' That's what I thought, and I was only nine years old.

And as time went, it just seemed that I never did really come to know God through those years at residential school, and I guess today I can understand why; the Anglican Church, in particular, doesn't necessarily teach or believe in people making a personal decision about the Lord. They don't really encourage people to invite the Lord in their life.

And I guess to this day I would have to say that was probably the reason why I never really came to know and have a personal experience with the Lord, because I was never led to that point where I needed to choose the Lord to have in my life.

But anyway, I went to the residential school for seven years in total, three years here in Moose Factory, and then I went four years in Brantford, Ontario, and in fact I was even an altar boy for two years. As I got older, when I was down in Brantford, when I was about fourteen, fifteen years old, I was an altar boy.

When I started high school, that's when I got out of residential school, and I went to North Bay, Ontario to do my high school. I was put into a private home or private billeting, and I stayed with two other Native kids from here, from Moose Factory area, so I was about sixteen years old when I started high school. So really, I was no longer in a residential school setting and I found that a little bit awkward for a while, because I was free to do what I wanted to do. There was nobody around to tell me to do this or do that, like in residential school.

We had to follow rules and line up, and all that kind of stuff there, but when I started high school and living on my own in a private home, more or less I was free to do what I wanted to do, and one of the things that I struggled with in that first year of high school was the thought, 'Well, should I go to church?' I had gone to church every Sunday for the seven years I spent in residential school, so I kind of became a bit of a habit I guess, going to church.

I kind of felt in some way the importance of going to church, but at sixteen I asked myself, 'Well, should I go to church?'

And I made a wrong decision on that day as a sixteen year old. I thought to myself, 'Well, I've gone to church for seven years in residential school and now, seven years later or eight years later, I felt I didn't know God at all. I didn't feel any closer to God, even though I went to church seven years, and so, what I decided was, 'Well, maybe there was no point in going to church.' Because I concluded there's probably no way a person can really know God.

And so I decided I wasn't going to go to church, I wasn't going to bother going to church, and plus, I didn't know which church to go to, North Bay being a new town for me, I wasn't acquainted with people there and the people that were my guardians, looking after me while I was going to school there, they didn't encourage me to go to church either. So I decided on my own I was just going to let that church life go. I concluded that there's probably no way I can ever really know God anyway. So that's what I decided.

And I went to high school for about four years; then I came home and I was about nineteen years old, and at that time I was starting to dabble into drinking, smoking and drinking, and when I came home, at that time my parents were involved in alcohol as well. And we didn't have a very good home life, even though there were certainly plenty of love there, I would have to say, but my parents became involved in alcohol on weekends, and as hard as I tried to stay away from that, eventually I got caught up into it as well.

And I should mention that, when I was about fourteen years old, and when I was home during the summer, my parents would get involved in drinking, and I remember those nights and I couldn't sleep, because we used to just live in a one room tent frame in the summer, and then my parents lived in that in the winter time as well.

And I remember those nights when I couldn't sleep and I was so sleepy, wanted to go to bed but I was afraid to go to bed because I was afraid that those people that were drunk might fall on me when they're drinking and fighting.

And I remember thinking to myself, I felt so miserable in that situation, and I remember thinking to myself as a fourteen year old, 'If I ever get married and have a family of my own, I'm not going to bring them through something like this.'

I hated the drinking that was going on, I hated that life. My dad, and even my mum, when she got involved in it too, they were different people when they were drunk, and my dad is sort of the most loving person when he's sober, but when he was drunk, he was the worst person to be around with.

We became afraid of him, as young boys growing up, so we hated that kind of life and what alcohol was doing, but of course, by the time I was nineteen, I got caught up into it. I couldn't get away from it, so, I guess, even though I don't blame anybody for it, I think maybe at one time, maybe I did blame my parents: 'Well, I got into drinking and all the things associated with that because you people were drinking, and you brought that into our home and us boys got into it as well.'

The more I think about it, nobody forced me to drink. In the end, I took the bottle myself, and even though, young as I was, immature in many ways, not strong enough to make decisions on my own, to this day, when I look back on it, I wish, I wish I could have said, 'No, I'm not doing that, and even if I have to move away from home I'm going to, just to get away from the drinking.'

But anyway, I got caught up into it, and for the next five years of my life I was involved in drinking, it seemed like every weekend, and the money I made from working, I spent most of it just wasting it away, squandered away in drinking.

And I thought I was having the best time of my life, being a young guy from nineteen till twenty-three, twenty-four, but after so many years doing that, life begins to take its toll, and drinking causes you to get involved in a lot of other things that you wouldn't normally do when you're sober, and that's what happened to me.

After four or five years in that and, you know, as things begin to mount up, things you are bringing upon yourself because of drinking, and those things became more of a heavy burden on your shoulders, and it becomes unbearable, the weight on your shoulders, because of things that you've caused upon yourself because of drinking.

When I was twenty-two, the girl that I was involved with at that time, who was my wife today, she became pregnant with our oldest son there, and that's when it really got me thinking about things, and I said to myself, 'Well, here I said to myself when I was fourteen, if I ever have a family of my own I will never bring them through this – drinking'; even times when I used to see my mother beaten up by my father, and I used to say to myself, 'I'll never do that if I ever get married.'

And so when I got married, my wife and I got married, and then we were expecting our child there in October, we got married in the month of June, June 9 of 1972, and I was still drinking now and then. I was slowly stopping, but I tried to stop on my own, but now and then I get caught up into it again.

So, just the heavy burden that I felt from the way that I was living, plus the responsibility that I felt from having a wife, and then we were going to have a child, a family of our own eventually, and then just a, just a tremendous load that I felt on my shoulders, 'Well, what am I going to do? What kind of life will I provide for my wife, for my children? Is this the life that they're going to have to go through, just like what I went through, all the drinking that happened in our home, how awful that was, and then the promise I had made to myself that I would never do that,' so those things really got me thinking. It was the first time I really thought about God again, and even though I had given up on God because I had spent seven years in residential school, going to church every Sunday, even being an altar boy and all that, I had given up on God. I didn't think there was any way a person could really, truly know God, but somehow, in the back of my mind, I felt that the answer was God.

I thought of other things, other things that could bring happiness, to my wife and to our family. I thought, 'Well, if I had a good job, made money.' I even thought about celebrities like movie stars, and, I know, those kind of people, too, are not totally happy, either.

So it made me really wonder and ask the question, 'Well, what is true happiness all about? Where can you find true happiness?' And that is when I really thought about God. I thought to myself, 'God must be the only answer. He must be the only hope in this situation.'

And I did something, and to this day I have to believe that the Lord led me to this. I had the Bible, at least I knew about the Bible, and I always felt in my heart that the Bible was a sacred book. I never read it that much. I vaguely remembered some of the verses that I had heard in the residential school, and one of them that came to my mind as where it says, I believe it's in Matthew chapter seven, "Ask and it shall be given, knock and the door shall be opened unto you."

I remembered that verse vaguely, and the more I thought of that verse, it just seem to speak to me. It said that there was a condition to that verse; 'Seek and ye shall find,' and I thought to myself, 'Well, maybe I haven't been seeking, why I can't find God. I haven't been knocking, I haven't been persistent enough, knocking and seeking God.' That's what I thought of.

It was right there and then that I kind of decided, I said... I picked up a Bible and I said, "God, if this is your Word and if you intended this for me, then I'm going to make a point to read it. I've tried to read it before but I couldn't understand anything, but I'm going to read it, I'm going to believe that this is your Word and that you have a message for me there."

So I made a point to read the Bible every evening for about two weeks straight, and I started in the New Testament, the book of Matthew. I went through all the four gospels; I believe I was into the book of Acts.

But as I read the four gospels, I began to understand certain messages that were there. I began to understand there's hope, even if you're down and out, if you feel you're down in the gutters and you got nowhere else to turn. I understood the message in the Bible that there's hope, there can be a new beginning, that there can be forgiveness, forgiveness of sins, and a new life, and I understood the message of love that it spoke about: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

And I read about eternal life. There was one verse that I can remember to this day. I was in the book of John, chapter 7 and verse 38, the words that Jesus spoke when He said, "He that believeth in me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of water." And then the next verse explains what Jesus was talking about, cause it says, "This He was referring to the Holy Spirit that will be given to them who believe in Him."

Man, that just blew me away when I read that, and I thought to myself, 'Well, this is what I'm looking for.' To me, I understood that verse that's kind of referring to happiness, when it said, "Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of water," and I thought, 'That's what I'm looking for,' and then the next verse explained it, "This He was referring to the Holy Spirit that will be given to those that believe," and I thought, 'Well, He's going to give me something to make that happen.' And that really got my attention.

So I went through the course of about one year. I was really thinking and seeking, and sometimes I would give up, and say, 'Well, I don't know if I can do it,' but I struggled through the whole thing.

And it just so happens I was working with a guy at the hospital, we worked in the same department, he was a believer. He was a Christian, and I would be asking him my questions every day. So he answered a lot of my questions that I asked of him. So every day we'd be talking about those kind of things.

And he subscribed for me a magazine, 'Decision' magazine by Billy Graham. So I was starting to receive those through the post office, and I was reading everything that was in there. And in there, Billy Graham had advertised two of the books that he had written around that time, 'Peace with God' and 'World Aflame.'

And I thought to myself, 'Well, I was going to go to Ottawa that summer, and I was going to see my brother Joe who was living there, him and his wife Sheila,' said, 'While I'm there, I'm going to look for a bookstore and see if I can find those books by Billy Graham.'

So my wife and I went down there, and while we were there we did go to a bookstore, and my brother knew where there was one, even though he wasn't a believer, either, at that

time, and I was able to find those two books by Billy Graham, 'World Aflame' and 'Peace with God.'

I read through those books. When I was done reading those two books, all my questions were pretty well answered.

And the friend of mine that I was working with, one day he said to me, "When are you going to accept the Lord?"

And, in those days, you know, you could still smoke even in public buildings, at the hospital, so we're sitting there in the cafeteria and he asks me that question, "When are you going to accept the Lord?"

I said, "I don't know, I don't think I can do it," and he said to me, "Why not?" And I was sitting there with a cigarette in my hand, and I said, "I can't do it because of this." I just lifted up my cigarette between my two fingers in front of him; "I can't quit smoking."

I don't know why I thought that. I didn't read anything in the Bible that says smoking is sin. I don't know; I just thought in my head, 'Well, if you're a Christian, you can't smoke'. I said, "Well I can't; I can't accept the Lord because I'm still smoking."

And you know, he told me something that day, he says, "You know what, that's not the most important thing, about you smoking. The important thing is, if you know you need to accept the Lord, then you should do that."

And he said to me, "Don't you think the Lord can take care of that too, the cigarette? If the Lord can forgive you your sins, don't you think He can deal with that cigarette as well?"

I didn't say anything more. Those words came ringing in my ear all through that day, and the more I thought about it, then it made sense to me. 'Yeah, if the Lord can forgive me of my sins, which were many, surely this cigarette is nothing to Him.' That's what I thought.

And that day, or the next day, I did something in a roundabout way. I was praying to the Lord and I said, "Lord if you don't agree with me smoking cigarettes, then you're going to have to take that away from me. I've tried to quit and I can't. I've tried and tried but I can't quit, I can't do it on my own, but if you don't agree with it, if you don't want me to smoke, then I'm asking you to take it away from me."

You know what? In three month's time, the Lord did take that cigarette away from me. I remember one morning I woke up, I had no craving for a cigarette. Now the other amazing thing was the fact that I didn't take a cigarette to smoke. I didn't have any craving, so I didn't bother taking one, and I said, 'Well, I'll take one probably by noon.' Noon came by, no cigarette, no cigarette. 'Maybe by supper time I'll have a cigarette.' Supper time came around, no craving, and I didn't take one either, and then, 'Later on this evening before I go to bed I'll probably want to smoke.' No craving, and I didn't take one.

You know, I went through that whole day without a cigarette, and that was it. The craving was gone and I never smoked again. You know, that's going back like almost 40 years to this very day.

So, to this day, I really believe that I did something, what I understand now today is what the Lord wants from each and every one of us, that we would learn to put upon Him our dependence on Him to help us in every situation, more so when it comes to salvation. There's not a thing that we can do to save ourselves; it's all the Lord's doing.

All we have to say to Him is, "Yes, Lord, I believe, I believe in you."

And we learn to cast all our cares, all our wants, all our desires upon Him, and that's not an easy thing to do, I mean, I should have learned my lesson from that day, but I didn't, you know. Even after 40 years, I realize a lot of times I'm trying to run my own life and not really depending on the Lord as I should.

Only now as I get older, I do understand that, that I need to do that, that I need to trust the Lord, depend on the Lord, and to cast all my needs upon Him and then to wait on Him. So I did eventually accept the Lord.

To believe in the Lord is really to believe in Jesus, the person that He was, that He was a real person and in fact that He came from Heaven. That He is the Son of God, that He was in Heaven before He came to this earth. And then God the Father sent Him down to this earth to do a specific work in order to redeem us, to provide redemption for us.

Not only for us, but really the world itself and everything that's been affected by sin, redemption, but primarily to bring redemption to us.

And so the salvation that God has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ is God's own work, God's only initiative, and all He asks of you and I is that we believe, that we believe in Jesus, that we believe in what happened to Jesus. That He died on the cross, and then that He was resurrected from the dead on the third day.

And when we read the Bible, it does say to believe in the Lord, so believing is mainly just responding to the Lord from our heart, and that we desire the Lord, we want the Lord that's coming from our heart. And we're just saying, "Yes Lord, come into my life."

When I did that, when I called on Him in that sense, that I said I was looking for Him, I wanted to know Him, then He saw my heart and He responded to that, and He came into my life at that moment.

And I didn't necessarily feel anything, but there was a manifestation about the evidence of it. The Lord began to let me know that He was now in me, He was doing some new things, good things in my life, and that's when I realized that the Lord had answered my prayer.

And my wife, I remember I was talking to her, and I was saying to her, “If we want to have a good marriage, a good life, I think our only option is to become Christians.” Now that’s the way I put it to her at that time, and “If we want to get away from drinking and all that kind of stuff, if we don’t want to go down that road, I think our only option is to become Christians.”

And I do remember reading a statement in, I believe it was in the magazine there by Billy Graham, when he made a point to say, “If you want to lead your family in the way of true happiness then show them to the way of Heaven.” I remember that comment.

And I thought about that for a bit and I thought to myself, ‘Yeah, that’s right. That’s the only true and lasting happiness. If I can lead my wife, and our children that we are going to have, to show them the way to Heaven, and for them to have a personal experience and a personal knowledge that they’re going to Heaven, that’s the best gift I can give my children’, and it was one of the thoughts or reasons, I guess, why I turned to God or I turned to Christ, because I wanted to lead my family at the right way of life, and I’m sure we all desire that, all of us. We want the best life for ourselves and for our children.

To me, after 40 years of being a Christian, I would have to say, knowing the Lord as I do, in a personal way, that’s the only life there is to live, knowing God and finding meaning and purpose in your live every day because of God being in your life.

Understanding what God is doing, the work that God is doing today, where God is going in terms of the future, what He will eventually do.

So that’s been my journey now, like I said, spanning over forty years, over those years the Lord has become more and more as a person in my life, and I’m still striving to want to know Him more and more, to get deeper and deeper in my relationship with Him and my walk with Him.

And as I understand more of the Gospel message and the overall message of the Bible, I’m just amazed what God has done or what God has provided for us to be saved in the first place, and then for us to stay saved. He’s done everything needed and necessary for our salvation.

What God has done, in fact... I can’t remember where the verse is found, but it does tell us that it was necessary that Christ should suffer and that He should die. But also it goes on to tell us that He was raised from the dead on the third day.

So really, the plan of salvation that God has put in place, has accomplished, is through the person of Christ, through His death, His burial and then His resurrection, and then by His very life, and then the Bible tells us that today Jesus is back in Heaven.

He went back to Heaven after He accomplished that work, the work on the cross, the finished work involving His death and His resurrection, and it is through that means that

God has provided salvation to each and every one who would only believe in the Lord Jesus.

In Romans chapter 10 – well, I’ll read the verse 9 - it says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture sayeth, whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.”

The word ‘ashamed’ there is also ‘disappointed’; it can read like this: “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be disappointed.”

And I can say till this day, the Lord, in more ways than one, He has not disappointed me, and when I sought Him for salvation, I didn’t know it at that moment that I was seeking Him for salvation, but as I realize it now, that’s the first thing that needs to happen in our life, is that we need to be saved from our sin.

And God has provided that means of salvation for us, as I mentioned, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, through His death, through His resurrection and by His very life. So I can testify to that fact that when I sought the Lord, I wanted to find a better way of life, is the way I put it, but really that I needed to be saved.

He didn’t disappoint me. Salvation was there and ready for me, and all I had to do was to believe in Christ for it.

One of the verses I like to quote here is in Acts 4:12. When it comes to the salvation that God has put in place, it says, “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Of course, that name is Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, and even here, what I read, that there is no salvation in any other, other than Jesus.

I know if you think about that on your own, if you don’t read the Word and you start saying, ‘Well, there’s more one way, everybody’s religion is okay.’ That’s the way people talk today, but that’s not what the Bible teaches.

Jesus said that He’s the way, He’s the only way, He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

© 2016 Without Reservation (www.withoutreservation.org) Permission granted to reproduce and freely distribute this resource provided you do not alter the content in any way. This copyright statement must be included on all reproductions.