

It is my fifth trip to your country. The first was in 1982, then in 1985, then about 15 years ago with some Canadian members of parliament, and then four years ago and here we are tonight together.

Tonight I want to share two exciting walks I had in my life. The first is the walk on the moon. It lasted three days. And the other walk is the walk with Jesus and it will last forever!

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses" - Acts 1:8

Many of you have been called as missionaries, pastors or preachers. I haven't been called to be any of those. But we are all called to be witnesses for Jesus. May my talk encourage you to be a witness for Jesus. God gives us all an opportunity to share our faith. Many people cross our path, and we can share our personal testimony with them in love. They cannot deny your testimony easily.

I've had a very exciting career. When I was at university I fell in love with aeroplanes instead of ships. I've been in flight school when the first satellite was launched into space. The first satellite was the Russian Sputnik of 1957. I was a young pilot in Germany when the first human beings went into space. The first American into space was Adm. Alan Shepherd. It was in May 1961, for 15 min up and down. Two weeks later President Kennedy announced we would go to the moon. Only fifteen minutes in space and he announces we're going to go to the moon! And he said we will land on the moon and we will return safely. The astronauts liked the "return safely" part. Nobody volunteered for a one way trip. And we did it nine times. We landed on the moon six times. Eight years and two months after the announcement was made we landed on the moon. I was at mission control talking to Neil Armstrong when he landed on the moon. It was very exciting. Very tense. We were running out of fuel. I said "30 seconds" to the crew. He had to land on the moon within the next 30s. Thirteen seconds later he landed on the moon. The first landing was a success. We had seventeen seconds of fuel remaining. In 1966 I became an astronaut. It was a very exciting adventure, my ten years as an astronaut. Of the nine missions to the moon I've been a part of five of them. The job of an astronaut was very difficult, very demanding. You had to learn your job. So we trained and trained and trained. I had to learn how to fly the space ships. We didn't have a real space ship to fly, only a simulator. This machine I probably crashed on the moon a thousand times in practice. But we landed 3000 times in practice. So we were ready to go.

The whole purpose of going to the moon was to collect rocks. So we studied geology. When I first started out I could tell you the difference between dirt and a rock. But that wasn't good enough so we learned geology. We had to learn all the science. So on 16 April 1972 I was ready to go. If all went well we would be the fifth landing on the moon. It was a Sunday afternoon. There were several million people there to watch. I've got a big extended family and everyone from South Carolina came. So right on the second that was planned we started our journey. We circled the earth one and a half times. And over Australia we left earth and headed for the moon. A few moments later we manoeuvred our space ship and we saw the earth. We were 30000km from the

earth. You could see the whole circle of the earth. We could see the Arctic circle. We could see Canada and the United States, Mexico, Central America, the Pacific Ocean. There were three colours. The pure white of the snow and clouds, the brown of the land and the crystal blue of the oceans. I call it the jewel of earth. The earth was just suspended in the blackness of space. I wasn't a student of the Bible in those days. I occasionally read the Bible but not very much. But after I gave my heart to Jesus I started reading His Word. And in the Book of Isaiah there's a verse. It says "God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth". With my own eyes I saw the circle of the earth. I didn't see God, but I know He's real today. He made the earth and spoke it into existence. And in the book of Job it says when He made the earth He suspended it upon nothing. And that's exactly what it looks like. When you're in space there is no night. The sun shines all the time. And so just like day here on the earth – when it's daylight, you don't see the stars. Well, in space you don't see the stars. Even though space is black you cannot see the stars.

I was so excited that I was on the way to the moon. Apollo took 72 hours to reach the moon. We began to circle the moon. And a day later, on the fourth day, we landed on the moon. As you look at the full moon from the earth, we were right in the centre of the full moon.

When we landed we were so excited, like two little boys on holiday. I was 36 years old, but I was acting like a 5 year old.

The moon was very, very beautiful. It was like a big desert. I would best describe the moon like a big rock hit by meteors and now covered by very fine powder dust. We were in the mountains of the moon. It was a large valley, about 10 km across. With the little electric car we had, we drove to the edges of the valley. In the sky, when we look at the moon, it looks white. But on the moon it's grey. Shades of grey, some dark grey, some light grey. But there are some rocks that are black and some rocks that are white, but only a few.

I felt right at home on the moon. I didn't feel like some alien was going to jump out from behind a rock and get me. We recognised the major landmarks in our area. We never worried about getting lost on the moon. Everywhere you walked you left your footprints. So if ever in doubt where you were, simply follow your tracks back.

There were twelve of us that walked on the moon. Three have died. I'm the youngest and I'm 75 years old. So I don't think anyone is going again to the moon in my generation. But I was ready to go again.

When I was on that mission I didn't feel close to God. I wasn't searching for God. I had about all of God that I wanted, which was Sundays at church. I believed in God. I'd been baptised as a young boy. I regularly went to church but Jesus wasn't Lord of my life. I was in charge of my life. My career was my god and I was pretty successful in my career. I became a general and a successful military officer. A successful businessman later on. A successful astronaut. But I was a failure as a husband and a father. I had an explosive temper. When I went to the moon I had two young sons. I was a very stern father, more like a military drill instructor than a loving dad. My children never could please me. We were almost in divorce. By 1975 my wife was on the verge of suicide. But we had all of the things the earth says you need for happiness. We had money. We had automobiles. We had society and friends, a nice home and a lot of things. But we had no peace because we didn't have Jesus. But fortunately some wonderful people came to our church. It was a weekend, called "Faith Alive". They shared their faith in Jesus. They were labourers, school teachers, bankers, businessmen. And they knew Jesus. They had a glow and a love. They had a personal relationship with Jesus. And my wife looked at them and said, "They have something I

don't have". She tried everything. You see, her problem was that I was her god. I was her prince. And I'm not a prince and I'm not God. So she was looking in the wrong place for her happiness and joy. She had never tried Jesus. So in our bedroom after that weekend, unbeknown to me, in the private – just she and God, she had a prayer. She said, "I don't know if You're real, Jesus, or not. But these people say You're real and You changed their lives. If You're real, I give You my life. If You're not real I want to die." She prayed to die if God wasn't real. Jesus revealed Himself to her. It wasn't instant overnight. But within two months I watched her change from sadness to joy. This was October 1975. I was leaving the space program. I took my eyes off the moon and put them on money. Even though I've reached the top of my career, I wasn't satisfied inside. That drive that took me to the moon was still there. And where could I find satisfaction and peace? I thought it was money, and I made a lot of money but I didn't have any peace. God doesn't have anything against money. But the love of money was my problem. So I sold my first business. And the very next month, April 1978, a doctor invited me to a Bible study at a tennis club for the weekend. That's a strange place for a Bible study. I didn't want to go. But I did go to the Bible study. And the Holy Spirit was present, and I began to listen to this teacher. I had been in church all my life and was exposed to the Word. But I never put it into practice. So that weekend I began to think. As a little boy I learned John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have Everlasting Life". And the thought occurred to me that it is either true or the biggest lie I've ever heard and I must decide whether it's true or a lie. God has given us all a free will. We can choose to believe God or choose to believe Him to be a liar. And our decision determines our eternal destiny. It's an important question asked, "Who do you say that I am?" That weekend in my automobile, after the Bible study, I looked over at my wife and I said, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God". And I said, "Lord, I give You my life". I didn't see any angels. I didn't hear any heavenly voices. There were no blinding lights, but I knew that Jesus was alive. He came into my life. I had an insatiable desire to read the Bible. So I began to read and the more I read I was convicted of my sin. I didn't really feel that I was a sinner. But God convicted me. Firstly, my relationship with my wife. I read in Ephesians, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church". God didn't speak to my ears but to my heart, "You do not love your wife that way. And the problem with your marriage is you". And I repented and said, "Lord, forgive me. I want to love my wife as You love me." Sacrificial 100%. God forgave me and my wife forgave me. And we began to build our marriage on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. We turned from the divorce court to walking with Jesus. And the last 33 years we've had a lot of problems, but not one promise of Jesus had failed us. I've discovered that the Bible is God's handbook for life. If you put it into practice it will teach you how to be a good husband or wife. A good father. An ethical businessman. A good friend. This is God's handbook for us. In my career I've flown nearly 30 different types of aeroplanes. And they all have a manual. You better read the manual before you fly the aeroplane. You can kill yourself very quickly if you fly an aeroplane without reading the manual. And so God has given us this manual which I read daily and put into practice.

God convicted me from His Word about my children. In the Proverbs it says we have the power of life and death in our tongue. That is a strong word. Brothers and sisters, we can speak death or we can speak life. And God showed me that I had cursed my own children. "Son, you're stupid!" That's a curse on my son. God's Word has infinite power, but my word in the life of my children has power. And I love these boys, and in tears I went to them and asked for forgiveness. They were

11 and 13 at the time. And they forgave me. The youngest said, "That's okay, Dad". And I began to bless my children, encourage my children. They became Christians on the same day. They gave their lives to Jesus. And we as a family began to walk with God. Now they're grown men. They've blessed us with nine grandchildren. And I'm blessing my grandchildren. God has delivered me from this explosive temper.

So as we read in Acts 1:8, "And you shall be My witnesses" – the power of the Holy Spirit came into my life. And I read in the book of Mark, "These signs shall follow them that believe: They shall cast out demons and they shall lay hands on the sick". So the Lord started using us as witnesses. Our first time as a witness we went to our church. And in our church we have a prayer list. And we said to our pastor, "Could we have the prayer list? We want to go and pray." So we went to the nursing home and we were going to pray for this man. We got to the parking lot. I got out of my automobile and I heard this little voice in my heart, "This is the dumbest thing you've ever done. Who do you think you are? Why are you so spiritual? What if nothing happens?" And I began to fear. But then God spoke to me from His Word, "I didn't give you a Spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. You go pray and leave the result up to God." So we went in to pray. We laid hands on this man and as we prayed he started to cry. There was another man in the room whom we did not know. He began to sob, "Pray for me!" So we prayed for him. This man was 78 years old. He had been angry at the world since he was 6 years old. He hated his parents who were long dead. He had tried to commit suicide three times. My wife prayed and witnessed to him over a period of 30 days. God touched his heart. His hard heart melted and he received Jesus. Two days later he had an accident and three days later he died. But glory! he knew Jesus. What an inspiration to us!

So we began to share our story. And our story is simple, "Let me tell you what happened to me. Jesus changed my life. My god is not my career, my God is Jesus." Seek first the Kingdom of God. So Jesus is first, then my wife, then our children and grandchildren, then my career. And God is blessing us. That's the way we should order our lives with our priorities. God has taken us all over the world to be a witness to Him.

One lady told me one time: "God has given us each a little handful of people that He brings into our lives". You will meet people I will never meet. And God wants you to be a faithful witness. I've met people you will never meet. And I want to be a faithful witness. Walking on the moon gives me special access to important people. We've spoken all over Africa, South America, Asia, Europe and Russia, Australia, New Zealand. I've spoken to presidents, prime ministers and kings. And I've spoken in tents and huts. God has no favourites.

I remember I was in India one time in the prime minister's office. There was a very important businessman sitting next to me. This man was very wealthy. He had 40000 people working for him. So we began a conversation. I told him that I was there to pray with the prime minister. I told him I was a Christian and that God sent me here because He loves the world. Well, he said he was a Hindu and worships his god, but has no peace. So he invited me to his home. That evening we went to his home. It was like the story of the rich man and Lazarus – the beggars outside and this rich man inside. We witnessed to Jesus and he thanked us after two hours. Two months later I was at home and he was in New York very sick. And he became a Christian and I prayed with him over the phone and God healed him of his sickness. We've seen people healed and delivered and set free

and saved. All because we're simply a simple witness.

You all have opportunity. You are His witnesses. The world will never see Jesus without us. God does appear in very special dreams and visions and people do come to know Jesus that way. But generally he chooses us imperfect vessels to carry the love of Jesus.

I remember one time we were in an aeroplane in Australia. My wife and I prayed that God will put someone next to us with whom we could share Jesus. So on this flight this young man sat down next to me and we introduced ourselves. He said, "You're an American". He could tell from my accent. He said, "I know an American". Now there were at that time more than 250 million Americans. But I said to him, "What's his name?" He said, "My friend is Jack Rusa". Jack Rusa is the son of my best friend in the astronaut office. There are no coincidences in God's world. So we witnessed to him. And he didn't say a prayer but when he stood up to leave he said, "I know God set me in that seat". I don't know whatever happened. But God called me to be a witness to this man.

So many of us have a problem that we don't see any results and so we get discouraged. I can't tell you, though, how many times over the last thirty years I would get an every-mail or a letter or I'll meet someone who says, "You don't remember me but I was so-and-so and you shared your testimony and it had an influence on me and so I became a Christian later on". So brothers and sisters, be faithful and don't be discouraged. We are God's servants.

I live near San Antonio, Texas. We were going to a Christian meeting to a church in San Antonio. I dropped my passengers and went to park the car. I was going to sneak in the side door. On the steps of the church was this homeless man. He was drunk. He was filthy. He smelled horribly. God spoke to my heart, "Go love him. Go tell him I love him". I said, "God, I cannot even get close to him. He stinks. He's drunk." I argued with God. So finally I picked up courage and got as close as I could get and I leaned over, "Jesus loves you". He spit at me. I was discouraged. I went around to the other door. Two weeks later I was back at the same church. The same man is sitting on the same steps. Jesus spoke to my heart, "Go love him". I had the same arguments. Jesus spoke to my heart, "You cannot love him, but I can. But I need your voice and I need your hands and I need your feet. If you will go over there, we will love him." And when I said Yes, this stinking man disappeared and what appeared to me was a soul that Jesus died for. Physically he was still there, but I didn't see the outside. So I went over and pulled him up and gave him a hug and said, "Jesus loves you". He started to cry. He reached into his back pocket and threw a bottle of whiskey away. I shared Jesus with him. That night I got him into a home for the homeless. It was run by Christians. Two days later he ran away. I drove all over town, found him and took him back. Thirty days we witnessed to this man and he received Jesus. He sobered up. He cleaned up. This man couldn't talk. He had a big hole in his throat. I prayed that God would heal him so that he could speak. After that prayer I read in our newspaper an article about a little electronic thing that you can put to your throat and you can make an electronic sound that sounds like a voice. So I bought him one and gave it to him. He started to cry again. He put it to his throat and said, "I used to have one of these, but I sold it for a bottle of whiskey. Thank you for giving me this." Finally he said that he wanted to go back to his home state. So I bought him a bus ticket and put him on the bus. I've never seen him since, but he was part of my little handful.

Who is in your handful that God has brought into your life? He will continue to bring people into your lives.

My dad was not a Christian until two weeks before he died. We were praying for my father. I have a young sister and a twin brother and we were praying for him. My father had been exposed to the church, but his excuse for not going was that the church was full of hypocrites. And I said, "Dad, if you don't receive Jesus you will go and spend eternity with the hypocrites". I was trying to build my dad's faith and wanted that God would heal him miraculously. So I told my dad of these friends of ours. I told him how they had seen an angel. I believe in angels but I've never seen an angel. But these people, when they fly in an aeroplane, pray that God would send His angels to protect them and carry them to their destination. So I was telling my dad this story that these people were flying and as they looked out the window they saw an angel sitting on the wing of the aeroplane, but then my dad started to laugh. I said to him, "What's funny?" He said, "What if the angel falls off the wing of the aeroplane?" I said, "Well, I don't know what will happen". He said, "Well, if I ever see an angel like that, he'd better have on a parachute". I said to him, "I will pray that you would see an angel". I forgot about the conversation. Two years later my father was in hospital, dying. My twin brother, who was his doctor, led him to Jesus. And fear left my father. The peace of the Lord came to my father. He knew Jesus. The day he died I was in California. My mother called and said, "Come quickly, he's dying". He was in South Carolina. So a friend of mine took me to the airport. And I asked him to pray for my father. He said he would. So I arrived in South Carolina and drove to the hospital and arrived at 06.30. My father died at 05.30. I said to the Lord, "Why didn't You let him last an hour?" We've got a lot of "why" questions. Jesus had a "why" question. God didn't answer my question, but I had a peace, "Go to your mom". So I went to my mom and the family was gathering and the phone rang. My wife was on the phone and asked me to call my friend that prayed for my father. He said to me that as he was praying for my father in the afternoon at 02.30 (which is 05.30 in South Carolina), and "I felt the Lord saying to me that your dad would die very soon. And I had a vision of two angels coming to collect your father and taking him to Jesus". And I said, "Praise God, he died as you were praying". What joy I had. Then he said, "These two angels had parachutes on! What does an angel have on a parachute for?" I said "I don't know". But two weeks later I remembered my father saying, "If I ever see an angel, he'd better have a parachute on". That's the God we serve. What a sense of humour our God has! What a powerful God we serve!

I don't understand, but He needs your feet and hands and voice. Would we be faithful to the witnesses that He calls us to be. As I said earlier, the walk on the moon lasted three days, but the walk with Jesus for eternity. We won't walk on the moon together, but brothers and sisters, we could walk with Jesus together. The walk on the moon cost 400 million dollars. It took six years of training and a lot of education. The walk with Jesus is free. He paid the price. That's good news and let's go and share that with our little handful.

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