

Love Jesus, Preach The Gospel, Die, And Be Forgotten

by Dick Brogden

This sermon emphasizes the importance of loving Jesus, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, dying to self, and being forgotten in the context of making disciples among all nations. It highlights the sacrificial love of Jesus, the significance of preaching the true gospel, the necessity of dying to self, and the humility of being forgotten in the process of disciple-making.

Scripture: 1 John 4:10, John 13:3, John 12:24, Galatians 2:20, Psalms 116:15

Topics: "Sacrificial Love", "Humility in Discipleship"

Description

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Transcript

Nicholas Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf was a wealthy Austrian noble who was born in Germany. In 1731, he was visiting Denmark and met there a converted slave from the West Indies. This former slave was looking for someone to go back to his homeland to preach the gospel to black slaves.

Zinzendorf was moved, returned to his estate where he had allowed a Moravian community from the Czech Republic to settle and he recruited two volunteers from the Moravians to go to the West Indies. They became the first Moravian missionaries, the first Protestant missionaries of the modern era. And as Zinzendorf commissioned them to go, he famously gave them these instructions, preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten.

As the boat slipped its berth, these two men who left their families behind to work as slaves on the sugar plantations called out to their loved ones and said, may the lamb that was slave receive the reward of his suffering. And they meant of course, may Jesus receive the worship from every tribe, people, nation. May he who was slain for the sins of the world receive global glory, disciples from every culture, every language, every country.

With one addition today, I would like to use Zinzendorf's framework as the outline for our message. If we're going to make disciples amongst all the nations, we're going to have to love Jesus, preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten. 1 John 4.10, this is love.

Not that we loved him, but that he loved us and gave himself as a propitiation for our sin. The first missionary call is to love Jesus back and to revel in the wonder of Jesus loving us. In John 13.3, we are told, having loved his own, he loved them to the end.

I was recently on the Arabian Peninsula where we live and I was in a meeting with some other mission leaders and a believer from Saudi Arabia was addressing us and giving us a communion message. And he unpacked John 13 in a way that I had never heard before. Asking us why the disciples didn't jump up to stop Judas when Jesus had just identified him as the betrayer, he presented this hypothesis.

He told us this, every act of the Passover meal had a historic Old Testament precedent. Each of the four cups was symbolic. Every portion of the meal had a sacramental holy reference, including when Jesus dipped bread in the cup and gave it to Judas.

Thus all of the disciples conversant as they were with their own history knew exactly what the bread dipped in wine meant. For it had happened before, only once in the Old Testament. And surprisingly, it happened in the book of Ruth chapter two, verse 14.

When Boaz invites Ruth to dip her bread in his cup and by so doing culturally invites her into a kinsman redeemer covenant. So when Jesus invites Judas to dip bread in his cup, he is doing much more than identifying his betrayer. He is telling Judas in effect, I love you to the end.

Judas, I love you. I forgive what you have done. I love you despite what you're going to do.

Judas, what you have to do, do it quickly. But let the last memory that you have of me be a reminder that I always have and I always will love you. I offer you my kinsman redeemer covenant covering.

It is ever and always open to you. Judas, I love you to the end. And the reason that the disciples, my Saudi friend said, didn't jump up and jump on Judas was that they were stunned.

What? Judas is the favored one. Judas is the one that Jesus loves. We had just been arguing about who's the greatest and now it is Judas being covered by the love of Jesus.

We didn't see that one coming. Jesus loves Judas. Yes, indeed he does.

He loves all of us who betray him and we'll do so again shortly. Jesus knows our sin. Jesus knows our shame.

He knows how we will betray him next and he loves us to the end. And he offers to us that kinsman redeemer covering and he extends to us unmerited favor and grace. His banner over us is love.

We do not originate nor do we sustain love for Jesus. Our love for Jesus isn't sourced in us and it cannot be maintained by us. We love him back.

He loved us first. Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to him belong. They are weak but he is strong. Jesus loves us to the end and therefore if we're going to make disciples of all the nations in the most difficult places of earth, we have to start by loving Jesus back.

So we love Jesus and from there we preach the gospel. Preaching is central to the Great Commission. Matthew 24 14's version is prophetic and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world to all the nations.

Mark 13 10's version is and the gospel must be preached to all the nations. Paul will add in first Corinthians 9 woe to me if I don't preach the gospel and in Romans 15 I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. I have made it my aim to preach Christ where he has not been named and from these texts we see that the gospel must be preached and that it's the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the nations.

Second Temple Jews had a very clear understanding of what the gospel of the kingdom meant. In the time of Jesus the Jews who lived in that era they knew what the kingdom meant when Jesus referred to it because that phrase the kingdom of God is actually not mentioned in the Old Testament. The closest thing we have is Daniel where there's a prophecy of a kingdom that will have no end and to the post-exilic Jews the fallacy of the kingdom of God on earth had been shattered numerous times.

Saul didn't end well. David, adultery, murder, civil war. Solomon, perversity, idolatry, decadence and those were the good kings and never again did the people of God say oh we're gonna have some utopia where some godly region will orchestrate and organize the redemption of the world.

They'd seen it fail time after time after time and in exile the longing for the Messiah rose up in their hearts and they knew there is no recourse, there is no final redemption, there is no solution until the king comes, until the Lord of heaven comes down to set up his kingdom on heaven and earth. That's the only hope of the world and they knew better than we do today 1 John 5 19 that the whole world is under the sway of the evil one and the only hope the blessed hope is when the king comes back and revelation 21 he's the only one that will make all things new. We don't make anything new.

Nothing that man does is sustained through all the generations. All of our projects will putter out and all of our movements eventually will meander. The only lasting hope is when the king comes on that day and on that day he will judge the living and the dead and not until that day will all be restored and renewed and on that day the wrath of God will be outpoured and we are saved by faith through grace against that day for the gospel is simply this God saves us.

God saves us from God. God saves us from God for God. The love of God saves us from the wrath of God for the glory of God.

Let's preach that gospel amongst the nations. We are not to preach sugar. We are not to preach medicine.

We're not to preach self-help psychology. We're not to preach cutesy, comedic, courteous, little, ear-tickling, TED talks. No! With fire in our eyes and love in our hearts we are to preach the love of God saves us from the wrath of God for the glory of God and if everyone loves our preaching and if everyone speaks well of our sermons then whatever we're preaching it's not the gospel of the kingdom.

Preach Jesus the king. Preach Jesus the Lord who is coming to judge the living and the dead. Preach the utter helplessness of man to rule over anything uncorrupted over time.

Preach the cross and that this is the age of mercy. Preach that the day of the Lord is nigh. Judgment's coming and hell does burn eternally hot.

Preach that now is the day of salvation. Preach heaven and eternal life to be gained forever. Preach the love of God saves us from the wrath of God for the glories of God.

Preach him everywhere to all the nations all the time. We worked in Sudan for 15 years. 2012 all the missionaries of all the organizations were kicked out of northern Sudan and the ones who suffered the most were the ones that remained.

Local believers and partners. One of them was named Adam. He was put in prison.

He was locked up in a toilet one meter by one meter with the hole in the middle. He had to sleep there curled around that vial hole to add shame to injury. All the prisoners had to use that toilet and he wasn't allowed to leave so he had a choice and every prisoner that went to the toilet had the gospel of the kingdom preached to them by Adam.

And the prison keepers couldn't understand why these prisoners would go inside and come out happy so one of them dressed up in prisoner clothes and went in and Adam laid hands on him as he's doing his business and told him about Jesus and the wrath to come and how Jesus can save him from the wrath of God and prayed over him. The guards didn't know what to do with Adam so they let him go and a few months later he's sitting on a bus and a man comes down the aisle of that bus sits down next to him and says you might not recognize me but I was that guard that came into the toilet and you preached the gospel to me. Tell me again how can my sins be forgiven? How can heaven be gained? And Adam on the bus led him to Jesus.

We are primarily commissioned to love Jesus and preach the gospel of the kingdom. Not to build schools. Not to drill wells.

Not to rescue the traffic. Not to teach English. Not to run businesses.

Not to feed the hungry. All those beautiful things I do and will do but my first call is to love Jesus and to preach the gospel of the kingdom and then to die. An anonymous missionary wrote our God bids us first build a cemetery before we build a church or dwelling house showing us that the resurrection of the nations must be affected by our own destruction.

My wife and I were recently on an island in the Middle East. It's completely Muslim. There's not one believer on that island and some of the workers have been laboring there for over 20 years.

We sat with that small band and the leader told us we've all gone in together and bought a piece of land. We fenced it. We tend it.

We call it the everlasting ground. It's our cemetery. We want to be buried here.

We've given our lives for the people of this land and now we want to give them our deaths for on that day of resurrection we will by faith rise with many of our local friends. Should Jesus tarry all of us are going to physically die but there is an antecedent death required of every minister, every missionary, and every follower of Jesus and that is dying to self. John 12 24.

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone but if it dies it bears much fruit. Galatians 2 20. I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me.

If we say yes to loving Jesus if we say yes to preaching the gospel of the kingdom we are also going to have to say yes to dying to self. All of you in the ministry you know that no one calls you with good news at three o'clock in the morning. A friend of ours called her daughter 20 years old with a young child had died.

I had a pickup truck, a double cab, Toyota Hilux and so I drove down to that Khartoum Sudan hospital. The family got in the back bench and the body had already begun to stiffen and so I kind of put the body on the laps of those sitting on the benches and I remember having to kind of press the door closed as her footprint pressed up against the glass, put Arabic worship music on, began to drive home and Sarah the mother is crying as she sang in Arabic next to me. We get to the courtyard and Sudanese houses kind of look like Iraq or New Mexico.

Adobe mud buildings, flat roofs and a courtyard wall made out of mud bricks and so they sat the body on a bed in the middle of that courtyard. It was a wooden bed with a saggy sisal rope kind of mattress and so the body is there and people are streaming out of the night. It's a full moon, they're wailing, they're crying and some of the the women began to sit on that bed as they wail.

I went over and sat in the shadow of one of those little walls and observed the proceedings and I felt the Holy Spirit tell me, go pray for that 20-year-old woman that she would be raised from the dead. So I argued with Jesus as we are prone to do but eventually obeyed and I walked over to that cluster and some of these mamas were big hefty mamas and I reached between them and I put my hand on the head of that 20-year-old girl and I just simply said, in Jesus name rise and she sat up and then fell back dead because she hadn't been resurrected. Those fat mamas just stood up and that sisal bed shifted so the body jerked up but then fell back dead again and then I got angry because I was embarrassed.

So I left and I got in my car and I began to drive home and I said to Jesus, I trusted you and now I look foolish and you look foolish and I'm not happy about this and I felt him ask me in my spirit in his gentle way, if she would have been raised from the dead what would you have done and after thinking I had to confess to him I would have gone home and written an email making sure to give Jesus the big headlines but also just as sure that every reader knew that I had been involved in raising a woman from the dead and then Jesus softly said to me, until I can trust you with my glory I will not trust you with my power and then I got really sad. How many go unraised because we want the glory? How many stay blind because we want the credit? How many stay lame or unsaved because we want to be recognized? It is not enough for us to physically die. Oh yes to be with Christ on that day along with Tim Keller is great game.

Oh yes it is far far better but what Jesus needs in the now is for us to be dead now because we don't get resurrection power unless we're a hundred percent dead. Dead to popularity, dead to glory hunting, dead to position, dead to status, dead to reputation and honor and the applause of men, dead to all of this by the means of crucifixion. I am saying that what Jesus wants of us is to love him, preach the gospel and be crucified.

Psalms 116 15 precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints and I know textually that refers probably to dying physically but I think we can also have a semantic range that allows it for dying to self as well. There is something beautiful and precious to our Lord Jesus when his people die well. Ronald Roheiser said before you get serious about Jesus first consider how good you're going to look on wood.

And beloved we can't get to that wooden cross alone. We can't crucify ourselves. We cannot die to self in the power of self.

We need others to help us die. Think about it physically. Could any of you really crucify yourself? Would you have the strength to drive a spike through your own feet even by some superhuman effort if you did that? Could you really shaking in pain hold another spike and drive that through your hand and let's say some surge of adrenaline let you drive a spike through your feet and one through this hand how do you crucify your other hand? You can't physically do it right? And it is the same spiritually and if you try you just end up a hypocritical spiritual prig that nobody wants to be around and you just mutilate the job.

You cannot deny self in the power of self and so what Jesus does is he takes the hammer and he gives it to the one who is near. He gives the hammer to your spouse or to your child or to your boss or to your team leader or to your apartment mate or to the one that is in the workplace near you. The one you don't like the one that doesn't like you that is God's appointed agent for you to be crucified and he wants you to like it and to like them.

God is helping you die. Why? Why are we talking about the necessity of death? Because you don't get to resurrection power until you're dead. Not 55% dead, not 76% dead, not 99% dead.

If you wiggle off the cross before you die all you have is a bunch of scars. You don't have resurrection power. You want resurrection power.

You want the glory of God and all the nations. You got to die. You got to be all the way dead.

That's why Jesus could say all power in heaven and earth has been given to me therefore go make disciples of all the nations because that was after the cross after he was 100% dead. Resurrection you have to be dead. My wife Jennifer said to me a few months ago we have lots of people who want to be martyrs but not many who want to die.

She meant of course that we all can suffer for a little while, get a few scars, write the book, tell the tale, speak the circuit, hold a seminar, revel in the attention and God says to that until I can trust you with my glory I will not trust you with my power. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. First because when we die he gets all the glory.

Second because when we die fully we have access to resurrection power. And thirdly because there is a unique knowledge of Jesus only gained by dying. We know Philippians 3.10. I want to know Christ.

Hallelujah. I want to know the power of his resurrection. Amen.

What comes next? And the fellowship of his sufferings. And the context for the sufferings of Jesus was the redemption of the nations. There is a sweet knowledge of Jesus that can only be gained when we suffer with him.

There's a knowledge of Christ only attained when we die to self suffering and dying not because we're republican, not because we're black, not because we're female, not because we homeschool, not because we vaxed or didn't vax or mask or don't mask. No. But when we leave home and suffer and die to self for the redemption of the nations there's a knowledge of God there that can't be found in a lazy boy at home.

It can't be found in a coffee shop with a latte in your hand. It can't be found in an air-conditioned church. It cannot be found at a carpeted altar.

It can't be found at a camp or a conference or on a Sunday morning surrounded by Christians. No. There is a knowledge of Jesus that can only be found when we suffer with him for the redemption of the world.

And therefore we should not be sorry in this sense for the persecuted church or the missionaries who leave home and hearth. We should have a holy jealousy within us. They know Jesus better than we do.

I want to know Jesus that way. Brothers and sisters, wouldn't it be wonderful if the defining question for our churches and our gatherings and our groups was not, hey, so how many are you running? But how well are you dying? Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. So we love Jesus.

We preach the gospel. We die. And then we're forgotten.

Frank Boreham in his book *A Bunch of Everlastings* tells the story of Hugh Latimer. Latimer was born to a family of farmers, studied Latin at age four, went to Cambridge, was elected a fellow of Clare's College, ordained a priest and a chaplain in 1522. At the time, he was highly against the Reformation.

After his conversion, which I'll come to in a moment, he became the great preacher of the British Reformation, advocating for all to read the Bible, which was illegal at the time. And so even though he was beloved by the people and preached in the popular tongue, he was on the wrong side of Henry VIII, so he was arrested. When Mary came to the throne, he was again imprisoned, tried, condemned, burned at the stake outside Oxford in 1555.

As Latimer was led to the stake, he famously said to his friend, Nicholas Ridley, who was the Bishop of London, play the man, Master Ridley. We shall this day light a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out. From Latimer's incandescent death in 1555, flow an irrepressible tide.

John, give me Scotland or I Knox, 1560. John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678. John Newton, *Amazing Grace*, 1748.

George Whitfield Preaching, 1770. The Wesley Brothers, 1788. William Carey, going to India, 1793.

William Wilberforce, *Abolishing Slavery*, 1807. David Livingston, going to Africa, 1840. Charles Spurgeon, 1850.

Hudson Taylor, going to China, 1854. All these and others burned for Christ, lighting their dark world from the light of the candle that Latimer and Ridley so bravely lit in 1555. Latimer was the father of the Reformation in England, whether you know it or not, and the fact that you're sitting here in evangelical America means you are a spiritual descendant of what Latimer did, and nobody even remembers him.

But where did Latimer come from? There was a young man named Thomas Bilney, so unremarkable that his nickname was Little Bilney. He went to hear Latimer unconverted preach, and he said this to Jesus, Oh God, I am but Little Bilney, and shall never do any great thing for thee, but give me the soul of that one man, Hugh Latimer, and what wonders he will do in thy most holy name. One day Latimer's coming down from the dais, his robe brushes by Little Thomas Bilney, and Thomas says, Father Latimer, I have a confession.

They went to the confessional booth, and there Bilney said, I went to the priest, and they pointed me to broken cisterns that held no water and only mocked my thirst. I bore the load of my sins, my soul was crushed beneath the burden, and then I saw that Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief, and now being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And Hugh Latimer falls on his knees next to Little Bilney, and gives his heart to Jesus.

Oh God, I am but Little Bilney, and shall never do great things for thee, but give me the soul of that one man, Hugh Latimer, and what wonders he shall do in thy most holy name. The greatest mark of the greatest disciples is that they are forgotten. No one remembers them, because those that they disciple love Jesus more than they did, radiate the Father's love greater than they did, understand the scriptures deeper than they did.

If we are to disciple well, those that follow us will advance further into the knowledge of God than where we stood, and we will rejoice in that, we will celebrate that, they will live and die more graciously than us, they'll be more fruitful than we ever would. Nobody remembers Little Bilney, we don't even remember the great Latimer, both are forgotten, as it should be, because the great disciplers, they revel in the impress of John 3 30, Jesus must increase, and all of us must decrease. Nobody should remember the Brooklyn Tabernacle, or Jim Cimbala, or you, or me, they should only remember Jesus, and all of us should be forgotten.

If we disciple well, Jesus will rise. We love Jesus, we preach the gospel, we die, and in making disciples that make disciples, we are forgotten. Beloved, there is joy and rest in being forgotten.

When we strive to be remembered, to be known, to be praised, to be respected, to be honored, to lead, to have status, or position, or power, it is so fatiguing, and there is so much rest in being forgotten. Let's just be Little Bilneys, let's just make disciples that make disciples in all the nations, and let Jesus be remembered. Let's love Jesus, let's preach the gospel of the kingdom, let's die to self, and let's be forgotten.

Would you bow your heads and close your eyes as pastor comes.

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