

(Radical Jesus) 35 Radical Pursuit

by Glenn Meldrum

God's pursuit of mankind is a radical and loving pursuit that seeks to rescue us from our sin and bring us to Himself through faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 21:38

Scripture: Psalm 19:1, Isaiah 55:6-9, John 14:18

Topics: "Radical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that there is a divine work beyond our human perception. The psalmist's words in Psalms 121 are referenced to highlight that God is always watching over us. The speaker also discusses the sacrificial nature of Jesus and how His sacrifice allows us to be cleansed and adopted as children of God. The sermon emphasizes that even when we cannot see or feel God, He is actively working in our lives. The speaker also mentions that God's love for mankind is evident through the work of Calvary. The sermon concludes by highlighting the importance of not rejecting God's pursuit of us and the consequences that can result from such rejection. The sermon also mentions the concept of general revelation, which refers to the truths about God that are revealed through creation and available to all people. The speaker warns against believing in the lies of microevolution and encourages listeners to embrace God's general revelation.

Transcript

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In last week's podcast, we finished studying the radical nature of abiding in Christ. This week we will start a new section on radical pursuit in our continuing study on the radical Jesus. In this section on radical pursuit, we are going to dig into God's pursuit of mankind and of our pursuit of Him.

But before we can go any further, I want to state a biblical truth so that no one will misunderstand what I am teaching or miss this extremely important truth that is foundational to this lesson. Paul presented the reality in Ephesians 2, verses 3-5, that all of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved. Paul strongly established through his epistles that we are saved by grace through faith and not by works or good deeds.

Salvation is 100% the gift of God. We do not deserve it. We will never deserve it.

Therefore, it is impossible for us to earn it. God is always the first cause, which tells us that He sought us while we were yet in blatant rebellion against Him, when we wanted nothing to do with Him or the salvation that He freely offers us. He was the hound of heaven in hot pursuit of us.

No one has ever first sought God until God had first sought them. This wonderful truth will forever be a mystery, that the Lord does not need us, but that He wants us. In our sinful condition, mankind is by nature objects of God's just and holy wrath due to our persistent rebellion against His person and laws.

Why do people go to hell? Because they do not receive Jesus as their Savior? Well, this is true, but the ultimate reason why people go to hell is because they break God's laws. They are willful sinners in obstinate rebellion against Almighty God. It is the overwhelming love and compassion of God that compelled Him to pursue us and to make a way that we could be saved.

Can mere mortals understand the ways of God? Only barely, for we are finite and He is infinite, and it is impossible for finite creatures to understand an infinite being. Paul taught us that we know in part, but one day all those that truly know Christ as Lord will know Him through face-to-face fellowship. Yet even in the bliss of heaven, we will still be finite creatures unable to fully know an infinite God.

But in our glorified condition, we will have the joy of passionately seeking after Him, so that we can know Him more and more while never coming to the end of the infinite marvel that He is. The Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 55, verses 6-9. What we know about the Lord is what He has freely made available to whosoever would thirst to know Him in a real and intimate way.

The fact that we only know in part very strongly relates to the spiritual world, to the person and work of God, and of all that exists in the spiritual realm. Though we are made up of body, soul, and spirit, we live in a material world that is dominated and controlled by our physical senses and carnal appetites, which make it very hard for us to understand the spiritual. I like how C.S. Lewis illustrated this idea by stating that the world in which we live is only shadowlands.

This is not the real world, only a land of shadows that reveals through the shadows that there exists a world that is far more real than the one in which we now live. By living in the shadowlands, we can only see the outlined forms of what makes up the real world that is spiritual and eternal. Yet we cling to the shadows at the cost of forsaking the real world that is eternal.

Our blindness of the real world that is spiritual and eternal means that we cannot see the activity of God other than in the form and fashion of shadows. We may see His footprints and fingerprints all over the place, and we may even get glimpses of Him now and then. But God is infinitely bigger than we have ever imagined.

Job stated this thought in chapter 9, verses 10 through 11, that the Lord performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. When He passes me, I cannot see Him. When He goes by, I cannot perceive Him.

Then we read in Job 33, 14, for God does speak, now one way, now another, though man may not perceive it. The Lord is perpetually busy in His creation in ways we cannot perceive. He is far more active than we could ever understand or even imagine.

Because there are times when we cannot see, hear, or feel Him does not mean that He is not there working in our lives and what may appear to us behind the scenes, when in fact He is playing the leading role in our drama of life. The Lord is not the God of the old deists that claimed that though He started creation, He now lets it go through its own course through indifference. The Scripture plainly teaches that God loves mankind, and the work of Calvary is the clearest proof of that love.

The Lord is uniquely involved in the lives of those who have surrendered the rule of their lives over to Him, who have come to know the joy of saving grace. The Lord told Joshua, first through Moses, then after the death of Moses, that he would never leave Him or forsake Him. In Hebrews chapter 13, 5, Paul quoted Deuteronomy 31, 6, Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, because God has said, Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.

In both instances, God said He would never forsake those that put their trust in Him. With Joshua, it was trusting that the Lord would give Israel the promised land, while Paul was addressing the church, calling her to trust that the Lord will provide for those that belong to Jesus. In a very beautiful and yet touching moment, Jesus told His followers in John chapter 14, verse 18, I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.

This wonderful promise follows Christ's statement, If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And it precedes His statement, Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. Jesus clearly established the fact that those that love Him will obey Him, and when people do not obey Him, it is because they do not love Him.

When Jesus said that He would never leave us as orphans, it was not an unconditional promise, because it is contingent upon our loving Jesus enough to obey His commands. If you question what I just said, then you need to study what Jesus taught in Matthew 10, verses 32 and 33. Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father in heaven.

But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven. To disown or deny Jesus clearly implies in the Greek that the people had to at one time have known Jesus. Jesus said He would disown anybody that disowns Him.

And for Jesus to disown a person means that his or her name is blotted out of the book of life, that they are now enemies of Christ. Turning to Matthew 28, 20, we hear Jesus telling His disciples after His resurrection that surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. This comforting promise is directly tied into Christ's command that the disciples embrace the work of the ministry, which is to make disciples and to teach them to obey everything that Jesus taught.

I think that Jesus is giving a special promise of nearness to those that actively do the work of the ministry. The Lord will be near those saints that have the heart of God to advocate and promote the purposes of God in this fallen world. This is a practical need because all those that do the work of ministry will suffer the trials associated with ministry, and they will need Christ's nearness all the more to remain faithful in those type of situations.

How is the Lord involved in the lives of the unsaved and backslider? As a hound of heaven, He is pursuing them with what is called pervenient grace. What is pervenient grace? It's grace that brings people to the point of decision for salvation. The Lord seeks mankind with a tenacious passion as the hound of heaven that relentlessly pursues people and gives them every chance possible that they might be saved.

All those that want to be saved, the Lord will surely save. People have to labor hard against God to be damned to hell. They must resist the convicting power of the Spirit that speaks to their conscience and tugs upon their hearts.

Because we cannot physically see God's activity in our lives or tangibly feel His presence does not mean that He is not active in our lives and the lives of humanity. Our blindness to God's activity and deafness to His voice speaks of our spiritually dull condition, not of God's work of salvation in this rebel planet. All of mankind has the testimony that there is a Creator staring them full in the face through creation and all of its marvelous diversity and complexity.

Most Christians are familiar with Psalms 19.1, the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of His hands. God's self-disclosure that we receive through creation is called general revelation because it reveals truths about God that are available to all people of all ages. People have to fight hard against God's general revelation to believe the lies of microevolution that claims there is a transition from one type of organism to another.

They have to reject pure logic that declares that zero times anything will always equal zero, which means that it is impossible for nothing to produce something. For people to believe such blatant errors, they must make a willful choice to reject the alternative that there must be a Creator, non-eternal force, but a super-intelligent personal being that has the genius and power to create everything that is seen and unseen. Creation only reveals certain truths about God, that He possesses super-intelligence to invent the laws and concepts that define creation, that He is powerful enough to create what He designed, and that He is caring enough to sustain what He created.

But the general revelation of creation does not reveal who God is or how we can know Him. That comes only through special revelation. It is unreasonable for people to admit that there is a God that has the power and intellect to create but then admit that He cannot give mankind a faithful revelation of who He is and how we can enter into fellowship with Him.

God does not suffer from a multiple personality disorder as if He did not know who He really was. All religions do not lead to God because there is only one God who has clearly revealed Himself to mankind in space and time. He has given a special revelation so that we can clearly know who He is and how to enter into fellowship with Him.

People that follow false religions do so because they do not want to follow the truth that has been revealed to them. The Bible is the unfolding special revelation of God's self-disclosure to sinful mankind. Though most people do not understand this, the Bible is a book primarily about God, not man.

Yes, mankind plays an integral role in the Scriptures since God is bringing to mankind the way of salvation. But the Word of God is all about God breaking into our world to reveal Himself to the rebellious race of man. Without special revelation as found exclusively in the Christian Scripture, we could not be saved because there would be no ability to know God.

The pinnacle of God's self-disclosure is Jesus, God incarnate in flesh and blood. All of human history points to Jesus and flows from Him. He is the apex of the human race.

The Old Testament purposely moves us toward Jesus. The Gospels wonderfully reveal His person and work of redemption while the epistles expound upon the revelation knowledge that came through Christ's life and teaching. Jesus is also the culmination of human history.

He is the beginning and the end. As He brought creation into existence with the Word, so He will uncreate it with the Word. We are told that He will again create with the Word a new heaven and new earth where only righteousness can dwell.

And as it bursts forth from His divine lips, all the redeemed will be in awestruck wonder at His power. In that new heaven and new earth, Jesus sits enthroned as absolute victor and absolute Lord with all of His enemies being vanquished forever in the lake of fire. It was the ultimate expression of divine love to the world bent on practicing evil that Jesus would come to us as the Lamb of God seeking to save that which was lost, which includes all of mankind.

God has His fingerprints all over human history. What can be seen in the Scriptures and in a broader sense all of history is God's persistent pursuit of man. When we look at God's pursuit of man, we need to go to the beginning and look at the story of Adam and Eve.

Though we have the fact that God created Adam and Eve, we are not told why He created them other than that it was His good pleasure. Before mankind's first parents sinned, they only knew the joy of God's awesome presence and blessings. After they rebelled against God, they tasted the bitterness of sin and the consequences that followed.

They strove to cover their crime against God with fig leaves and hiding behind bushes as if that could hide from God what they had just done. Sin makes us act very stupid because it literally makes us stupid, and we are still trying to hide behind our own inventions in an effort to cover up our sin, but it never works. The Scriptures tell us that Adam and Eve tried to cover their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together, hoping to conceal the shame of their nakedness.

When they were beautiful in innocence, their nakedness brought no guilt or shame. But in the ugliness of their sin, they were filled with shame and that emotion they had never experienced before. They abandoned the beauty of innocence for the bitterness of the guilt of sin.

What a terrible exchange! They certainly got the raw end of the deal. Shame came upon them, and they did not know how to handle it other than their feeble attempt at sewing fig leaves together. The Lord knew what they had done, when they had done it, and He knew it before creation even came into existence.

It was in the timeless void that God's pursuit of man began, before creation even came into being, before it was fashioned and formed in the infinitely creative mind of God. When the Lord called out to Adam and Eve, Where are you? it was the searching heart of God seeking after the prodigal couple that must have been dumbfounded at the judgment that so quickly fell upon them. The Lord had not lost that first couple in the Garden of Eden.

He knew exactly behind what bushes they were hiding. Sin had caused Adam and Eve to lose themselves, and God was pursuing them so they could find their way back home. Before they could find their way home, they needed to see that they were lost, and this is a very hard thing to accomplish in the

hearts of rebellious mankind.

So the Lord's question, Where are you? was purposely aimed to force them to look at what they had done and to comprehend the consequences that their sin produced. The sin and subsequent consequences that came upon our first parents did not take God by surprise. He knew what He was doing then, and He knows what He is doing right now, even if we cannot figure Him out.

The Lord has not faltered or failed in any way whatsoever. Everything is on track according to His perfect plan, and everything will come to its proper end when the time of earth as we know it comes to its conclusion. The Scriptures are full of accounts of people who the Lord aggressively pursued, and these select stories are told to offer us hope that He is in hot pursuit of us today.

Though we are not abandoned, we must be very careful not to thwart His pursuit of us by rejecting His offer of mercy and salvation. The results of those divine chases outlined in Scripture are as diverse as the stories themselves. Some were saved, others were judged and condemned.

A great number of them found deliverance, while many others suffered bondage in a host of ways by a vast array of oppressors. Beginning with Adam and flowing through history to Abraham and then on to Moses and to the nation of Israel, we see that the Lord revealed His wonderful and at times terrifying love. At one moment, He used a still small voice to shake and reprove a prophet.

At another, a pagan army was the instrument to devastate a rebellious nation so that some might return to the Lord. No matter what form His pursuit must take, the Savior aggressively seeks after rebellious mankind for their eternal good, even though He is not personally benefited by it. It is in this divine pursuit of mankind that we get a glimpse of the awesome nature of God's disinterested love, where He never grows weary, for He is busy about His business of rescuing mankind.

This ever-present, all-powerful God is perpetually seeking to save that which is lost. He knows exactly what is necessary to bring rebels to salvation and will do everything that is in keeping with His holy character to accomplish this task. When we resist His tender efforts to drive us to the foot of the cross, He will not shrink from using more severe ways of getting our attention and compelling us to turn from our wicked ways and idolatrous loves.

We can only comprehend a small portion of the Savior's radical pursuit of mankind. Part of the problem is that our spiritual vision is extremely dull, so we cannot see the invisible realities of the spiritual realm, as I briefly touched on earlier. Then we have the problem that God has only revealed what is necessary for us to know so we could see His redemptive work of salvation and be saved.

But there is a work that is beyond the range that our inquiring eyes can see or hearing ears can detect. There is a history that goes into the timeless past and reaches deeper into the earthbound time than we have ever yet learned. As the psalmist stated in Psalms 121, that He who watches over you will never slumber nor sleep.

There are infinitesimal ways in which Jesus sacrificed Himself so He could rescue us from our love and practice of sin and make us fit through the cleansing blood of Christ so He could adopt us as sons and daughters. Some of these events we may have the privilege of learning when we reach the eternal shores of heaven. Others will forever be kept a secret in the mind of God.

Yet the Lord allows us to get a clear enough account of His divine pursuit of us so that we can be overwhelmed with the love that He has lavished on us, a love that at times we do not even know is being lavished upon us. We know that the climax of this divine pursuit of mankind is seen through the gruesome scenes that began in the Garden of Gethsemane, progressed through the scourging He received from the Romans, and culminated on Mount Calvary where He was unjustly executed. The radical love of God was openly displayed for all the world to see, if only we will have eyes to see.

The aching heart of the Lord of Glory was openly displayed so that they could see the work of redemption and find their way home to the Father's house. I love the prophetic verse in Isaiah 49, verses 15 and 16 that is about Christ coming to us as the Lamb of God to redeem mankind. Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has born? Though she may forget, I will not forget you.

See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Some commentators do not recognize this section of Scripture as a prophetic reference to Jesus. But could there be a more wonderful revelation about Christ's heart of compassion for wayward sinners? His nail-pierced hands, feet, and side are emblems of His passionate pursuit of mankind.

They were in the hands of the resurrected Lord, and I believe they will be the only scars in heaven, an eternal memorial of His sacrificial love. Those nail-pierced hands will also be an emblem to those who rejected His hands of mercy, Revelation 1-7 paints the picture for us. Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him.

So shall it be. People must fight hard against God to go to hell. They must resist every testimony of God's existence that can be seen in the general revelation that is found in creation.

They must reject the special revelation that is given to us through the Word of God. They must also reject the ultimate revelation of Emmanuel, God coming to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. They must reject the personal revelation that comes to them through the work of the Holy Spirit that convicts the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Everyone that goes to hell is without excuse. They have wreathed what they have sown, and they have in the end received what they wanted. They wanted a life without God, and they will then have an eternity without Him.

At the great white throne judgment, the hearts of mankind will be laid bare. The justice of God's righteous judgments will be clearly seen. I think that His radical pursuit of each and every person will also be seen so that those that rejected God's call to salvation will comprehend that they freely chose to love their sin instead of God.

For those of us that belong to Jesus, we will have an eternity to thank Him for His relentless pursuit of us, and even eternity will not give us enough time to shower upon Him the love and praise that is rightly due Him.

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