

(Radical Jesus) 5 Radical Standard

by Glenn Meldrum

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a fresh vision of Jesus and living a radical faith that is centered on Jesus as the standard for humanity.

Duration: 24:46

Scripture: Genesis 1:1

Topics: "Radical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing a parable about a deformed child who grows up to be a deformed man, representing Jesus. The purpose of the parable is to show that Jesus is the only normal person in this world, while the rest of humanity is spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually deformed. The speaker emphasizes the need for a fresh vision of Jesus and a deeper understanding of our Savior. The goal is to inspire believers to live holy lives and bring others to Jesus, ultimately turning the world upside down for the glory of God. The sermon also highlights the unfolding revelation of God in Scripture, culminating in Jesus as the center of human history.

Transcript

This message by Glenn Meldrum was originally produced by In His Presence Ministries for the Radical Truth Podcast. You can listen and subscribe to the Radical Truth Podcast by going to www.ihpministry.com You are welcome to reproduce this message for free distribution. This message is part of a series entitled, The Radical Jesus.

This is week five in our series on The Radical Jesus. There are two primary reasons why I produced the podcast, The Radical Truth, wrote the book, The Radical Jesus, and am now teaching a series on that same subject. The first is that we are in desperate need of a fresh vision of Jesus.

We have made Jesus way too small in our hearts and minds. We need to enlarge our vision of the Jesus of Scripture and increase our understanding of our awesome Savior. The second reason is that I want to be a catalyst in helping to raise up on fire believers that will turn this world upside down for the glory of God by living holy lives and by bringing men, women, and children to Jesus.

There are other reasons besides, such as my desire to help true followers of Jesus to persevere to the end. We are living in the last days and there is a great falling away that is taking place right now in America. So we need every encouragement and help so we can remain faithful to Jesus.

Last week we dug into the fact that Jesus was not a conventional religious leader. An honest reading of the Gospels revealed that people either loved or hated him. Jesus disturbed and amazed the people with who he was, what he said, and what he did.

He was not out to sustain the status quo of the religious world. He was out to revolutionize it, to raise it from the dead, and give those who would follow him a new heart and new mind so that they would live and act totally different from the rest of the human race. Jesus was so radical that he was hated, persecuted, and eventually crucified for who he was, what he did, and what he taught.

I closed last week's podcast by giving a parable about Jesus. The main figure of that parable was a deformed child that grew up to be the deformed man. The deformed man was actually a representation of Jesus.

The representation of the human race was the village people. The purpose of the parable was to show that the only normal person this world has ever known was Jesus. In the beginning, the village people thought that the deformed child was grossly deformed.

Yet as he grew, his perfections exposed that they were the ones that were deformed and that he was perfect. Christ's perfect life revealed the fact that we are spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually deformed, and when this revelation breaks into our understanding, it can cause us great trauma. The fact is that we are the deformed people.

We do not have a reference point to what it means to be normal other than by looking at Jesus. When Jesus walked this planet 2,000 years ago, they hated him because his perfections exposed the depth of their depravity. So they killed him, hoping that by his death they could silence the voice of God confronting their conscience.

But it didn't work. Mankind has not changed in 2,000 years. Most people today hate Jesus enough that they would want to silence his voice that pierces their conscience like they strove to do back then.

Jesus is still hated by the vast majority of people because his holiness and perfections expose the depth of our depravity. When we look at the perfect Jesus, we will learn that we are not normal, but deformed people that have been twisted and perverted by our natural propensity and love of sin. His perfections so angered us that we killed him.

I will allude to this parable throughout the remaining months that I will be teaching this series on the radical Jesus. This week, I want to look at the radical standard that the radical Jesus gave the human race to live by. To do this, I want to begin by examining God's self-disclosure to the human race.

Now, this may sound like a very strange statement, but God is not schizophrenic, manic-depressive, or suffering with some mental illness. He does not need a God-sized dose of Prozac or any of those other terrible, destructive, psychotropic drugs that are ruining the lives of multitudes who are addicted to them so that the drug companies and medical industry can get richer. Rest assured, God knows who he is, what he is about, and he does not have a problem revealing these truths to mankind.

It is an absolute lie that all religions lead to heaven. There is only one way to heaven, and that is the way of righteousness through Jesus Christ. Anything else is a lie, a deception that will lead people to the very depths of hell.

One of the awesome wonders about God is that he longs to reveal himself to the residents of this rebel planet. Why does he do this? Because he wants us to have the power to know how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses human knowledge. But we have a problem with God, and we know it.

There is something that has alienated us from him. We feel this deep down inside of us. We know that we should experience God's love, but most people never taste of such joy.

There is a legitimate reason why God and man are estranged from each other. Actually, it is far worse than mere estrangement. We are at war with God, and he is at war with us.

This war was not of his making but of ours, and it is a war that we cannot win. This is what Calvary is all about, righting the wrong we created and so restoring the fellowship we were originally meant to know. An important question arises at this point.

How can we then, who are rebels, know God? There is only one faithful and faultless revelation of the one true God and his plan of redemption for sinful mankind, and that is found in the word of God, the Christian scriptures. Through his word we learn who he is, who we are, the reason for the hostility between man and God, and how we can be reconciled to God. God did not leave us without a remedy for our sin-sick souls.

He made a way of escape for us, and he made it very clear. The word of God is the only book that gives us the true revelation of God. All the other sacred books of the world religions and cults are lies and illusions that will take us away from God, not bring us to him.

This is why I strongly believe in the great Reformation battle cry, sola scriptura, which means that scripture alone must define our faith and practice because anything else is a creation of men and devils. With all this said, if we want to know God, then we must go to the only source he has given us concerning his self-disclosure. I think it is very important at this point that we understand three truths concerning the scriptures.

First, the Bible cannot save, only Jesus can. This may seem like a strange statement, but it is true nonetheless. The Bible is not God.

It is the word of God that reveals who God is and how we can know him, but the Bible is not God. Paul made this very clear when he taught, for there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men. I am not downplaying the scriptures, only putting them in their rightful place.

It is God's word that faithfully leads us to the crucified and resurrected Christ, who is the only Savior, but they cannot of themselves save us. Now, some people may be angry over this idea, thinking that I am belittling the power and authority of scripture, but this is just not true, because I have a very, very high view of scripture. The problem happens when people know the word of God while never knowing the God of the word.

One expression of this is found in people that have a good knowledge of the Bible, but live like the devil. Another expression of this we see in the Pharisees of Jesus' day, that outwardly lived right and knew the scriptures, but did not know God because they refused to surrender themselves to him. They were experts in the Mosaic law and traditions of the elders, but most of them were not in right relationship with God.

Knowledge of the word is needful and helpful, but it cannot save us. You could have a man living in the jungle that never learned how to read, yet he could know Christ in a real and personal way that a great Bible scholar never experienced. The one has a relational knowledge of God, while the other has only an intellectual knowledge.

To the one, salvation is working in and through the man, while to the other, his head knowledge leaves no room for a personal relationship with God. Knowing God and knowing the scriptures are not opposed to each other, they complement each other. The problem is when we trust in our knowledge of the word and not in the God of the word.

The second important point about scripture that we need to know is that the Bible's primary purpose is to reveal God, not man. Now this may be disturbing to the self-centered humanistic version of Christianity that is so popular today in America, where we basically think that God exists to make us happy. The primary purpose of scripture is to be an infallible revelation of a holy God that works in human history.

Without God's self-disclosure, we cannot know who he is or who we are and that we are in desperate need of a savior. If we corrupt the word by making it predominantly about us, then we create a humanistic religion that elevates man to the center of creation, which is an absolute lie. Through such twisted and perverted ideas, we rip God off the throne of our heart and turn him into a subservient being that exists for our personal happiness.

He then becomes the Christian version of the genie in a bottle that grants us our every wish. Besides all this, we must understand that scripture does not paint mankind in a very pretty light, for we are a twisted mess of depravity and wickedness. The final important point that we need to know about scripture is that the word purposely presents an unfolding revelation about God, which points us and culminates in Jesus.

This is called salvation history. It begins in Genesis and moves along with fixed intent to climax in Jesus, who is our atoning sacrifice. It then moves on to the book of Revelation and those end-time events where the world as we know it will cease to exist.

Jesus is the center of human history, where all history moves towards and flows from. Paul wonderfully expressed this idea in the first two verses of the book of Hebrews. In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. With God, there are no random or spontaneous acts. Everything he does is with purposeful intent.

Let me briefly lay out what I mean by salvation history. Beginning in Genesis chapter 1, we learn that God created through divine fiat. On the sixth day of creation, God fashions mankind out of the dust of the earth.

From the moment Adam was created, God began revealing himself to him. When Adam sinned, God did not abandon his original intent for mankind as if he was taken by surprise. No, he is a timeless and all-knowing creator.

Mankind's rebellion did not hinder God's purposes because he knew what he would do for mankind even before they were created. When sin entered the world, it radically affected mankind's ability to know God. But it did not hinder God from being able to reveal himself to us.

Remember, he is almighty. The plan of salvation is intricately wrapped up with God's self-disclosure because without rightly knowing who God is, we will never know who we are and how we are to be saved. In the Old Testament, salvation history traveled along a progressive path of revelation over a long period of time through many people and came in various ways.

We can see this in the flow of revelation that goes from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, and on to Isaac and then Jacob. From those patriarchs, the revelation moves on to Moses and the giving of the law. And from the giving of the law, we see the rise and fall of the kingdom of Israel.

Through this time, the Lord sent his prophets that foretold of the first and second coming of Christ so Israel would be prepared for the day of his visitation. So the entire Old Testament moves the history of mankind to the point of the ultimate revelation and self-disclosure of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Like Paul told us, in these last days the Lord manifested the fullness of his self-disclosure through Jesus Christ.

We could think of the Old Testament as the unfolding revelation about God with the growing prophetic expectation of Messiah as Savior and Lord. The New Testament is the fulfillment, climax, and full revealing of the Old Testament prophetic revelation about Messiah. All this tells us that the primary purpose of the Bible is to reveal Jesus, our God and Savior.

All of history was rushing to the point to reveal Jesus to the world. And from Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, all of history is rushing to his return. Jesus is the definer of human history from where it all points to and moves from.

Now this leads us to two important dimensions that the Word reveals about Christ which are central to the biblical faith. First, Jesus came into the world with a purposeful agenda. This agenda is wonderfully revealed in Luke 19.10 where Jesus proclaims his mission to the world.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. This is the primary reason for the atonement. Jesus did not come into this world to take a vacation because nothing about his sojourn on earth was vacation-like.

He came to die on the cross as an atoning sacrifice so sinners could truly be forgiven of their sins and know sweet fellowship with God. The second reason Jesus came into the world is so that he could be made like his brothers in every way by sharing in our humanity. This thought comes out wonderfully in Hebrews 2 where we are told that he literally became the standard to define what it means to be human and more specifically Christian.

The standard is revealed even in what we are called Christian which means that we are to be Christ-like. The scriptures clearly and powerfully commands all those that would be true followers of Jesus to live like Jesus. This is the only standard by which we are to live.

To make anything other than Christ the standard of our faith is to create a false religion. This is extremely important. We must never let the church define the church.

More than that we must absolutely never let the world define the church. Only Jesus is the standard for what it means to be both human and Christian. Now we come to the crux of the matter.

If Jesus is radical then the faith that he founded is also radical. This idea may make many people very uncomfortable but we have to understand that Jesus did not die on the cross so you and I could be

comfortable. He died to save us from our sins and the judgment our sins demand.

Lukewarm Christianity is absolutely hostile to God because it is absolutely contrary to who he is and what he came to do. Yet it is this lukewarm Christianity that defines the majority of the church in America and Western civilization today. It is this lukewarm religion that is taught from most of the pulpits in this land and from TV, radio and the internet.

How few preachers we have today that will faithfully preach the full gospel that will call sinners to fully repent and the saved to live like the radical Jesus. We will never live out this radical faith until we are fully convinced that Jesus is the only standard for biblical Christianity. This is why it is so vitally important that we hold on to the great Reformation battle cry, *Sola Scriptura*, because only the scriptures are to define our faith.

Anyone that honestly reads the scriptures and focuses on Jesus in the New Testament will see that he is absolutely radical, that he purposely made disciples that would think, act and love like him. Since the inception of Christ's ministry, hell has relentlessly attempted to redefine the Christian faith so that it would become impotent and useless. This is nothing new and hell is aggressively advancing the same agenda right now in the American church.

The devil and the hordes of hell know that every time people begin to live, act and love like Jesus, that they are in grave danger. A spirit-empowered church does violence to the kingdom of hell by ripping out of their malevolent grip multitudes of hell-deserving sinners to lay as spoil at the feet of Jesus. This is what the church is called to do.

This is our mission. As genuine believers, we should never define our faith and practice by man's traditions, institutions or pet doctrines. And we especially should never allow our faith to be influenced and defined by secular society like so many pop forms of Christianity does today.

Like I have already said, Jesus must be our sole standard for what it means to be human and to be Christian. Only the life of Christ, as clearly described in scripture, is to define the true faith. Let me quote just a few verses to back up what I'm claiming.

This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, to do as he did for us. If we fail here, we fail the entire Christian calling. Jesus was speaking about how he loved, served and touched mankind.

He was also speaking prophetically about Calvary. Jesus called the apostles and disciples to lay their lives down so that people could be saved, and that same call is for us today. Only Jesus can save people.

Our job is to lead them to the Savior, even if it costs us our lives and treasures. John, being a good disciple of Jesus, stated what Jesus said above in his own words, as we see in 1 John 2, verse 6. Could the Christian calling be made any more clear and simple than this? If we claim to be Christian, then we should live, love and act like Jesus. If we are not going to strive with all that is within us to act like Jesus, then we should stop calling ourselves Christians and disgracing that title.

Paul speaks on this issue in Ephesians 5, verses 1 and 2, where he commands us, Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Depending on the translation you read, the idea can flow in two different directions, and both are good possibilities. The NIV tells us that we are to be imitators of God because we are dearly loved by God.

Now this is a great motivation to be like Jesus because we are loved so profoundly and perfectly by him. The KJV presents the other side of the picture. We are to be imitators of Jesus because we love him as adoring children.

Both ideas are true. We should imitate Christ because he loves us, and because we are growing in love for him, we should strive to be like him as adoring children. Love for God is the only motivation that can produce the right results.

When people claim to be Christian but do not live like Jesus, then they have proof that they do not love Jesus. That is a very scary thought. Then in Philippians chapter 2, verse 5, Paul tells us your attitude or mind should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

Are you getting a picture here? All of Christianity is about Christ's likeness. If we fail here, we fail entirely. Here Paul is saying that we should think like Christ.

According to how we think is how we will act. When we look at the subject of Christ's likeness, it covers the full spectrum of the faith from how we think, to how we live, to how we love, to how we serve, and ultimately to how we die. The cruel hard fact is that the majority of professing Christians in Western culture are not radical because they have not truly made it their life's ambition to be like Jesus.

Why haven't they made it their life's ambition to be like Jesus? Because they love themselves more than Jesus. That's a very hard truth to be confronted with. By degrading who Jesus is in their minds, they have made him irrelevant to their daily lives.

And since they do not love him enough to strive to be like him, they will end up looking like the idol that they truly do love. They are rebels and refuse to obey him. They love the world like Lot and his wife did, so they do not want to leave their Sodom that is filled with all the tantalizing pleasures of the flesh.

Just make sure you remember the fire and brimstone part of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Whenever people reject Jesus as the standard for faith and practice, they are bound to live contrary to Christ and his word. If we love Jesus, we will strive to be like him.

If we do not strive to be like him, it is because we do not love him. Some belief system, however, will define us. We cannot escape this reality.

It will either be Jesus and his word or some other religion or philosophy. Whatever we truly believe is how we will live. If we claim to be Christian but do not act like Christ, then it is because we are actually believing something other than the biblical faith.

The simple fact is that the more we become like Jesus in thought, word, and deed, the more we will turn into true radicals like he is. Now we come to a very important point. And it does not take long while walking this faith journey to learn that to live like Jesus is impossible for fallen humanity.

How can imperfect people be like the perfect Jesus? Herein lies the miracle of biblical Christianity. That the only way to live like Jesus is for Jesus to live through us. We need the miracle of grace working in and through us to live like Jesus in this fallen world.

Think of it like walking on water. It is absolutely impossible without the Savior and absolutely possible with him. Peter, quoting the Old Testament, said in his first epistle, But just as he who called you is holy, so be

holy in all you do.

For it is written, Be holy because I am holy. What is impossible with man is possible with God. Unholy people cannot become holy through any effort of themselves.

But through the miracle of divine grace, we who are unholy by nature can be made holy through the transforming power of the Spirit. God never commands us to go and be what he will not empower us to fulfill. While passing Detroit, I had a man in my church that was constantly in sexual sins.

One day I confronted him about his sin and he made the excuse that he must have a stronger sex drive than most men. I told him the real problem is that he loved his sin more than Jesus and that he did not want to repent. That was the truth of the matter.

It would be cruel for God to command us to be holy and perfect if he did not offer us the power to live it out. God offered that man the power and that man said no to God. The radical Jesus calls us to a radical faith that is impossible to live through human strength and ability.

But it is absolutely possible through divine grace. If we do not live out this radical faith, the fault lies in our own heart, mind, and will. The fault does not lie with God.

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