

(Radical Jesus) 6 Radical Standard

by Glenn Meldrum

Glenn Meldrum's sermon explores the radical nature of Jesus, the impact of sin on humanity, and the necessity of transformation through Christ for a meaningful relationship with God.

Duration: 25:07

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:1

Topics: "Radical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses a metaphor of a friend creating a paradise for ants to illustrate the warped and perverted nature of humanity. He references Moses' prophetic song in Deuteronomy 32 to highlight the greatness of God and the corruptness of mankind. The speaker emphasizes that our own twisted ways are worsened by our inability to recognize them. He explains that only through the cleansing blood of Christ and the transforming grace of God can we be restored to a meaningful relationship with the Lord.

Transcript

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We are continuing today's podcast or study on the Radical Jesus. This teaching series comes out of the last book I wrote with the same title. The wonderful thing about Jesus and the true faith that he founded 2,000 years ago is that he is able to relate to people in every culture and in all ages, whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, primitive or modern.

The Christian faith is able to speak to the real needs of people, no matter if they lived in ancient Israel or the present Middle East, the modern techno-culture, or people groups living in the deepest, darkest jungles of the world. If this is not true, then Christianity is not the true faith because scripture tells us that the Lord came to seek and to save the lost, both Jew and Gentile. Not just that, the Lord commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, regardless of culture or era.

There is, however, a problem that always happens after the gospel has been established in a land or among a people group, and that problem comes out of our natural inclination to make Jesus a resident or

citizen of our culture. This causes people to look at Jesus and his teaching through the eyes of one's culture and experience, which is not all bad, at least when it helps us to see that Jesus is able to save and deliver people from any cultural situation, no matter their particular bondage to sin. It can also cause to degrade the glory and wonder of what it means for God to become man so that he could be the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

This can also cause us to marginalize his teaching or water it down so that the radical nature of his teaching is lost. This is why I wrote my book, *The Radical Jesus*, and why I started the Radical Truth podcast, and why I am teaching this series on *The Radical Jesus* right now. We are in desperate need of a fresh biblical vision of Jesus.

Like I said last week, we have made Jesus way too small in our hearts and minds. The focus of last week's lesson was to examine God's self-disclosure to the human race and what that means for us today. This week I want to look at the benefits of being Christ-like and the detriments of not being like him.

Imagine that you visit an old friend, and after some chit-chat, he excitedly takes you into a special room in his house so you can see his latest hobby. When you enter the room, you see this humongous glass tank, but it is not filled with fish but with dirt. Then you realize that it is an extremely large terrarium.

Your friend begins to explain how he has created a virtual paradise for ants. He took a colony of common ants struggling for existence in his backyard and transplanted them into this paradise. Everything that ants could need or desire, he supplies for them in abundance.

He gives them the finest food and drink ants could enjoy, and he keeps the terrarium at the perfect temperature for ants. Then he tells you that he talks to them all the time and endeavors in every way possible to make their life happy and fulfilling. By this time, you wonder if your friend is having a problem with reality.

Then, with deep concern on his faith, he makes a startling statement. No matter what I do for them or how much I talk to them, they do not even acknowledge my existence. Now you're convinced the guy's insane.

The fact is that the man and his ants cannot have any viable form of communication or reciprocal love because they are so dissimilar to each other that it is not even possible. I have no idea how ants view humans, and I cannot imagine what an ant thinks. They are busy little creatures and know what they are about, but apart from the cartoonist's rendition of the life and character of ants, we have no idea what goes on in those tiny little brains of theirs.

No matter how much that man wants to build a relationship with his colony of ants, they are so dissimilar from one another that they cannot have any meaningful relationship. So if there was to be any mutual affection between the man and his ants, they must somehow become more like each other. The distance between mankind and ants is huge, at least from our point of view.

I can't say how ants would see it. If we had the ingenuity, we could invent a gauge that would measure the distance between the mental capacity of man and that of ants, because that distance is measurable since both man and ants are finite creatures. Even if we could measure the distance between finite creatures, the distance between man and his ants is still so great that there cannot be any form of meaningful relationship between the two.

In like manner, we finite mortals are dissimilar to God, but here we find that the distance between God and man is immeasurable because we are finite and he is infinite. Let me make another analogy. Imagine you put in a room an angel and an ape, and watch through a one-way mirror the results.

Could there be any meaningful relationship between the two? I don't think so. Angels are spirit beings, while apes are animal. The ape could not understand the existence of an angel, nor could an angel really comprehend the life of an ape.

When the angel spoke of the wonders and glories of God that he has seen and experienced, the ape could not understand a single syllable of that heavenly language. The angel may comprehend some of the ape's grunts and shouts and wild movements, but the language of apes is so animal, so below that of angels, that the celestial being would not know what the ape is trying to communicate. Maybe there could be a type of relationship between the two, as an owner has to his pet, but it couldn't go any further than that.

In the end, there could be no meaningful relationship between the two. When we look at the distance between God and man, we find that it is infinitely greater than the gap between an angel and an ape, or between a man and an ant. God is absolutely unique, and we are not like him.

David declared in Psalms 7119, Your righteousness reaches through the skies, O God. You who have done great things, who, O God, is like you? This is a theme that is found in many places in Scripture, that there is only one God, which tells us that he is absolutely unique, separate and distinct from all of creation, whether spiritual or material. This idea is central to what it means for God to be almighty, because you cannot have two almighty beings.

It is impossible. For there to be two or more gods, they would be limited beings in power, wisdom, and space. The prophet Isaiah prophesied with poetic beauty in Isaiah 40, verse 25, where the Lord proclaimed to him, To whom will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

We cannot say that God is like anyone or anything, because there is no one like God. One of the things that makes God unique is that he is the only being that is holy in and of himself. No one made him holy, for he is inherently holy by nature.

God's creatures are holy only according to their relationship with him. They are not inherently holy. The nearer creatures get to God, the holier they become, and the further they get from him, the more unholy they become.

In Jeremiah 10, verse 7, the prophet announced, Who should not revere you, O king of the nations? This is your due among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you. God has no beginning and no end. He is the timeless creator that has no equal.

All other beings have a beginning, because they were created by the uncreated creator. In the beginning God created man in his image, which is an extraordinary gift bestowed upon us that other creatures were not privileged to experience. Instead of worshiping the God in whose image we are created, we make gods in our own image, out of our own imaginations, worthless idols that are powerless to save.

In the foolishness of arrogance, many people think they are equals to God, or at least have a right to his blessings. But mankind cannot compare to God. There is an infinite distance between the two.

We may be higher than the ants, but none can compare to Almighty God. Then in Psalms 89, 5, we hear the lyrics of the psalm, The heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness too in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare it with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? In this verse we learn that all heavenly creatures, including angels, seraphim, archangels, or cherubim, never compare to the majesty and glory of the one and only God.

If we are so dissimilar to God, then how can God and man have any meaningful relationship? Plain and simple, left to ourselves, we can never have a meaningful relationship with God, for we are hopelessly flawed by sin and depraved in nature. For God and man to have fellowship, they must somehow become more like each other. Now this is an insurmountable problem.

We are told in Malachi 3, 6, 1, the Lord, do not change, so you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. I'm not going to expound upon this verse other than to state that since God does not change, he can be trusted. He is not a moody or changeable deity.

If he were, I would venture to say that we would have ceased to exist a long time ago. What he has been is what he is, and what he will be throughout eternity. In pride and gross selfishness, we claim that morals are changing, which is an absolute lie.

It's an impossibility, because God does not change, and the moral standard that he establishes is based upon his changeless character. Since God does not change because he is perfect and complete in and of himself, all the change must be on our part, not God's. The breakdown of the relationship between God and man is of our making.

It's of our doing, not his. There is one exception to what I have just stated. It is not that God changed in who he is, but only that he became man so that he could rescue us from our self-destructive ways.

Think of this for a moment. The unchangeable God became a man. So Jesus, being all God, was the same in nature as he has always been and always will be.

Remember, God cannot change, and Jesus was God. This is radical. The God that spoke creation into existence walked this planet in human form.

The God that breathed stars out of his mouth was hated and crucified because mankind hated the absolute perfection that was the constant reproof to their twisted, perverted hearts and minds. The easiest way for us to understand how the relationship between God and man broke down is to go back to the beginning and look once again at God's original intent for the human race. This is important because God's original intent for mankind has not changed because God has not changed.

In the beginning, God created mankind in his own image, so we could have genuine, substantive fellowship with him. He did not create us as pets, but as companions and friends. Adam and Eve knew real, sweet fellowship with God as they walked with him in the Garden of Eden.

Then came the great rebellion when Adam and Eve sinned. Something happened to them at that moment. There was a change that took place in them, down to the deepest resources of their being.

When you look at how Satan tempted Eve, you see him claiming that she would be more beautiful and fulfilled if she disobeyed God. He is still telling mankind those same lies all these years later. What really happened? A change did take place.

But it was the uglification of mankind, not their beautification. The uglification that came from Adam and Eve was somehow transferred to their children and on to all the generations of mankind, no matter where they settled or what nationality they became. Just like in the parable I gave of the deformed man, the village people were the ones that were deformed, not the deformed man who was actually perfect and without fault.

Through generations beyond counting, the village people had been a hunchback race that came falsely to believe that their deformities were normal. But their deformities were not normal. They were a perversion of what they were meant to be.

When sin entered the world, the human race mutated into a monstrous deformity, becoming only a vestige of what they once were. The world has lied to us. Sin does not liberate us.

It cannot bring fulfillment. Sin can only do what sin can do. The Lord taught Adam and Eve the only thing that sin is capable of accomplishing.

And what is that? Death. Sin can only give death. Death in every area of human existence.

Death to the body, death to relationships, death in the way we think, love, and act, and finally eternal death, which is eternal separation from God in a real hell. But the greatest death is the death of our relationship with God. There is no greater tragedy that could befall us.

The consequence of the uglification of mankind has been the horrendous tragedy of separation from the living God. That uglification made us such a mess of who we are on the inside that a holy God could not have fellowship with such unholy beings. Sin has so deformed and twisted us on the inside that we are like the ants who were so vastly dissimilar to the one who lovingly cared for them that they could not have any meaningful relationship.

In the gross delusion that has taken hold of our heart and mind and culture, we think that we do not need God and foolishly claim that our rebellion against Him is liberating. We only think like this because we have grown so ugly on the inside that we are now spiritually blind, incapable of seeing Jesus and His wonder, majesty, and glory. Sin has brought upon us a spiritual death that is exceedingly ugly and gruesome.

One of the consequences of our uglification is that it blinded us so that we cannot see Christ's lovely face and deafened us so we cannot hear His beautiful voice. We become like brain-dead zombies that are oblivious to God's infinite goodness and are now driven by the basis of desires because we love evil even though it causes us pain, suffering, and death. Like the deformed village people, we celebrate our spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and relational deformities as if they were better than being whole.

Such actions are proof we have gone mad. Our uglification has so perverted us that we think that evil is good and that good is evil. How could we fall so far? Moses sang a prophetic song about this in Deuteronomy 32.

Listen, O heavens, and I will speak. Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words ascend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

I will proclaim the name of the Lord. O praise the greatness of our God! He is the rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just, a faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just as He. They acted

corruptly toward Him.

To their shame, they are no longer His children, but a warped and crooked generation. Doesn't that define the situation, the wonder and majesty of God and how twisted and perverted we have become through our love of sin? What makes our warped and twisted ways so much worse is that we cannot see how warped and twisted we are. This is blindness of the most dangerous sort.

If what we think is right is actually wrong, then the bondage, the wrong we practice is greater than if we recognize wrong as evil. There is no hope of change until we yearn for God to heal our terminally ill, sin-sick souls. And the only way that can happen is when we begin to see the depths of the depravity of our sin and the wonders of a Savior.

In our unregenerate state, we are unable to have an authentic, reciprocal relationship with the Lord, for we are hostile to Him. Here again, the depth of deception in the minds of people can be seen when they believe they are right with God when in fact they are at war with Him. If we want to know the true liberty that only Jesus can give, then we must come to know that the only sacred book that reveals that truth is the Bible.

The Word of God is the only true and sure revelation about God that came from God Himself. In His Word, we find revealed truth that teaches how sinful, depraved humanity can be transformed to such an extent that they can become enough like God to have real fellowship with Him. When sin entered the world, a great gulf was created between God and man, a chasm so deep and wide that no mere human effort could ever bridge that gap.

It took the timeless work of Calvary to bridge that great abyss that separates God from man. Those that think good deeds will balance out their bad are greatly deceived and proved by such assertions that they do not understand the tremendous evil of sin and the uglification of mankind. Only through the cleansing blood of Christ and the transforming grace of God can we be de-uglified and have a meaningful relationship with the Lord as He originally intended for us.

Left to ourselves, we are hostile to God because our inward deformities make us like brute beasts, unable to know Him. Paul clearly taught this in Romans 8, verses 6 and 7. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. The sinful mind is hostile to God.

It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. In our unregenerate condition, there is not the least ability for us to submit to God because our uglification from sin has made us rebels through and through. The more we practice sin, the more God turns us over to sin, as Romans 1 clearly teaches.

The progression then continues. As they are turned over to more sin, they practice even more and are then turned over to more sin in a greater measure. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul referred to some of the men of Ephesus as wild beasts because they were extremely based in their person and passions.

The apostle Peter, in his 2nd epistle, declared that some people are like brute beasts, creatures of mere animal instinct. Does that not define so much of America today? All this is about how sin makes people ugly on the inside. As they give themselves over to more and more sin, they only grow even more and more ugly.

Salvation is the means by which God de-uglifies us through the process of sanctification. I wish I could say that the sanctifying process was an easy or enjoyable one, but it's not. Imagine the painful process that it

would take for one of the village people to have his hunchback removed.

But that is not the end of his deformities. The de-uglification process is a lifelong one. Step by step, little by little, the de-uglification takes place, slowly revealing the beauty of Christ in our life, the beauty that God wants revealed in and through us is His beauty, not ours, for there is nothing beautiful in our sinful nature.

When you study the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of the flesh in Galatians 5, you will find an obvious difference between those that bear the fruit of the flesh and those that bear the fruit of the Spirit. Those who bear the fruit of the flesh are inwardly ugly because sin always destroys everything it touches. Those that bear the fruit of the Spirit are noticeably different from those that bear the fruit of the flesh.

It is not just that there is an inward beauty that the non-believer cannot know in their rebellious condition, but that those who bear the fruit of the Spirit give life to all who eat its fruit. If a difference cannot be made between the professing Christian and non-believers, then something is terribly wrong with those who claim to be Christian. They have never been healed of their uglification.

As we grow in Christ's likeness, we grow in fellowship with Him. This is the prize of the true faith, unbroken fellowship with the living God. When we get a glimpse of the beauty of His holiness, we thirst for more because we see how beautiful, clean, rich, and pure it is.

David is saying this in Psalms 29, verse 2. Give unto the Lord the glory, do His name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. I just read out of the King James Version, and this translation centers upon the idea that we are to worship God by being holy because holiness makes us beautiful to God.

The NIV translates it a little bit differently. Ascribe to the Lord the glory, do His name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.

Here we find that we are to worship the Lord in the beauty or splendor of His holiness. Both translations are good and have something different to teach us. The King James Version tells us that we must be holy to worship God acceptably, and the NIV states that if you will worship the Lord, you must know and approach Him as holy.

Either way, to worship God in a way that is pleasing to Him, we must be in the process of being de-uglified. We must go to the Holy Ghost beauty shop and have a major overhaul. The only way that we can have fellowship with a holy God is for us to be made holy by God and to fully embrace the Spirit's work of destroying the ugly rebel self.

As the ugly old nature dies, we experience the power of Christ's resurrection working deep inside of us by recreating a new man or woman beautified with Christ's likeness. No matter what we look like on the outside, we can be truly beautiful on the inside by having a Christ-like character. And no matter how beautiful a person may be on the outside, without Christ, he or she will be ugly on the inside to a lesser or greater degree depending on their personal pursuit of sin and evil.

The less we are like Jesus, the less there can be any real relationship with a holy God. Why is it that some Christians have a deep abiding relationship with God while others don't? Is God a respecter of persons? No, because the Word clearly declares the opposite. This leaves us with only one alternative.

People that have a shallow relationship with the Lord have chosen that life instead of one that would produce vibrant communion with God. Close fellowship with God is available to anyone that would pursue

it. He offers us all the grace necessary so we could obtain the prize of all prizes, which is Jesus himself.

If we do not appropriate his divine grace and help to be more like Jesus, that is not his fault, but ours. The radical Jesus called us into a radical relationship. Could it be otherwise? If our God is a consuming fire like he said he is, then how can anyone enter into fellowship with him and not be burnt? The fire of his very person is hotter than any known temperature and is able not only to burn us up, but consume us entirely.

And that is exactly what the Lord wants to do. He wants to consume the ugly self-life and all the ugly sinful desires and inclinations with all of its ugly forms of idolatrous love that leave people in ruin. What comes out of that holy fire of his presence is purified gold, a character that is a reflection of his own.

That is how true fellowship happens between God and mankind, through the power of his transforming grace. And it is absolutely radical.

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