

Ten Shekels and a Shirt - Part 2

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon critiques the pragmatic approach to faith, emphasizing the importance of viewing God as the ultimate end rather than a means to personal success or happiness.

Duration: 9:56

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:7, Matthew 16:26

Topics: "Godly Success", "Christian Values"

Description

This sermon delves into the concept of success and failure in the eyes of God versus the world, highlighting examples from biblical figures like Noah, Jeremiah, and Jesus Christ. It challenges the prevailing philosophy of pragmatism and humanism, emphasizing the importance of viewing God as the ultimate end rather than a means to personal gain or success.

Transcript

But he was a wise man, nonetheless. Rather than go along at the front, which put him in a place of danger, or at the rear, which put him in a place of danger, I say he was a wise man. He put himself right in the middle, so that if Micah sent any of his servants to get him, he was faced with soldiers on every side.

What can we call this, and how will it apply to our day and generation? Would I be out of line and order if I were to talk to you for a little while about utilitarian religion, and expedient Christianity, and a youthful God? I would like to call attention to the fact that our day is a day which the ruling philosophy is pragmatism. You understand what I mean by pragmatism. Perhaps pragmatism means if it works, it's true.

If it succeeds, it's good. And the test of all practices, all principles, all truth, so-called, all teaching, is do they work? Do they work? Now, according to pragmatism, the greatest failure of the ages has been some of the men God has honored most. For instance, whereas Noah was a mighty good shipbuilder, his main occupation wasn't shipbuilding, it was preaching.

He was a terrible failure as a preacher. His wife and three children of their wives was all he had. Seven converts in 120 years, you wouldn't call that particularly effective.

Most mission boards would ask the missionaries to withdraw long before this. I say as a shipbuilder he did quite well, but as a preacher he was a failure. And then we come down across the years to another man by the name of Jeremiah.

He was a mighty effective preacher, but ineffective as far as results were concerned. If you were to measure statistically how successful Jeremiah was, he would probably get a large cipher. But we find that he lost out with the people, he lost out with royalty, even the ministerial assassination voted against him and wouldn't have anything to do with him.

He had everything and everything failed. The only one he seemed to be able to please was God. But otherwise he was a distinct failure.

And then we come to another well-known person, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a failure judging from all the standards. He never succeeded in organizing a church or denomination.

He wasn't able to build a school. He didn't succeed in getting a mission board established. He never had a book printed.

He never was able to get any of the various criteria or instruments that we find and are so useful. I'm not being sarcastic at all. They are useful.

Our Lord preached for three years, healed thousands of people, fed thousands of people, and yet when it was all over, there were 120 or 500 that he could reveal himself after his resurrection. And the day that he was taken, one man said, And if all the others forsake you, I'm willing to die for you. And he looked at this one and said, Peter, you don't know your own heart.

You're going to deny me three times before the cock crows this morning. And so all men forsook him in flair. And by every standard of our generation or any generation, our Lord was a signal failure.

The question comes then to this. What is the standard of success? And by what are we going to judge our lives and our ministry? And the question that you're going to ask yourself is, Is God an end or is he a means? And you have to decide very early in your Christian life whether you're viewing God as an end or a means. Our generation is prepared to honor with signal honor anyone that's successful, regardless of whether they've settled this problem or not.

As long as they can get things done or get the job done or, well, it's working, isn't it? Then our generation is prepared to say, Well, you've got to reckon with this. And so we've got to ask ourselves at the very outset of our ministry and our pilgrimage and our walk, Are we going to be Levites who serve God for ten shekels and a shirt? Serve men, perhaps, in the name of God rather than God, for though he was a Levite and performed religious activities, he was looking for a place, a place which would give him recognition, a place which would give him acceptance, a place which would give him security, a place where he could shine in terms of those values which were important to him. All his whole business was serving in religious activities, and so it had to be a religious job.

And he was very happy when he found that Micah had an opening. But he had decided that he was worth ten shekels and a shirt, and he was prepared to sell himself to anyone who would give that much. Somebody came along and gave more, he'd sell himself to them.

But he'd put a value upon himself, and he figured then that his religious service and his activities was just the means to an end, and by the same token, God was the means to an end. Now, in order to understand the implications of that in the twentieth century, we've got to go back a hundred and fifty years, a hundred years at least, to a conflict that attacked Christianity just after the great revivals in America with Finney, the Spirit of God having been marvelously outpoured upon certain portions of our country. There came an

open attack on our faith in Europe under the higher critics.

Darwin had postulated his theory of evolution. Certain philosophers had adapted it to their philosophies, and theologians had applied it to the scripture. And so about 1850, you could mark the opening of a subtle attack upon the word of God.

Satan had always been insidiously attacking it, but now it was open season on the books, open season on the church, and Voltaire could declare that he would live to see the Bible become a relic and just have it placed only in museums, that it would be utterly destroyed by the arguments that he was so forcefully presenting against it. Well, what was the effect of this? The philosophy of the day became humanism, and you can define humanism this way. Humanism is a philosophical statement that declares the end of all being is the happiness of man.

The reason for existence is man's happiness. Now according to humanism, salvation is simply a matter of getting all the happiness you can out of life. If you're influenced by someone like Nietzsche, who says that the only true satisfaction in life is power, and that the power is its own justification, and that after all the world is a jungle, and it is therefore up to the man who would be happy to become powerful, and become powerful by any means he can use, for it is only in this position of ascendancy, or as we saw last night in the worship of Moloch, that one can be happy.

And this would produce in due course a Hitler, who would take the philosophy of Nietzsche as his working operating principles and guide, and would say of his people that we are destined to rule the world, and therefore any means we can use to achieve this is our salvation. Somebody else turns around and says, The end of being is happiness, but happiness doesn't come from authority over people, happiness comes from sensual experience. And so you would have the type of existentialism that characterizes France today, that's given rise to beatnikism in America, and to the gross sensuality of our country.

That since man is essentially a glandular animal, whose highest moments of ecstasy come from the exercise of his glands, the salvation is simply defined the most desirable way to gratify this part of a person. And so this became the effect of humanism, that the end of all being is the happiness of man, and John Dewey, then an American philosopher influencing education, was able to persuade the educators that there were no absolute standards, and children shouldn't be brought to any particular standard, that the end of education was simply to allow the child to express himself, and expand on what he is, and find his happiness in being what he wants to be. And so we had cultural lawlessness, when every man could do what seemed right in his own eyes, and no God to rule over it.

The Bible had been discounted and disallowed and disproved according to what they said, and God had been dethroned, he didn't exist, he had no personal relationship to individuals, Jesus Christ was either a myth or just a man, and so they taught, and therefore the whole end of being was happiness, as the individual would establish the standards of his happiness and interpret it. Now religion then had to exist because there were so many people that made their living at it, and so they had to find some way to justify their existence, so back about at that time in 1850, the church divided into two groups, the one group was the liberals who said, who accepted the philosophy of humanism, and tried to find some relevance by saying something like this to their generation.

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