

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 110, NUMBER 12

IN MY TEACHING AND PREACHING

Ronnie Scherffius

Some of the most incredible words to pass from the lips of man were spoken by one who came to Jesus by night, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). Jesus was not simply “a teacher come from God.” He was the Master Teacher. When Jesus preached, “the people were astonished at his doctrine.” When Jesus preached, He taught “as one having authority,” not simply as a scribe (Matt. 7:28, 29). When Jesus preached, “the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). When Jesus preached, “all the people were very attentive to hear him” (Luke 19:48). When Jesus preached, the people responded, “Never man spake like this” (John 7:46). What are some of the reasons Jesus was the greatest teacher and preacher the world has ever known?

Jesus knew His subject. Jesus had an intimate knowledge of those things about which He spoke. Having full knowledge of man’s state after death (Luke 16:22, 23) and of the resurrection of humanity (John 5:28-29), He could speak with authority. Knowing fully the circumstances of the final judgment (Matt. 25:32-46) and the condition of the saints in heaven (Luke 20:34-37), He could speak without fear of contradiction.

One who endeavors to teach spiritual matters today should likewise have a deep knowledge and understanding of those things he teaches (Heb. 5:12). Paul admonished Timothy, a teacher and preacher of God’s Word, to “give attendance” to the Scriptures, to “meditate” upon them, and “give thyself wholly to them” (1 Tim. 4:13, 15). The resultant growth would be witnessed by others (1 Tim. 4:15) and his ability to positively affect their salvation would greatly increase (1 Tim. 4:16). The man who would be an effective teacher delights in the oracles of God (Ps. 1:2; 1 Pet. 4:11) and faithfully says, as David, “in

his law do I meditate day and night (Ps. 1:2).

The gospel preacher, though not an inspired man, should be so acquainted with the inspired Word that, as Luke wrote, even so he can say that he has “perfect (i.e., accurate and precise, cf. 1 Thess. 5:1) understanding of all things from the very first” (Luke 1:3). One who speaks without the proper knowledge of God’s Word will find himself “darkening counsel without knowledge” (Job 38:1), and in shameful embarrassment say, “I will lay my hand upon my mouth” (Job 40:4).

Jesus knew His audience. Of God, Solomon wrote, “for thou,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

DECEMBER 2024

“Let the beauty of Jesus be seen...”

In My Teaching and Preaching RONNIE SCHERFFIUS.....	1
In My Anger CODY WESTBROOK.....	2
In My Sorrow JOHN HAFFNER.....	3
In My Thoughts JOEY DAVIS.....	3
In My Stewardship of Time JOHN BAKER.....	5
In My Obedience BRYCE MAYFIELD.....	6
From the Director’s Desk TRENT KENNEDY.....	8

FROM THE EDITOR:

IN MY ANGER

Cody Westbrook

It may seem strange to include Jesus and anger in the same sentence, much less an entire article dedicated to learning something about His anger. But perhaps our squeamishness at the idea of Jesus being angry is due to our tendency to view Him through a modern lens. When we think about anger in our culture, we usually think about someone who is out of control, who launches into a fit of rage. Cursing, being destructive, and seeking vengeance are all aspects of anger that our world promotes. So, many people struggle to understand how Jesus could have ever been angry—surely that is at odds with everything about Him. But the truth is that the Bible does not condemn all anger (Eph. 4:26), and indeed Jesus did become angry on several occasions. So it behooves us then to consider His anger and what we can learn from it.

First, consider a few occasions of Jesus' anger. In Mark 3:1-5 Jesus entered into the synagogue where there was a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees watched Him closely, looking for an opportunity to find occasion against Him. Jesus challenged their hypocritical thinking with a question which they would not answer (v. 4) and in their silence, Jesus "looked around them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts." Mark records another occasion for us, in Mark 10:13-16. The disciples rebuked (corrective rebuke, or censure) those who brought little children to the Lord and when Jesus saw it "He was greatly displeased" (Mark 10:14). The term translated, "greatly displeased," is one that more accurately translated means "to arouse to anger," or, "to be indignant." One of the more well-known instances of Jesus' anger is found in John 2:13-17, when during Passover, Jesus made a whip of cords and drove the money changers out of the temple. Though the word "anger" is not explicitly used in the context, the actions certainly indicate His emotion.

In each of these contexts the two important questions to ask are "why?" and "How?" What was it that motivated the anger of our Lord and what did He do about it? How did he express His anger? In Mark 3:5 it was the hardness of the Pharisee's heart—their hypocrisy—that angered Him. In Mark 10 it was the disciples' action as gatekeepers and

rejection of the helpless, vulnerable, and powerless that angered Him. In John 2 Jesus took exception to the abuse of God's house—"Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up" (John 2:16-17). Notice that in every case the Lord handled His anger perfectly. There were no temper tantrums or emotional reactions. He never lost control in a fit of rage. His words and reactions were measured and intentional. Even in the case of the money changers in the temple, we find no evidence of the Lord losing control. His action may have been forceful and demonstrative but that does not make it sinful. After all, one does not clear out a large gathering of people and livestock with a whisper.

As in everything, Jesus was perfect and holy in His anger. His was not emotional, but judicial. He was the perfect demonstration of Paul's words in Ephesians 4:26-47: "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." It is not sinful to be angry but it is sinful to be angry for the wrong reasons and to deal with anger in the wrong way. Unlike Cain who burned with anger because his offering was not accepted (1 John 3:11-12), we must be careful to control our anger. Uncontrolled and unresolved anger grows into wrath and bitterness and all manner of sinfulness (Eph. 4:32). As we seek to apply the beauty of Jesus to our lives, His anger ought to be a top priority. Let us be angry in the right way and for the right reasons.

CW



IN MY SORROW

John Haffner

Feeling sorrow demonstrates not just our emotional capacity but also where we place significance—our tears show our hearts. The Bible reveals many intensely sad and trying moments Jesus faced. Even long before the incarnation, our Lord was prophesied to be a “Man of sorrows” (Isa. 53:3). If we were in His position, we would no doubt find many occasions to cry over our difficult circumstances. However, when the Bible describes Him weeping, Jesus most often shed His tears for others.

First, Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Of course, the power of His divinity is on display when the Lord raises up Lazarus, calling him from the tomb (John 11:43-44). We should take the time to consider the power of His humanity on display as well. Yes, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15-16), but He is also a man who has lost a friend. In one of the most beautiful windows into the caring nature of the Lord Christ, Scripture reveals not only His tears, but also the powerful reaction of the Jews, “See how He loved him!” (John 11:35-36). This is the promise of “God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23) and the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14). As a man, Jesus was not devoid of feeling and not afraid to display appropriate emotion. This trait is shared among those who are strong in the faith. For example, the Ephesian elders “wept freely” at Paul’s departure “sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more” (Acts 20:37-38). In like fashion, our tears for the brethren testify to the powerful bonds we share in the family of God.

Second, Jesus wept upon seeing and considering the state of Jerusalem. Immediately following His triumphal entry into that great city, we see a change come over Jesus. He wept over their false belief and approaching destruction (Luke 19:41-44). The Bible explains how the people had Moses and the prophets to teach them, and yet they still failed to comprehend the promise of the Messiah (Luke 16:29; John 5:45-47). Although they initially welcomed Him, the people would later reject their Messiah and cry out for His death (Luke 23:23). As you and I consider enemies of the truth and those who are lost, what do we feel? Of course there is an appropriate place for righteous indignation, but shouldn’t sorrow come first? To match the heart of God we need deep-seated and sincere mourning over “what might have been” in the lives of those who spurn the Lord’s invitation. Do we weep for the lost? Can we echo God’s pleading message through His prophet, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked

turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?” (Eze. 33:11).

Third, Jesus wept as He prayed. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes Jesus as praying with “vehement cries and tears” (Heb. 5:5-9). Many Bible commentators consider this a reference to what must have occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane. Although the Gospel accounts do not specifically mention tears at this scene, they describe Jesus as “being in agony” as well as “sorrowful and deeply distressed” (Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46). This most intense moment for our Lord shows His great devotion to God. Doing the will of the Father was His business and His food (Luke 2:49; John 4:34). The Lord’s obedience is consistently on display for our edification. Greatly sorrowing for the wickedness and separation of sin, yet committed to the cause, Jesus said, “not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). Here the Lord exhibited great strength, not by “bottling up” His emotions, but through acknowledging and expressing them!

To live as Jesus lived, we need to feel as Jesus felt. As you and I work toward that end, we would do well to study not just the good moments, but also the heartaches and laments in the record of inspiration. By tracing the tears of Jesus through the Bible we learn more and more of God’s amazing care, lessons which are too easily missed by those men and women of God who have allowed themselves to grow cold and unfeeling. May we appreciate the beauty of sorrow and ever strive to learn from the awesome compassion seen in the tears of our selfless Redeemer.

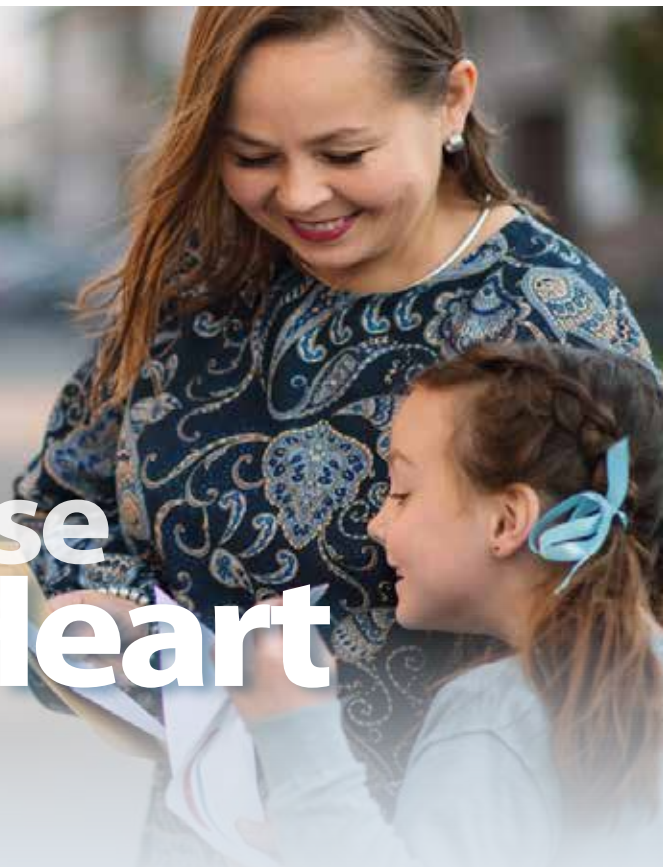
CW

IN MY THOUGHTS

Joey Davis

Isaiah said, “He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isa. 53:2). The modern artist’s efforts to depict the Son of God typically portray him as a magnificent specimen of humanity. The Bible indicates that Jesus’ external appearance was probably, at best, average and perhaps even less. However, as for qualities that really matter – those of the heart (1 Sam.16:7) – Jesus was nothing short of exquisite. From his youth, Jesus increased in wisdom, stature, and favor with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



House to House Heart to Heart

2025 Topics

JANUARY • Is Jesus Real or Legend?

FEBRUARY • Three Facts that Changed the World Forever

MARCH • Do We Obey the Ten Commandments Today?

APRIL • The Doctor Who Never Lost a Case

MAY • Don't Lose Your Bible in Church

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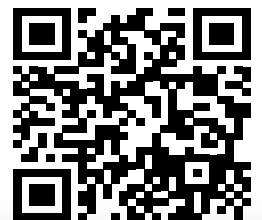
AUGUST • A Farmer Who Never Plowed a Field

SEPTEMBER • Are All Religions Equally Valid?

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God and man (Luke 2:52). We gather that just being with Him led to meaningful shifts in personal demeanor (Luke 24:32; Acts 4:13). What kind of impact has being close to Jesus had on us? What impact and change should we expect in ourselves as we grow in our knowledge and understanding of the beauty of Jesus? What should be our thoughts? What should others see in us? We must understand that who we are on the outside corresponds to what we think on the inside (Pro. 23:7). If we are to do as the title of this article suggests then we need to look at the mind of Jesus. Perhaps no other passage opens the window into the mind of our Lord than Philippians 2:5-8, which says:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Reflecting Jesus in our thoughts requires humility. In his mind, Jesus did not view His divine prerogative as Divine immunity. Some officials travel with diplomatic immunity. They enter foreign countries with an assumed and respected immunity to the treatment afforded to everyone else. One might expect that the God who chose to enter our world would do so by expressing the rights and privileges due to Him. Yet, in His mind, not only in His actions, Jesus set all of those privileges aside and came in the mind and spirit of humility. In that state, He was subject to humiliation, mistreatment, rejection, torture, and crucifixion. Isaiah's prophecy of Him says, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7). We are so prone to expressing our perceived rights that we will hardly accept any wrong for the sake of letting people see Christ in us. If we are going to let the beauty of Jesus be seen in us, it's going to require humility that begins in our minds. That is much different than just being quiet.

Reflecting Jesus in our thoughts requires obedience. Generally, attitudes toward obedience are nothing like they used to be. In our time it is not strange at all to see individuals and groups showing reckless abandonment as they lash out at authority figures. Even those who call themselves Christians can regularly be observed blatantly disregarding God's imperative that we avoid the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). Even those who might be above such disgraceful behavior may struggle with obeying God in areas such as honesty and fidelity. What cannot be overlooked here

is that we are not just talking about outward behavior. We are talking about our thoughts. It is one thing to submit to God by avoiding sinful behavior. It is something altogether different to have a mind of obedience. We are called to reflect the beauty of Jesus – in this case, obedience – in our minds, not just in our behavior.

Reflecting Jesus in our thoughts requires self-denial. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13), and then He went to the cross and did exactly that. Even when those who hated Him railed on Him and those closest to Him remained silent, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Self-denial to the point of death was not some end that was forced upon Him – this was in His mind. He said, "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15). Peter said that he would do the same (John 13:37), but when the moment presented itself, it was not in his mind to do so (Mark 14:72). As stated before, the self-denial that comes with having the mind of Christ is not just an outward action. If the beauty of Jesus is to be reflected in our lives we must have in our minds the resolve to deny ourselves, even to the point of daily taking up our cross and following Him (Luke 9:23).

We may go through the motions of giving in to others, obeying the commands of God, and denying ourselves for the greater good. However, if in our minds we are complaining about such necessities then we are far from letting the beauty of Jesus be seen in us.

CW

IN MY STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

John Baker

Nobody ever managed their time the way Jesus did. In just 33 years of life, He changed history forever. Think of all He accomplished. In the work that He did on earth, Jesus became a greater Provider than Jacob (John 4:12-14), a greater Lawgiver than Moses (John 9:28; Heb. 3:1-6), a greater Teacher than Solomon (Matt. 12:42; cf. 1 Kings 10:1-7), and a greater King than David (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16). No one ever lived a fuller, richer, or more God-honoring and impactful life. Truly, the Lord is in a class by Himself when it comes to stewardship of time.

A lesson for reflection: every Christian would be a better steward of time if we thought more deeply about how Jesus used His time.

Life is a temporary assignment. Job said, "Our days on

earth are a shadow” (Job 8:9). The Psalmist wrote, “So teach us to number our days that we might gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). James says, “Your life is a vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:14). In the interest of becoming better stewards of time, consider the following concepts:

Jesus viewed time as a gift from God – “I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). The Lord was determined not to squander the time His Father granted. The ticking clock counting down to the cross was ever in His consciousness (John 2:4; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). Jesus deeply understood that time is a gift from God Himself. If such is the case, think about how it must sound in God’s ears to hear us constantly complain, “I haven’t enough time.” Paul wrote, “My God shall richly supply all your needs” (Phil. 4:19). While there will never be enough time to do all we WANT to do, by faith we can believe that God gives us the time to do what we NEED to do. Solomon wrote, “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecc. 3:1). We would be better stewards of our time if we looked at each day as a God-given day.

Jesus used His time wisely – After only 3½ years of ministry, Jesus prayed, “I have finished the work You have given me to do” (John 17:4). Jesus used His time wisely by loving and investing in people (Mark 10:21). He used His time wisely by giving Himself to the ministry of prayer (Mark 1:35). He used His time wisely by demonstrating daily dependence on God (Matt. 6:11). He used His time wisely by remembering that much would still need to be taught and accomplished even after His crucifixion (John 16:12). Most importantly, Jesus used His time wisely by seeking the glory of God in everything He did (John 8:29; 1 Cor. 10:31). We would be better stewards of our time if we saw time and opportunities more like our Master.

Jesus understood that interruptions are often opportunities – The Lord is our example in every facet of life (1 Pet. 2:21-22; John 13:15; Phil. 2:5); we do well to consider how He handled unexpected interruptions. He was interrupted while teaching (Luke 12:13-21), while on His way to heal (Mark 5:21-34), while praying (Mark 1:35-37), and even while sleeping (Mark 4:38). Every time the Lord faced an unexpected interruption, He used it as an opportunity to point people to God. What a Savior! The New Testament instructs us that when we make plans without considering the unexpected, we are arrogant and proud (Jas. 4:15-17). Paul planned to go work in places like Asia and Bithynia on one occasion, but Scripture states that God had other plans in mind (Acts 16:6-7). We will be better stewards of time when we remember the possibility that some of the inconveniences, interruptions and changes of our plans might

in fact be intended by God to help make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29).

Time can be spent, wasted or invested wisely to the glory of God. Everybody struggles with being a good steward of time, but by imitating our Lord more completely we can grow in this area. May He truly be glorified in how we choose to use the time He has given us.

CW

IN MY OBEDIENCE

Bryce Mayfield

Obedience is an appealing characteristic. Not only to our God and His Son (John 14:15), but also to mankind. Parents, consider the pleasant thought of asking your children to wash the dishes and, with a simple, “Yes sir” or “Yes ma’am,” they immediately obey without raising objection. Such a thought would likely make any parent smile. This could be because obedience is learned and takes discipline or because this character trait has, seemingly, become less common in our society. Whatever the case may be, obedience is a great way to “Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.” Making such an appealing characteristic a part of my life can accomplish the wonderful exhortation contained in this hymn. In the rest of this article, I hope to convey how the beauty of Jesus can be seen in our obedience.

If we truly desire to display the beauty of Jesus in our obedience, we must look at His. Our Savior was perfectly obedient! His obedience, in every circumstance, serves as the perfect example for us (1 Peter 2:21-22). Consider the attitude of Christ while on this earth: “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me” (John 6:38). When the Messiah came to this earth, His purpose was to glorify God in His obedience to Him. We see this mindset in Jesus from a very young age. At twelve years old, we find Him in the temple saying, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:41). From His youth to the last night before His death on the cross, we see the obedience of our Savior. In Gethsemane, we find the Son of God collapsed on the ground saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done” (Matt. 26:42). From His childhood to the cross, we see the obedience of Jesus Christ. His perfect example not only illustrates for us what obedience looks like, but motivates us to do the same.

As followers of Christ whose goal is to radiate the beauty of Jesus, we must be obedient ourselves. Not only is obedience essential to inherit eternal life (Matt. 7:21), it is also necessary to display the beauty of Jesus. Jesus was obedient, so if I am not obedient, I am nothing like Him. When we are obedient, we are conveying an important message both to ourselves and to those around us. When we are obedient to God, our actions claim that a love for God is worth more than a love for the world and the things therein. What is so beautiful about sweating blood, nails being hammered into flesh, and a crown of thorns being crammed onto the precious Lamb of God? Jesus' love for God: "But so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me..." (John 14:31). His beautiful example shows that there is nothing on this earth that is more valuable than loving God through obedience (John 14:15). When we obey Him, we show ourselves and the world that same message.

Think back to the illustration we began with. It is appealing that a child obeys his mother and father, but how much more so when that child obeys out of love and respect for their parents? It's a beautiful thing! When we obey God out of love and respect for Him, we display the beauty of Jesus in our lives. In doing this, we not only please God, we also present Christ to the world by our example. Dear brothers and sisters, may we truly "let the beauty of Jesus be seen in our obedience."

CW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men" (1 Kings 8:39). John affirmed that Jesus "knew what was in man" (John 2:25). Jesus knew those to whom He preached. He knew both their physical and spiritual needs (Mark 10:21). He knew what they needed to hear (John 3:3), when they needed to hear it (John 16:12), and how tender (Luke 22:31, 32) or severe (Matt. 16:23) it needed to be said.

For the local preacher and minister of God (and for the shepherds of the flock as we are addressing the case!), this has more to do with being out of the pulpit and office than in it. It has less to do with knowing the Bible and more with knowing the brethren.

Regarding the men who built the great tower, Moses wrote, "the LORD came down to see" (Gen. 11:5). Discussing the people of Sodom to Abraham, the LORD said, "I will go down now, and see" (Gen. 18:21). Applying the prophecy of Isaiah to Jesus the angel affirmed "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). When Jesus walked among men the people declared, "God hath visited his people" (Luke 7:16). If God

saw fit to "come down" and to "visit his people," should not those responsible for teaching, preaching, and shepherding the flock of God go out and walk among the brethren?

Jesus had something to say. Sitting in the house of a Pharisee and perceiving what needed to be heard, Jesus said, "Simeon, I have somewhat to say unto thee" (Luke 7:40). Peter testified of the "voice which came from heaven" (2 Pet. 1:18) declaring, This is my beloved Son... hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). The first gospel sermon ever preached still calls upon all me to "hear these words" (Acts 2:22).

Jesus' time on this earth was not in vain. He came with a heavenly word. The man who speaks the words of Christ speaks the words of the Father (Matt. 10:40; Luke 10:16; cf. 1 Thess. 4:8). That man should have something to say.

There is the man who feigns himself a preacher. He stands before the people of God preaching... because he has to say something... it is his job...it is how he makes a living. He is not prepared. He neither has an accurate understanding of the book, nor can he adequately to teach it.

Then there is the man who drinks deep from the well of God and is qualified to bring others to the living Word. He is the man who rises up before the sun, committing the word of God to his heart. He is the man who burns the midnight oil, searching the Scriptures for the Christ of God. He is the man who meditates on God's Word day and night. He is studied. He is prepared. When he stands in the pulpit, like his Master, he has something to say, "the word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

These are but a few thoughts and lessons we can take from the life of Jesus as the Master Teacher. May the beauty of Jesus be seen when you stand before men to proclaim His gospel.

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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Trent Kennedy
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The gospel is good news because the outlook of sinful man is bleak. Sin separates mankind from God and puts us in the “bad news” category. While in sin, we are lost. People must come face-to-face with the reality that they are lost, separated from God, and without hope. It is God’s mouthpiece, His servant, the preacher, who must communicate this reality and offer the hope found only in Jesus.

It is possible to communicate someone’s lost state to them in a way that is too harsh, unkind, unloving, slanderous, unfair, mean, abusive, and so on. This can be done with tone, demeanor, or other nonverbal communication. But, is it possible to describe sin too harshly?

- Sin is an affront to the moral perfection of God (Hab. 1:13), Sin is to be abhorred (Rom. 12:9).
- Sin is dark (1 John 2:11), Sin separates between man and God (Rom. 3:23).
- Sin is worthy of death (Heb. 3:17), Sin gives birth to death (Jas. 1:15).
- Sin is of the Devil and makes people children of the Devil (1 John 3:8-10), Sin controls the heart of man making him a slave (Rom. 6:11-14).
- Sin battles against those trying to do right (cf. Heb. 12:4), Sin is betrayal (cf. Matt. 27:4).
- Sin creates shame (cf. Luke 15:18), Sin is wicked (2 Pet. 2:4-8).

Sin ruins lives and homes and countries and congregations. It is ugly and awful. It is dark and demonic and disgusting. It is hideous and horrendous. It is gross and ungodly. Sin cost Jesus His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21). There are no words that can over-communicate the heinous nature of sin.

When we talk about sin from the pulpit or the lectern or the couch, we must recognize and label sin for what it Biblically is. The gospel is good news because sin is so dark, ugly, abhorrent, and whatever other words you might choose to describe it. When we recognize and label sin as the ugly plague it is, we can help others see the beauty of Jesus and the gospel.

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