

July 8, 2018

## **Radical Stuff**

### Prayer

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

### Sermon

I don't know about you but every time I hear or read this passage from the gospel where Jesus finally comes to his hometown. And he is kind of rejected by those that live in his hometown and attended the synagogue where he grew up. That always throws me off a bit. You would think you know small town boy makes good is a success story. But not so with Jesus as he comes back to Nazareth. And the more I thought about it I began to understand a little bit of the difficulty that was going on.

You see Jesus grew up. Mary, I'm sure took the children to the synagogue regularly on Saturday. Saturday being the sabbath of course. And they would sit, and they would listen to the teachings, very traditional. They watched Jesus grow up. You know a good kid. Never caused any trouble. He was there on a regular basis because Mary actually wanted all her children there. And then he becomes a carpenter. He follows in his father's footsteps.

He reaches the age of about 30. He makes a pilgrimage down south. And when he comes back he now has followers of his own. He has a set of followers of his own. He comes into the synagogue. And when it comes time for teaching he actually stands up and begins to teach. They probably thought well he's probably heard some good stuff down at the temple and he's going to share it with us. And all of a sudden, he

begins to teach. But he begins to teach about the kingdom of God. Begins to teach about God is doing something new and he is inviting us all to participate. God is sending and has sent the Christ into the world and is calling for people to repent even from this being in the covenant and trying to follow in the law. And to begin a new journey. A new journey that will bring God and humanity in closer relationship. No longer based on law but based on a baptism. Based on the forgiveness of old sins where God becomes a part of your life. You become not just God's followers and the chosen people but God's children.

Now that's pretty radical stuff. But if you think about it, if Jesus began to share some of the other teachings in the other villages and other places. Imagine this kid that you saw grow up. Hasn't been gone long enough to really attend seminary. Oh, wait a minute that was me. (Laughter) He wasn't gone far enough to get the education from a rabbi. If he did he certainly would not be this radical. And if he started saying funny things like, "I am the bread of life and the bread that I give to the world is my flesh." That's pretty radical stuff.

If he started saying, "I am the vine and you are the branches. You have to abide in me. I will abide in you and we will begin a new community. A thing called the church. That I will give you a baptism not of water but of spirit." Imagine what you would think sitting there in the synagogue listening to this radical stuff. Maybe you would take offense as well.

That's what Jesus is dealing with. He is seen still in light of who he was when he left Nazareth. And they are having a very difficult time trying to deal with who he is as the Messiah and as the Christ. And that's why he makes that comparison and prophets are held without honor except in their hometowns and in their own families and in their own house. Because prophets were just regular people like you and me. And God would touch them on the shoulder and say I have something for you to

do. I need for you to speak this not just the people but to the king. That it's time to repent. That God is unhappy. That consequences will follow decisions that you've made. And now is the time to repent and turn around and come back to God. Well, that was part of Jesus' message too. It was to repent but it was to start a new journey. And this they were having a lot of problems dealing with.

Now as a follow up to this. Jesus gathers his disciples the ones he's been traveling with for a relatively short period of time because this appears to be the first visit back to Nazareth. He's made his way back. He's been baptized by John. He's been out in the wilderness. He's come back. He's started gathering his disciples. You know, Peter, James, John, all the boys make their way slowly back up into Galilee. And they're teaching as they go and they're having some pretty good success because the message is a powerful one.

God is doing something new and God is calling you to participate. To come and be a part of the community that is based with God's spirit being a part of each person. Being brothers and sisters together. Is to see the world in a new way. Is to pray not only for your friends but for your enemies. It's to see each other as neighbors and eventually even more than neighbors as brothers and sisters no matter who they are or where they come from. This is the good news and it's also got power as people are being healed and evil spirits are being cast out. So, God is showing himself present with this person called Jesus and his disciples.

And now Jesus calls his disciples together and says I'm going to send you out two by two. I'm going to send you out to the villages where I will be coming. Kind of like a warm-up act you know. Get them set. Get them ready. Share a little bit about what's going on, what you've heard. It's kind of a pop-quiz for the disciples to make sure they've been paying attention.

Now you take this teaching and you go into the towns. You start sharing it and I'm going to follow up. You're going to have the power to cast out evil spirits, that ought to help some. Then they'll be ready when I come in to hear the radical things that I'm going to share with them. The radical things about loving everyone. About being at peace even in midst of turmoil. About being fed from heaven so that the soul is filled. To be given drink in an indwelling well, spring welling up within the individual. So that they don't thirst anymore for the spirit of God because it will be present.

So, they go out and they have this successful evangelistic ministry. Jesus comes in and he shows them what the disciples have been talking about. Now we hear all this, and we hear the radical things that Jesus says. And we can say yeah, I can see where they have difficulty with that. Especially this home town and those who saw him grow up. I can see difficulties with all these other people who were so based on the external law and now he was saying that God was going to be dwelling within them. And that he was the representative of what this new person in God will look like where divinity and humanity have come together.

And so, we have this and the disciples going out. And now we have to see and understand that we are those disciples. Maybe we can begin to understand that as radical as Jesus teaching was then. It still 2000 years later, seems to be about as radical. One would hope, and one would wish that people would hear the message of Jesus and his love for all of humanity. And give in and give themselves over to this truth, to this power. One would hope that we could live out what we saw in Jesus as he went to all the people, as he rejected none. As he gave each an opportunity and an invitation to come and be part of this community. To come and be the children of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and we would now in this day in age be united, but we are not.

But we are called to continue to share the message and the truth of the message. Unfortunately, the gospel message has been bent and twisted to conform to different ideologies. Different desires. So, the gospel is not and probably at this point cannot be preached in the way it was in the life of Jesus. And yet we are called. And as baptized Christians we have promised to present Christ to the world in that authentic way that Jesus did. To see each person as brother or sister. As child of God. To present the gospel and to hope that it can be presented in such a way by action and by word. That the people can hear and receive it and know that they are forgiven sinners. That they are accepted. That they are called to be a part of this great community where we respect the dignity of every human being not just the ones that we want to be a part of but to all human beings. Where we pray not just for our families and friends but for our enemies as well. Where we accept the right for a person to reject the gospel.

Remember when Jesus said if the people don't accept you in these villages, they won't hear what you have to say if they don't accept that. When you leave simply shake the dust off your feet. Just as a testimony against them. They had every opportunity to come, to be a part of. He didn't say call down fire upon them. It is for us to present the love of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that people long for that life. That they want to be a part. That the community is life-given and supportive in a way of making it through the world together even in its darkest times.

We are those disciples who are sent out into the world. We are the ones who received the gospel of Jesus Christ and accepted it as our own. We are those who are sent into the villages out into the community to share the gospel in such a way that people long to be a part. May we accept that responsibility loving one another as God loves

us. So that they may truly know the love of God. And they may know that they are child of God. And brother or sister with Jesus and with us.

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