

Rediscovery in 2010 Part 3

We are continuing our series on rediscovery. Most of you know that my father is living with us now. As we went through the things in his house, we kept rediscovering items - things we knew we had, things from our past but things we hadn't seen in years. Things from our childhood that brought back all kinds of memories. It has been quite a process of rediscovery.

I am suggesting that all of us do some spiritual rediscovering over these first few weeks of the new year. I've talked about the importance of rediscovering the love of our Heavenly Father. How astounding to know and realize that he loves you as he loves Jesus. Jesus in his high priestly prayer in John 17 asked of his Heavenly Father that we might be brought to "complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23. How incredible to think that God loves us as he loves Jesus. Let's rediscover the father heart of God and his astounding love for us, his children.

Then two weeks ago we talked about rediscovering the sovereignty of God. How liberating it is to know that he loves us and that he is in control in our lives. He has a divine and holy purpose for each of us and ultimately that purpose is to see us made conformable to the image, nature, likeness and character of his son. He desires the absolute best for us and he is causing all things to work toward that end, that we will be like Jesus and will be presented to the father without spot or wrinkle or blemish.

Finally we talked about the importance of rediscovering the power of God at work in and through our weakness. What an assurance that comes when we realize that when we are weak, he is strong. It is not about our strength and power, but it is about our willingness to surrender to him and to trust in him. He will exploit our weakness, using it to bring glory to his Son and work it for our good and for the good of his kingdom. We can rest in him and his sovereign plan.

This morning I want to challenge you to **Rediscover the Biblical Jesus**. Everyone has an idea, perhaps a mental image of what Jesus is like. We collect images and impressions and ideas from a variety of sources. Denny Nissley mentioned the flannelgraphs we had in Sunday School as children. We got an idea of what Jesus was like, what he looked like and how he acted, from those pictures and stories from

our childhood. Somehow he looked a lot older than 33 in those pictures. More like 63 to me. But I developed an idea, an image, a picture of what he was like.

As I studied the bible more, my ideas began to develop and grow and change. Through the radical years of the 1960's, Jesus often was pictured as something of a revolutionary, which in fact he was. I began to view him as a much more radical figure than what I had as a child. He called his followers, including us, to the most radical lifestyle possible. He has called us to take up our cross and die with him. I would call that radical.

I've tried to view him from so many different points of view. Finally going to Israel and looking and listening gives an even different idea and image of Jesus as a boy, as a young man, a rabbi, a teacher, walking the land, telling stories, dealing with all of the political and religious mine fields of the day. The more I read and study and listen and learn, the greater is my love and adoration and appreciation for Jesus and who he is. But also, greater is my sense that I still don't know him as I desire, as he desires, and he is not entirely as I've pictured him. He isn't as meek and mild and passive as I thought. Perhaps not as soft spoken, more direct, more confrontational at times, more intense, more passionate than what I thought. He was never afraid to stand up for his heavenly Father and for what was righteous and holy. He was never afraid of what others thought about him or his teaching. He was devoted to truth, regardless. It's time for us to rediscover the biblical Jesus.

I'm suggesting we abandon many of our preconceived ideas and notions about Jesus and just go back to the gospels. Stop thinking of him as a middle class, white American, Republican male and think of him as that Jewish teacher that challenged the status quo of first century life in Israel. Rediscover the biblical Jesus. Let me suggest a couple of things that stand out to me when we rediscover the biblical Jesus.

1. The biblical Jesus gives a whole new understanding to living like a King's kid.

Some years ago there was a book entitled "Living Like A King's Kid." I never read it, but I understood it to be another call to embrace the prosperity gospel. The argument was that since I am a child of the king, I am entitled to all the blessings and prosperity and divine health and every other possible benefit and pleasure that the king enjoys. The problem with the book is that the premise is flawed. You see, the premise is based

upon our understanding of an earthly king – someone living in splendor in a palace whose every wish is fulfilled. Since our God is the king over all and owns the cattle on a thousand hills, etc, then we are entitled to all of these things. The problem is, we aren't the children of an earthly king or kingdom. In answer to Pilate's questions Jesus said, **“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”** **“You are a king then!”** said Pilate. Jesus answered, **“You are right in saying I am a king.”** John 18:36-37

Jesus is a king and we are children of this king. We are inhabitants and citizens of an earthly kingdom and a heavenly kingdom as well. But this king is different from earthly kings. This king said, **“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** Matthew 20:25-28

To live like a king's kid, this king's kid, is to be a servant. We are to have the same mind and attitude in us that our king Jesus had. Philippians 2 says he “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:7-8 This is the life of a king's kid to which we have been called. Humble obedience as servants of God.

Gayle Erwin, in his book, *The Jesus Style*, outlines what he calls the nature of Jesus taken from the gospels. If we want to live like The King's Kid, then it means we are willing to become as a servant or slave, we will not lord it over others, we will lead by example, we will be humble, we will be as a child, we will be as the younger, as the least and as the last. These things are contrary to the desires of our flesh, to our natural ways. This is the way of heaven's king and his kids.

We have this idea of what it would be like to be a king's kid, but we are thinking of the things, the position, all the stuff that goes with being an earthly king's kid. Jesus said, **“What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.”** Luke

16:15. When you get to know the biblical Jesus, all the stuff begins to drop away and you realize it is all about serving God and serving others. That's what being a king's kid is really all about. It's not about getting more, it's about giving more. It's not about accumulating possessions here, it's about laying up treasures in heaven. It's about living a life of surrender and obedience to Christ. It is about denying yourself and taking up a cross and following Jesus. That is the radical discipleship to which our king calls us. He says if we want to find our life we need to lose it for his sake. We lose ourselves in him. It is about following him. Let's get to know the biblical Jesus, and then live as one of his children, ready to give and to live as a servant of our Lord and Savior, King Jesus.

2. The biblical Jesus was a “sinless friend of sinners.” I put that phrase in quotation marks because I borrowed it from Philip Yancey in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*. Jesus we know was the sinless son of God. The bible says he was tempted in all points like us yet was without sin. He was born without sin, without the sin nature that scars us from the beginning. He was sinless and yet he was known as a friend of sinners. He was often questioned concerning the company he kept. The Pharisees were quick to judge him because of the crowd around him. Jesus said, **“John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’” Luke 7:33-34**

Jesus was able to do what we seem to struggle with doing. He truly did love the sinner while hating their sin. We say it, but I'm not sure the sinners we say it about truly feel loved by us. Can we find a way to love people, to care about them, in spite of their sin? Can we hold to the biblical standards and live a holy life ourselves without trying to legislate a form of morality that lacks God's redemptive mercy and grace? It is a challenge that all of us face. How do we hold this line of morality and holiness and righteousness and yet still show love and forgiveness to those who reject God's standards and his grace?

Look at Jesus' attitude and response to the sinners around him and compare that to your own attitude and response. He told his followers that a tax collector that beat his chest and admitted he was a sinner needing God's mercy was more holy than a

self-righteous teacher (preacher, pastor, evangelist) of the law. To a lady taken in the very act of adultery he said, 'woman, where are your accusers? Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.' He carried on a conversation at the well with a Samaritan woman of questionable reputation - she had five failed marriages and was living with another man, and yet to this sinful woman he offered the gift of living water so she would never thirst again. In fact, instead of to the Pharisees or the religious leaders, it was to this Samaritan woman that he first revealed himself as the Messiah and she brought her whole village to the Lord. It was another woman of questionable reputation that anointed his feet and head with perfume. Jesus let his attitude be known when he said to the religious leaders, **"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."** **Matthew 21:31-32** Just think, with his last breath he forgave a thief who was dying next to him on the cross.

I think too often the church is viewed as the enemy of sinners but Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. How can that be the case for us when we don't even know any sinners and besides, we are so busy condemning their sinful actions and behavior that we don't have time to actually get to know them, befriend them or even speak to them. It just might be they've never met a real Christian. The only kind they know of is the "God hates homosexuals" idiots from Kansas or the God is judging Haiti by sending an earthquake kind of Christian. (Please remember, if God is going to punish us for our sins with earthquakes, we need to all exit the building right now and get to a safe place.) Look how far we've come from the Jesus of the bible - the one who was a friend of sinners. I don't know for sure how to do it. I start somewhere by being aware of my own faults, weakness, shortcomings, my own sinfulness. That way it is harder for me to stand condemning others when I realize I am not exactly sinless myself.

I don't join them in their sin. I don't compromise my convictions, but I look for ways to let Jesus love through me and reveal himself through me. I know there is a way to truly love folks without loving their sin and for them to know that and truly believe

that. I think we will discover how to do that as we rediscover the biblical Jesus.

3. Rediscovering the biblical Jesus just might be the most exciting thing you'll ever do. You've got this religious picture of Jesus in your head. You've decided what he will and will not do, for you, for others, for the world. You've fashioned this image, created it from a variety of sources, some accurate and some not so accurate, but I challenge you to find the real Jesus, find the one revealed in God's word. Find the one described in the gospels: rugged, raw, truthful, troubling. He is like no other. You can't place him in a certain category for he cannot be categorized. He will not fit into anyone's box. He is greater and mightier and beyond all our imagination. To come to him in faith, to surrender our life and our destiny to him is to dare to live, to dare to believe, to dare to truly be free to experience his glory and grace, on his terms and not on our own.

He is not safe or tame as C.S. Lewis tells us in his *Chronicles of Narnia*. Speaking of Aslan the Lion, the Christ character in the story, Lucy asks, "Is - is he a man?" "Aslan a man!" said Mr. Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor beyond the Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion - the lion, the great Lion." "Ooh!" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." "That you will dearie and no mistake" said Mrs. Beaver; if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy. "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

The biblical Jesus is not safe. He is not tame. He is not domesticated. Mark Buchanan in his book, *Your God is Too Safe* talks about Uzzah, the man who put out his hand to steady the ark of the covenant and was struck dead when he touched the ark. Buchanan states, "Uzzah teaches us, at great personal cost, a valuable lesson about God. God is not safe. God is not a household deity, kept in our safekeeping. And - be warned - God's safety is not our business. Our role on this earth, be it prophet, king, priest, or bank teller, is not to keep the Almighty from mishap or embarrassment. He takes care of Himself." Buchanan continues, "The safe god asks

nothing of us, gives nothing to us. He never drives us to our knees in hungry, desperate praying and never sets us on our feet in fierce, fixed determination. He never makes us bold to dance. The safe god never whispers in our ears anything but greeting card slogans and certainly never asks that we embarrass ourselves by shouting from the rooftop. He doesn't make us a kingdom of priests, only a colony of Uzzahs. A safe god inspires neither awe, nor worship, nor sacrifice."

"But God isn't nice. God isn't safe. God is a consuming fire. Though He cares about the sparrow, the embodiment of His care is rarely doting or pampering. God's main business is not ensuring that you and I get parking spaces close to the mall entrance or that the bed sheets in the color we want are – miracle! – on sale this week. His main business is making you and me holy."...Mark Buchanan

Our God is not safe. The biblical Jesus is not safe. Philip Yancey borrows Lewis' phrase as well when he writes, "Icons of the Orthodox Church, stained-glass windows in European cathedrals, and Sunday school art in low-church America all depict on flat planes a placid, 'tame' Jesus, yet the Jesus I met in the Gospels was anything but tame. His searing honesty made him seem downright tactless in some settings. Few people felt comfortable around him; those who did were the type no one else felt comfortable around. He was notoriously difficult to predict, pin down, or even understand...Jesus is radically unlike anyone else who has ever lived. The difference, in Charles Williams' phrase, is the difference between 'one who is an example of living and one who is the life itself.'"

The biblical Jesus is not safe, but he is the bread of life upon whom your soul can feast and he is the living water that will quench your thirst as nothing else in this life can do. He may be fierce in his dealings and passionate in his calling to you. He won't leave you as you were when you came to him. He transforms and cleanses and renews. Walking with him, knowing him in fellowship is the greatest adventure anyone can know in this life. Won't you come to him? Won't you give yourself to him? Lose yourself in him and discover what life is really all about.

Get to know the biblical Jesus. There is no one like him.

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How

unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” Romans 11:33-36

I dare you to get to know the biblical Jesus