



The Jesus Now Sermon Series

We are living in an extraordinary moment in time when God is awakening the world through the reconciling love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. What if the Lord was already awakening you, your family, your church, your city? Are you open to His Spirit sweeping through your life? Because of Jesus, our churches, nation, and lives will never be the same again.

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I. Introduction

"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

This and other passages confirm Paul's commitment to a relational apologetic and underscore our need for the same. Such a relational approach to the Gospel is even more important in our post modern culture, where the prevailing question is not: "Are these propositions true?" but rather, "If these propositions are true, then what?" It is only as we impart our lives along with the gospel that this important question will be answered.

A cautionary note must be given. Sharing one's life with another person requires a deep, costly commitment because only as our *walk* matches our *talk* will we have an effective, contagious witness for Christ.

- Only as we impart His life and love in spite of others' faults and failures will we give witness to a Christ who longs to accept us (Romans 15:7).
- Only as we offer supportive involvement, caring concern, and practical help will we give witness to the God who bears burdens (Galatians 6:2).
- Only as we demonstrate compassion and comfort when others are hurting will we give witness to a Christ who is acquainted with sorrows and grief (Isaiah 53:3 NASB) and moved with compassion for others (John 11:35).

The supernatural and sacrificial love of God demonstrated through His people will draw others to Christ and bear fruit that remains. We must be willing to allow God to make the necessary changes in our lives.

How Did Jesus Present an Argument for the Faith? A Relational Witness

If we hope to see a child, family member, friend, neighbor, or coworker come to Christ, we must look to the One who embodies relevance and impact. If we hope to restore relevance to our own lives and ministries as we share the gospel with others, we must ask ourselves: How did Jesus present the gospel? How did He reveal Himself to people?

The answer is revealed across the pages of the New Testament. Christ did not just impart the truths of the gospel; He lived them. Jesus did not offer isolated rational arguments about the tenets of our faith. Rather, He consistently modeled the character and behavior that His teaching encouraged. Christ did not merely present a system of truthful propositions, but revealed Himself as Truth.



P-7 Expecting and demonstrating the supernatural as His spiritual gifts are made manifest and His grace is at work by His Spirit

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

“Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . .” (Col. 3:16).

Pastor/Teacher: *Reflect on your story of being “born again” and then share your personal stories of gratitude as you were drawn to Jesus and into the family God.*

“I am especially grateful for how God involved (who) _____ or (what) _____ to draw me to Jesus.”

Walking in the Light of God’s People . . . Through Faithful Engagement in Community (John 12:35; Matthew 5:14)

“You shouldn’t be amazed by my statement, ‘You must be born from above’” (John 3:7 NLT).

This discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus has personal relevance to each of us. It’s this experience of being born again that makes us part of His family, a shared community of Jesus-followers.

Just like Nicodemus, we have been challenged to embrace Jesus as more than a teacher and to receive Him as Lord. We, like Nicodemus, have been provided the opportunity to add His supernatural life to our natural life. It’s this miracle of being “Spirit-born” that unites us by the Holy Spirit to Jesus and to one another. It’s the connection of the born-again that creates true fellowship, a community of Spirit-empowered followers who embrace the imperative to “let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1, 2). The pursuit of revival and a Jesus-Now Awakening is for us, not a solo race, but for a community of Jesus-followers who co-labor with Him for His purposes and His glory.

Pause together with a partner or small group.

“I am especially grateful for how God involved (who) _____ or (what) _____ to draw me to Jesus.”

Celebrate together that His Spirit draws all kinds of people to follow Jesus! Celebrate that you can each be a part of all the great things God is up to!

In order to effectively share both our very life and the gospel, we must come alongside people in such a way that we look beyond their faults in order to accurately see their needs.

II. Sharing beyond Other’s Faults: The Zacchaeus Principle

In Luke 19, we read about Zacchaeus, who is anything but a saint. He is a tax collector who lies, cheats, and steals from his own people. He hears that Jesus is coming to town and climbs up a tree to get a glimpse of Him. But Jesus does the unthinkable—He looks up at Zacchaeus and invites himself to dinner with this sinner—the one hated by the Jews. Christ saw people as people. He saw much more than their behavior. Rather than focus on Zacchaeus’ sin or fallenness, Jesus saw beneath the deeds to the

underlying needs. He knew that Zacchaeus needed a Savior, and that he needed grace. Christ reached out to him at his point of need, removing the man's aloneness.

The story of Zacchaeus depicts what we will often find along the road of life.

- We'll find people expressing human imperfections.
- We'll find them after compromise, after failure, after sin.
- We'll find them acting in ways that we do not condone—whether they are our own friends, children, spouse, co-workers, or complete strangers. To what will we give attention to? Where will we focus? How will we react?

We can tend to react to one another's behavior's rather than ministering to one another's needs.

Look again at the story of Zacchaeus. Notice what Jesus does NOT do.

- He does not say to him, "You lying, cheating, thief. Get down from there and stop it!"
- In our own relationships, much of our joy can be stolen away by the tendency to focus on how the other person needs to change. "Why can't you be on time?" "Don't be so critical." "Quit telling me how to drive."
- We can tend to react to one another's behaviors rather than ministering to one another's needs.

Did Jesus know that Zacchaeus was a lying, cheating, thief? Yes. But notice that He didn't focus on that. Rather than react to Zacchaeus' *deeds*, Jesus focused on his *needs*.

- He ministered to his need for acceptance. "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."
- In that day, the most loving, accepting thing you could do was to enter a person's home and break bread together, eating out of the same bowls.
- It's what got Christ into so much trouble with His critics. He would actually mingle with the sinners. Jesus would accept the person without condoning the behavior.

Our tendency to react by confronting or trying to change someone's behavior is often rooted in a fear that if we didn't, the behavior would never change. This story in Luke 19 is testimony that we need not fear. Did Zacchaeus change? Yes. How? Not through Jesus shaking him and telling him to stop lying, cheating, and stealing. Zacchaeus' heart and behavior changed because of the miracle of grace. "Look, Lord. Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Real and lasting change comes out of a contrite heart, grateful for a God of unmerited favor—a God of grace.

Reflect on what you have done or could do to deserve His forgiveness. There's nothing that you could do to earn the gift of His Son? Every one of us must conclude: It's only by His grace. It is only God's unconditional love that provided the gift of Calvary and the forgiveness that is available to us.

Make a list of all the things you have done this week to cause God to love you *less* . . . Answer: NOTHING!

Make a list of the things you have done this week to cause God to love you *more* . . . Answer: NOTHING!

“ . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).



L-3 Experiencing God as He really is through deepened intimacy with Him

Walking in the Light of God's Son . . . Through Fresh Encounters with Jesus (John 12:35, 8:12)

“Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him” (Isaiah 30:18 NIV).

Consider the current challenges and struggles in your world and in your life. Are you losing hope in relationships, religion, or politics? Are you struggling at work, with your family, in your accomplishments, or your faith? Whatever your challenge, meditate on the Lord of hosts, who longs to show you grace and rises to show you compassion. Invite Christ into your struggle. Together, with other followers of Jesus, make a personal request for Jesus to show Himself to you in the midst of those challenges.

In the quietness of this time, close your eyes and imagine the resurrected Christ. He is excited to express His personal grace and divine favor just for you. Imagine the scene of Jesus rising to receive you with welcoming arms! Pause to picture this moment between you and Jesus. Now, with a partner or small group, give Jesus thanks for such an incredible blessing just for you! Tell Him about your gratefulness.

Jesus, as I imagine You rising to receive me with welcoming arms, I am grateful because . . .

I am thankful as I imagine the compassion in Your voice because . . .

I am moved with gratitude for how You . . .

III. Sharing Our Very Life and the Gospel

A. Ministers of Reconciliation

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God was making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Christ has entrusted this ministry of reconciliation to us, His church. God is at work in us, calling a hurting world to Himself. He is the solution to the heartache of our world, and because He is in us and we are in Him, we have the awesome ministry privilege of co-laboring with Him to see people reconciled to God and to one another.

When we truly express Great Commandment love through our lives, it will startle the world around us. Consider the startling nature of Jesus' ministry.

- People were often startled by the things that He said: “Stretch out your hand.” “Pick up your mat and walk.” “I and the Father are one” (Mark 3:5; John 5:8; 10:30).
- They were also startled by the things that He did, such as turning water into wine, walking on water, and eating with tax collectors.
- Most importantly, the world was startled by His love. His love startled the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, and the woman caught in adultery.
- The most startling expression of His love was the giving of Himself as a sacrificial atonement for a skeptical and rebellious world.

When we truly express Great Commandment love through our lives, it will startle the world around us.

B. Startled by His Love

Pause now and consider how startling it is that He demonstrated a love that was so undeserved! He loved us when we were unlovable.

- He was moved with compassion when, from His eternal perspective, He saw us suffering in our alienation and aloneness.
- His love led Him to a painful death upon a cross in order to make abundant provision for you and for me.
- Hear his startling cry of love for those who betrayed, tormented, and rejected Him: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).
- Listen again as He speaks accepting words to the thief by His side: “Today you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).
- Then, “He said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother’ from that time on, this disciple took her into his home” (John 19:26, 27).

We too, are the beneficiaries of His forgiveness and compassionate care. Humbled by such matchless grace, we have been made partakers of His love. But our world needs to be startled by this same love. They need to see a living model of Great Commandment love in action.

Walking in the Light of God’s Word . . . Through Frequent Experience of Scripture (John 12:35, Psalm 119:105)

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10 NASB).

Pause and consider the “manifold” or “multi-faceted” grace of God. God’s grace—His unmerited favor—has been expressed to you in many different ways:

- You have received God’s grace as He’s shown you acceptance during those times when you’ve failed (Romans 15:7).
- You’ve received God’s grace when He’s encouraged you when you were weary or disappointed (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- You have received God’s grace when He has supported you during times of struggle (Galatians 6:2).

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . ." (Col. 3:16).

Pastor/Teacher: Vulnerably share your response to the Lord's leading:

"Heavenly Father,

Please help me to be more accepting, encouraging, and supportive of _____

Please help me to be more accepting of _____

Please show me how to do this in practical ways."



L-5 Living with a passionate longing for purity and the please him in all things

A possible prayer for those who want to receive this good news of the gospel:

Jesus, I need You.

I need Your forgiveness and Your love.

I receive Your care and acceptance of me.

I yield to You my life, my future, my all.

I invite Your Spirit to change me in order that I might share You with others.

C. The Good News of the Gospel

"You will be my witnesses . . ." (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit empowers our witness to others concerning the good news of the gospel.

Passionate love for God and grateful acceptance of our identity as the beloved of God will manifest themselves in love for others as we share our faith.

It is good news that:

- God is love (1 John 4:7, 8), and He is caringly involved in all our ways (Psalm 139:3).
- We do not need to be alone. Christ has paid the price for sin (which keeps us alone separated from God and others).
- Christ makes available His gifts of forgiveness and life, in order that abundance can be ours both now and for eternity.
- "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Now pause and ask God: "How could I better express the glory of your grace to others?" Ask Him specifically about how to show more of His acceptance, encouragement, and support to others. Listen and be still. Allow God's Spirit to reveal the people in your life who need to receive more of His grace expressed through you.

After you've heard from the Lord, complete the following sentences:

I could better express God's acceptance to . . .

I could better express God's encouragement to . . .

I could better express God's support to . . .

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24).

With vulnerability and sincerity, share what God has revealed to you with a partner or small group.

Pray together, asking that 1 Peter 4:10 be true about your life. Ask that God's Spirit would express His grace through you, so that others would be able to see Him in you.

Offer a simple prayer, such as the following:

"Heavenly Father,

Please help me to be more accepting, encouraging, and supportive of _____

Please help me to be more accepting of _____

Please show me how to do this in practical ways."