

“Renegade Gospel: Discovering the Rebel Jesus”

John 14:1-7

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Today we begin our Lenten sermon series...this will take us to our Easter Resurrection Celebration Service. The sermon series...Renegade Gospel coincides with Bible Study groups during this season of Lent. We have 2 small groups after 8:15 service, 3 after 9:45 service plus small groups on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. See Barbara Odom, Discipleship Coordinator in the Multi-Purpose Room to be a part of those small groups, get more information, or to simply buy the book.

Now I must admit...the title of the book, Renegade Gospel: The Rebel Jesus is a bit unsettling. And to be honest it is suppose to be. On Wednesday with over 300 in attendance we, in a since launched this series. The message was entitled, Jesus: Radical, Renegade, Rebel. A copy of that manuscript is on our website, and also there are some paper copies of Wednesday's message at the information desk. Renegade Gospel? What does that mean? And why would we say Jesus was a Rebel?

We may have people wondering what is going on with even the logo of the “R circled.” That can stand to Renegade, Radical, Rebel, Revolution. It may shake us up a little bit to even use those words...it does me. I'm not sure I would like to be called a Radical, a renegade, or a rebel. However as we will discover...that is exactly who Jesus is. Aren't we called to be like Jesus? Or have we become too comfortable with church and Christianity?

Having grown up in the church I can picture Jesus as a very safe, calming, nurturing Jesus. For example let me show you some pictures that personally I think of when I think of Jesus.

Picture #1...**Sallmans' head of Christ**. This picture has been around for years and probably has been seen by many of you in many churches.

One of my favorite pictures is **Jesus knocking at the door**. Very calm, gently knocking.

Or, perhaps we have Jesus pictured as the gentle Good Shepherd tenderly caring for His sheep. **(Image)**. And you know...all of those would be correct and right...so how is it that Jesus is a Renegade.

Now let me stop and talk about Renegade for just a moment. Now please bear with me as I get a little wild and crazy to demonstrate a point. To teens today if I use the term Renegade they may think of the 2015 song that won an award for Choice Rock Song from X Ambassadors called **Renegade (audio clip)** Let's listen for a minute: Lyrics:Run away with me, Lost souls and reverie, Running wild and running free, Two kids, you and me, And I say, Hey, hey hey hey, Living like we're renegades, Hey hey hey, Hey hey hey, Living like we're renegades, Renegades, renegades.

Now to be honest that song doesn't do anything to me...in fact I had never really heard it before. But I question if we are to be living like renegades. Was Jesus in fact a renegade?

Now more recently you may think Renegade and think Lorenzo Lamas (**Image**) and the TV show that ran from 1992-1997. Now again...I'm not familiar with that show...The voice over at beginning of the show said, "Framed for murder, now he prowls the badlands...an outlaw hunting outlaws...a bounty hunter...a RENEGADE." Again, to be honest I never heard of that show until sermon planning. Renegade sounds so harsh...are we sure we want a Renegade Gospel and need to Discover a Rebel Jesus?

Now it may surprise you that I am also not familiar with another song named Renegade. It came out in 1979, reached #16 on the Billboard charts, and not too awful long ago was used as the Pittsburgh Steelers defense theme song. Yes the song Renegade from Styx. Tolerate me for just a little minute more. (**audio clip, Styx/Renegade**)

Lyrics: Oh, Mama, I'm in fear for my life from the long arm of the law, Law man has put an end to my running and I'm so far from my home. Oh, Mama I can hear you a-cryin', you're so scared and all alone. Hangman is comin' down from the gallows and I don't have very long. The jig is up, the news is out, They've finally found me. The renegade who had it made. Retrieved for a bounty.

Okay, no more song audio clips. Because I've always been a bit out of the loop, so when I think of Renegade I think of this (**Image...Jeep Renegade**)

However how many of you when you think of Renegade think of this (**Image of words Jesus, Jesus, Jesus**)

I have here my first Bible (**Image**). It was given to me Christmas 1962. I was just a little over 3 years old. I remember taking that Bible with me to church. Even remember when a boy named David Adams rip my page in the Bible. It's been a long time...but since Lent is about forgiveness I am trying to let it go and forgive that Adams boy.

When Sarah and I married, 34 years ago come July, we discovered that we had been given the same cover Bible as children. Mine was given to me by my parents. Hers however it says was given by "Your playmate Roger." She's never really talked to me about Roger before. Sarah we will need to talk later this afternoon.

Basically was the same Bible, however one had a zipper the other did not. One of the pictures in it was this one (**Image of Jesus driving out the money changers.**)

Now as we leave that picture up for just a moment I want to share with you that when our first child was born we were able to find a Bible that had the exact same cover. We thought it would be neat if mom, dad, baby all had the same cover Bible...ahhhhh. I glanced at the pictures and they were the same. Later however, I glanced at the pictures and noticed that this picture on the screen was missing from Ben's Bible that was produced some 20 years later. Sarah and I talked about this, though we didn't talk about her playmate Roger, and we decided that the company probably didn't want to portray the "angry Jesus."

You see we would much rather have the gentler, kinder, peacemaking Jesus. Interesting that this wild rebel type picture of Jesus was left out of the newer Bible.

Renegade Gospel. Gospel means Good News. So how can we have Good News that is Renegade. We have Good News that is Renegade because Jesus was at odds and tension with culture. In fact by the Pharisees and Administrative Board, I mean the religious leaders he was considered a heretic. He was bringing news, although it was Good News into a world that was not ready to accept what He was saying. They rejected Him and His message because it was contrary to what they were use to.

Here is the Renegade Good News...Jesus said, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one come to the Father except through me.” John 14:6**

As we keep that verse up notice what is being said. Jesus says it is not religion that is the way...He says I am the way. Whoa....that is a rebellious renegade type of statement.

Christianity is not about religion it is about a relationship with one who said... “I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life.” Not politics, not this earth, not even religion. Today we so easily hide behind religion. Did you know that the fastest growing religion in America right now is “no religion”? We call these people the nones and dones. None because they have never had a relationship with Christ or the dones because they are done with religiosity and hypocrisy and comfortable Christians who tell you what their against but do not reflect the true love of Christ. Somebody say ouch! “OUCH!”

Slaughter in his book says, “We have dumbed down what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ...We have turned *church* into a noun, a stationary building that we visit once a week (or maybe once a month for many of us), instead of a living, functioning, working community of Jesus-following believers. The church has redefined *faithfulness* as simply showing up for worship making a donation, and then going back home to our regular lives.” (Slaughter, Renegade Gospel, page 19)

How interesting that we are talking about To Go Day....and don't forget the church wide picnic...as we Go and Gather. We are to be a working community of Jesus-following believers. How interesting we are talking about Harvest America Sunday....where it is said “I can't do everything , but I can do something. What I can do I ought to do, what I ought to do I will do by the grace of God....Pray, invite, bring. Harvest America, March 6<sup>th</sup>.

We discover a Rebel Jesus in that He was a threat not only to the religious leaders but also the political people. His allegiance was ultimately to His heavenly Father, not Caesar. “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's” Mark 12:17

Jesus was a rebel in that what He said and did was not consistent with the old comfortable easy religious way. way. He says it's not about not murdering, but also about not being angry (Matthew 5:21-22). He said to love your neighbor” (Matthew 22:39). This rebel Jesus said He came not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28) He was not a status quo type of person.

Jesus was before Pilate and notice this conversation as recorded in John 18.

**John 18:36 Contemporary English Version (CEV) 36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom doesn’t belong to this world. If it did, my followers would have fought to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. No, my kingdom doesn’t belong to this world.”**

Jesus a rebel because His allegiance, His true home is not of this world. After all this Renegade, this rebel, this Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Son of Man. He is Servant of All. This Rebel is the Savior of the World.

Well, now preacher that is all good, but it just doesn’t sound good to be calling Jesus a renegade and a rebel. And well, it’s as if you are asking us to do the same thing.

Yep!!!!

Rev. Slaughter says, “Jesus did not come to start a religion. I doubt that he ever said to himself, “Okay, now I am going to begin something called Christianity.” Instead the rebel Jesus came with a renegade gospel to start a revolution that would be propelled by a countercultural community of people on Planet Earth. And you and I are invited to be a part. (Slaughter, Renegade Gospel, page 32-33)

Go ahead call me a Renegade. Xxxxxx I hope I can live up to being the Christ follower that would distinguish me as one who is deserting the cause of this world for the sake of Christ.

Go ahead call me a Rebel. XXXX I hope I will live my life with the active realization that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. I am not going to get caught up in denominationalism, politicalism, secularism---but I hope I can get sold out for Jesus-ism. He is the way, the truth, and the life. It’s about Kingdom things. Let’s focus on Kingdom issues.

Oh to offer my heart oh God completely to you. To say, “All I am is yours.” That’s being a renegade and a rebel. (from the lyrics of The Stand, Hillsong United) To have a heart abandoned in awe of the one what gave it all. My soul Lord to you. Surrendered. All I am is yours.

Prayer (From Renegade Gospel, Leaders Guide, page 20)

God of grace, we call ourselves disciple of Jesus Christ, yet we confess to creating a Jesus shaped by our own cultural, political, and religious expectations. We want to follow Jesus, but we are a little uncertain, and frankly uncomfortable, with where He may lead us. Open our hearts to where you would have us go, and what you would have us do as disciples. Amen.