

“Renegade Gospel: The Way of the Cross”

Luke 9:23-26, Philippians 2:5-11

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Guess what I’m preaching on? Xxxxx (Jesus) He has not only made a difference in my life. He has changed my life for the better. With that has come a changing of priorities, a shifting of values, and a new way of looking at things.

Here we are on the 5th Sunday of Lent. Our sermon series during Lent has been Renegade Gospel. The Rebel Jesus. A Revolutionary life. And because of Him a Redeemed life. Sunday night at Harvest America we had 5 people make first time professions of faith....from age 12 to senior adult. We had 6 people rededicate their life to Christ. Beloved this is Kingdom business. This is Radical, Revolutionary in that right here in this place people’s lives were change forever...for eternity’s sake.

We began our sermon series with the message “Discovering the Rebel Jesus.” We found out that He was a rebel because He challenged the current political and even religious view. Instead of placing faith in religion He said, “I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.” (John 14:6) There is one way to Jesus.

I happened to run across an interesting photo. Check out the shadow from the sign. **(IMAGE)**

Yes....it is the wondrous cross that casts a shadow, because through it the SON is shining. Are you with me? Xxxxxx

In the book of Philippians chapter 2 Ken read a powerful passage that we need to examine more closely. Sometimes it helps to look to see how other translations put verses. Let’s look at Philippians 2:5

Philippians 2:5

New Living Translation (NLT) 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Contemporary English Version (CEV) 5 and think the same way that Christ Jesus thought

So when we say we want to go The Way of the Cross do we in all things have the same attitude Jesus had? Do we think the same way that Jesus thought? Do we see others with Jesus’ eyes?

Yes this Jesus, who we are to have the same attitude as and think the same way as, came from heaven, He was in the form of God and yet lowered Himself, gave up His divine privileges and was born in the likeness of you and me. And then....get this:

Philippians 2:8 And being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Son of God who became the Son of Man who was Servant of All and died as Savior of the World.

The cross in itself reminds of the mind of Christ. A vertical beam and a horizontal beam. A vertical beam pointing to heaven reminding us to Love God with all our heart. A horizontal beam to remind us to reach out to others. Loving God! Loving All!

Oh that we might confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. As Rev. Slaughter puts it, “To make the declaration Jesus is Lord means an all in commitment to follow Jesus...” Did you hear that All-In commitment!!! I like that. Loving God! Loving All! All Ages! All In! All In commitment by all ages!!!!

In this Renegade Gospel chapter there is a sub section entitled: “Do You Understand What You are Signing Up For?” Are we really ready to proclaim Jesus as Lord....and understand what that really means?

A lady by the name of Edith Stein was a born in a Jewish family. She was an atheist in her teenage years. She was baptized a Christian in the Catholic Church around age 30. She is known as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She said this: “Will you remain faithful to the Crucified? Consider carefully! The world is in flames, the battle between Christ and the Antichrist has broken into the open. If you decide for Christ, it could cost you your life. Carefully consider what you promise.” (page 99, Renegade Gospel, Mike Slaughter)

By the way Edith Stein....St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross died at age 50....in the gas chamber at the Auschwitz Concentration camp.

Warning: The way of the cross has consequences.

As Slaughter says, “We have compromised Jesus radical call to take up the cross and die to our personal prejudices and self-serving agendas. We have failed to be good news for the poor and oppressed and have forgotten God’s requirement “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Can people tell that you are a Christian? It’s an old saying, but it still holds true: If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Now let’s look at some scary realities and perceptions. Thom Rainer is a church consultant, blogger and leader in what is going on in the church today. 4 years ago he wrote an article entitled Seven Common Comments Non-Christians Make About Christians. Now I am not going to read all 7, but I think it is pertinent to share a few of them. Rainer says this:

“Over the past several years, my research teams and I have interviewed thousands of unchurched non-Christians. Among the more interesting insights I gleaned were those where the interviewees shared with me their perspectives of Christians.

In this article, I group the seven most common types of comments in order of frequency. I then follow that representative statement with a direct quote from a non-Christian. Read these comments and see if you learn some of the lessons I learned.

1. Christians are against more things than they are for. "It just seems to me that Christians are mad at the world and mad at each other. They are so negative that they seem unhappy. I have no desire to be like them and stay upset all the time."

4. I don't see much difference in the way Christians live compared to others. "I really can't tell what a Christian believes because he doesn't seem much different than other people I know."

7. I wish a Christian would take me to his or her church. "I really would like to visit a church, but I'm not particularly comfortable going by myself. What is weird is that I am 32-years old, and I've never had a Christian invite me to church in my entire life."

Do you see the pattern? Non-Christians want to interact with Christians. They want to see Christians' actions match their beliefs. They want Christians to be real." (September 15, 2012)

He closes the article saying this: "Satan is the author of excuses. There is no reason to wait to reach those who don't know Jesus Christ. We must go now. The harvest is waiting. And the Lord of the harvest has prepared the way."

Have you talked to someone about Jesus this week? Have you told someone that you would love to have them worship with us? **(Business card/Love to have you worship with us)** Pick those cards up on the way out of church at information desk or side door.....it's a kingdom thing. Harvest America.....Harvest Pinellas County continues. Are you with me? Xxxx

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote these words from a Birmingham Jail: "If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust." (Renegade Gospel, page 112)

And has that much changed since Martin Luther King Jr. wrote those words? Is it not the very cry of scripture, God's word, that we must embrace the Savior of the World? We must live the way of the cross.

And Jesus said, **Luke 9:23 English Standard Version (ESV) "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.**

As we leave this verse up...get out you bulletin and I encourage you under sermon notes to write down 3 things.

To Be a Disciple of Jesus---you must:

1. Deny self

Deny personal control of your life and put your life in Jesus' control. Reset your priorities. Seek first His kingdom. Readjust your values.

2. Take up your cross daily

Cross was a symbol of death. Are you ready to deny self and literally die....and not only that...how often???? (Daily)

3. Follow Him

You must follow the example of Jesus and His teachings.

The way of cross is simple yet complex. 3 things. Just 3 things. Deny Self. Take Up Cross Daily. Follow Him. (What are they? Xxxxx)

We must put Christ first.

Rev. Slaughter puts it this way: “Saying yes to Jesus is an all-out, all-in commitment to go where Jesus goes, be who Jesus is, do what Jesus does, and give what Jesus gives for the life of the world that God loves and gives himself for. (Page 115)

He goes on to say, “Does my faith talk match my faith walk? Am I tyrant to live with a foot in two contradictory worlds? Am I putting off until tomorrow what God is calling me to do today? Am I offering myself to Jesus as a volunteer who serves when convenient or a servant who acts sacrificially?” (page 116)

Oh friends we have to put to death self?

²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

Other ways of saying this is: Whoever lives a self centered life focused on this present world will not find eternal life with God. Or...whoever gives up his self centered life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel will find everlasting life.(ESV Study Bible note from Mark 8:35)

²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

There is a gap between this world and the way of the cross. There is a deep chasm between us and God that can only be bridged by the cross. **(Image)**

I have never met anyone on their death bed to say, “You know pastor....I wish my business would have done better. I wish I would have made more money. I wish I would have done better in this world.”

But I have heard stories of the love that have for Jesus and the dear love they have for family. You see it's about relationships. Denying self and investing in relationships. Relationship with Jesus. Relationship with family. Relationship with others. Like the cross reminds us...vertical...loving God...horizontal...loving others.

And then we find these words of Jesus: **²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.**

It is somewhat easy to not be ashamed of Jesus on Sunday at 8:15/9:45. But what about Monday. What about Friday and Saturday night?

So...the way of the cross. What does that mean for me today? I know for me it means I need all the help I can get. It is hard to die to self daily. I need to remember and let the impact of this verse penetrate my heart:

Galatians 2:20 New Living Translation (NLT)

²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

He loved me and gave Himself for me. It is Christ who lives in me. And I trust in the Son of God.

I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back
No turning back

The cross before me
The world behind me
No turning back
No turning back

(Image/kneeling at the cross)

Christ is enough for me
Christ is enough for me
Everything I need is in Christ
Everything I need (from song Christ is Enough, Hillsong)