

Side notes for disciples in the gospel

The flesh works against true community. The gospel creates true community. It's valuable to know how the gospel creates true community. When we think about our adoption, our justification, our sonship, the fact that we are heirs of eternal life, none of these things are natural experiences and nothing in our natural world equates with these spiritual realities. This is why we must become fluent in the gospel.

And key to this is understanding the believer's solidarity with Adam has now been replaced by solidarity with Christ. And so much so that God has radically identified you with the Son of God so that His person and His work is the sphere in which your salvation takes place.

Obedience is a faith response to who Christ is and who He is toward us. In fact, the clearer our sight of this, the greater we are willing to practice self-denial, consecration, and sacrifice.

Ephesians is a book that features many aspects of our union with Christ, our solidarity with Him. *In whom, in Him, in Christ, with Him* are some of the most frequent prepositional phrases in Ephesians about our union with Him.

Now to sermon two.

The gospel is a corrective lens. We live in an age of electronic screen culture. We're saturated with screen technology and with social media. What we're seeing on the screen is presented to us as if it is *life as it truly is*, as if it is a trustworthy presentation of life's values, when it's clearly not. Only by meditating on Scripture, will our affections be informed of true treasure—that we might develop a worldview characterized by eternal values.

A friend of mine at a mega church is in charge of the counseling department. They have many certified volunteers that assisting with the counseling. About 20 volunteers help out with biblical counseling. My friend in charge notes that there are similarities between counselling sessions. As he talks to the counselee, he finds they have received Bible knowledge cognitively. Second, they've not informed their heart affections about gospel treasure and scriptural discernment. They've not fortified themselves for a fight of faith by storing up retrievable wisdom—the wisdom needed to live righteously unto God, in light of His commands and

purposes. Third, therefore, when a severe test or trial entered their life, they responded to pressure and disillusionment with a fleshly, sinful response. They made rash decisions out of their sinful passions. Now they want the counselor to fix the consequences.

What does it mean to be on mission, or missional? It's the very opposite of being a passive male. What will move believers to serve sacrificially and settle for nothing less than being on mission? The sight of God's glory in the gospel is key to this. We must consciously develop the eyes of our heart to savor the things of God. We must be moved by the precious things of God. We must see the present benefits of the cross in order to appropriate those benefits. And we must regard what is revealed in the gospel to be our true treasure and our primary pursuit.

Is it possible to taste and see and know God's holiness and glory without desiring that others become true worshippers? It's not. We see this element in extending ourselves in a missional way to reach others. Look at John 4:23-24 and 1 John 4.

The glory of Christ regularly displayed is necessary for the church to live upon Christ, as its Source Person. When His glory is not displayed and is not central, there's an objectification of things in connection with the church.

Will we manage our fallenness by the fig leaves of performance or by Christ and the gospel? When we were seeking to be self-justifiers, and that's sort of an instantaneous response to defend our intrinsic worth, it produces flesh fruits (Gal 5:15; 19-21, 26). Self-justifiers tend to bite and devour one another.

The gospel reveals the source of our intrinsic worth, and when it does so, it shows that our status in Christ is immutable, it's not easily threatened. The more I see that my identity is based upon a guilt-transfer, the more interested I'll be in living an exchanged life, of exchanging my meager resources for those in Christ.

It was Shakespeare who said in Hamlet, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

We are so ready to fight for our intrinsic worth through self-differentiation. I think of an experience we had in London where we were told, "Save money, don't go to the expensive sit-down restaurants, order a sandwich at a pub." Every pub we visited had a sign at the door, "No football colors allowed in the pub."

What is the glory of Christ? It is His Person and His work. It is the hypostatic union. It is the marvel that He has earned the equipment necessary to redeem us. That 'equipment' is summarized beautifully in the qualifications of a kinsman Redeemer: 1) a close relative, 2) not in debt but able to pay, 3) willing to redeem. He is the eternal Logos, the eternal utterance of God. He executes His three offices over mankind as Prophet, Priest, and King. He is the divine Shepherd who lays His life down for His sheep—and then rises to lead them to glory.

He is preeminent in all things: He has first place as Creator, first place as Redeemer, first place as Judge. And His resurrection is the basis of your promised resurrection, and His resurrection is the guarantee of a new heavens and a new earth. Hebrew 10 says a body Thou hast prepared for Me. Think about the humility involved in taking on that human nature.

To have seen a glimpse of the glory of Christ produces a response, namely that it is an incredible privilege to be involved in discipleship. For His suffering is my salvation.

All the all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, and therefore, He has the ability to make us complete in Himself and full in Him (Col 2:8-10).

"Your commitment to Jesus is a beautiful thing, but it will eventually dwindle down unless you fully understand His commitment to you" (Carlos A. Rodriguez). And we see His commitment to us by beholding His glory in the gospel.

Now lesson three, which isn't color coded.

To know God is to be saved (Jn 17:3).

"For God wills to be known by means of the satisfaction of His unchanging standard of righteousness, through His appointed substitute, our Lord Jesus Christ."

We grow in our knowledge of God by means of the gospel. We have an identity bestowed by grace. It's an identity through justification which has reconciled us to God.

The study of God's Moral Majesty, that is His transcendent holiness, is revealed in Christ's Person and work. This perception creates in the saint the desire to receive holiness from the Lord.

To be nourished in the gospel. is to be zealous about dealing with unmortified sin in one's life.

Christ has purchased our acceptance and favor with God. And now our walk of faith of love and obedience is how we live to please God.

The gospel produces our identity, and we are poured into that mold and shaped by the gospel through renewal, transformation, and gospel formation.

Those who are spiritual leaders are mainstreaming and modeling Christ's mandates. 1) We're to grow in our knowledge of the Lord. 2) Committed to renewal and transformation; presenting ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. 3) We are to be sanctified and imitating our Savior as Christ-learners—be holy for I am holy. 4) we are to obey the Great Commission; teaching others to obey all that Christ has commanded. Church leadership is always mainstreaming the mandates to grow toward maturity in Christ.

Our coaching of others is an extension of the Great Commission. So is our burden-bearing. We must assimilate the model that the Great Commission gives us, for Christ is our true Pastor and Shepherd.

By grace, we have received an identity that collectively produces a corporate identity. This is the opposite of private piety. We have life in Christ in common with our brothers and sisters.

Your response to your resources in Christ is your response to Christ Himself.

Grace is glorious because grace makes a believing sinner increasingly like Christ.

Next lesson, the El Paso manuscript.

Like a Texas tornado, the gospel touches down and creates the church. It sustains the church by its power, it binds us together by the love of truth, by life in the Spirit, by forgiveness, by life in Christ in common. So the gospel creates community and fruitfulness. This is easy to forget. Let us not objectify the church as a value in itself, for it is constantly sustained by its original creational source, the gospel (Paul Zahl).

God saved you by radically identifying you with Christ. And He did so that He might execute a massive guilt-exchange, a guilt-transfer. His death is your death to

sin. Your death to the law of God as a covenant, is by this same death. His resurrection is your resurrection to newness of life, and someday His glory will be your eternal gain (2 Thess 2:12-13).

A view of this ravishing glory imparted, is powerful to our discipleship. It grants spiritual sight to our spiritual eyes. You are created to be an enthusiastic spectator of excellence. Every day, your soul wakes up hungry. What will you feed it? What is the excellence that you will be viewing today?

Our natural carnal instinct attempts to carry our own worth and identity. We ask the question, what defines me? Am I defined by my friends' opinion to me, by my truck, by my tattoos, by my biceps, by my sport, by my success in my career? We are hungering for dignity, belonging, security and significance, We must repent of looking to the world for these things and have our desires redirected to Christ. Only as we feed on the gospel, are we discipled in the gospel. This must be kept before us and kept in view, who I am in Christ. This is gospel sight. This makes me battle-ready. To have spiritual life is to have spiritual sight. In fact, the better you see spiritually, the more you'll be able to be *all in* to Christ's calling. Battles are won at the level of spiritual sight. We wage war by the Word of God. But an important part of our preparation for battle is that we are saved to behold God's glory.

The gospel gives us our true treasure, our value system. The gospel gives us an eternal portfolio—where to invest the one brief life. That we might hear *well done, thou good and faithful servant*.

Second Corinthians chapter 3 says that saved people are the unveiled ones, able to behold the glory of God and be transformed by it. For regeneration has installed in us, the spiritual faculties necessary to behold the Lord's glory. This is to see Christ as He is, to be able to see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Our response to beholding this glory is consecration. Presentation of ourselves to the Lord, fixing our eyes upon Him who is our life.

We must abide in Him in order to bear fruit. This needs to be modeled before us in discipleship relationships.

Discipleship reviews and makes tangible some of the most important basics of grace living. How does all this really belong to me? How do I appropriate this?

Where do I start? This is to be modeled by the discipler. There's as much caught as taught.

How do I feed on these spiritual realities? That I am known by Him in a love relationship in which I am possessed by God, and He is my God and I am His child, so that every square inch of my life is defined by Him, and He exerts His eternal power to bring me from dust to glory.

It's amazing. Our relationship with God is defined by what He's done with our sin. Our relationship is controlled by that reality.

How we live as God's possession is by the principle of presentation. We give ourselves back to the one who has bought us by His blood. Before salvation, our sins separated us from God, but now, God has separated us from our sin. This is all through the work of Christ. See 1 John 3:8.

Our obedience is not out of courtesy. No, the Lord of the universe has an absolute claim upon us, and He is subduing us to Himself. He's conquering your self-will. He's bringing you low to bless you. He's humbling you that he might use you.

The gospel is the food of the church. It displays and exhibits and communicates Christ to us as our life, our completeness, our power, our status, our standing, our access to God, our righteousness.

The cross is about this incredible exchange, about the perfect fitness of the Son of God, matching our unfitness, so that His redemptive work is a perfect match for our ruin. His saviorhood is the perfect match for our sinner-ship. We are to feed on this and review it until it is precious to us as true treasure.

In Adam, the human race became washed up—guilty of original sin. But in our fleshly reasoning, we hope that Adam is not completely void of some residual merit, that some of his descendants may, by their performance, prove to be something less than totally depraved. And so, we are attracted to superheroes. We bring our sons to toy stores and look at shelf after shelf of superhero plastic Nimrods.

Viewing the glory of Christ is crucial to your sacrificial service, you must behold the dignity of His Person. If you don't see His infinite dignity, you'll be tempted to add things to the sufficiency and simplicity of the gospel. These are some of the consequences of being blind to his glory.

