

## REDISCOVER JESUS: HEART & SOUL

### Proverbs 11:24-25

#### Intro

Radical is a word that carries a whole lot of connotations, many of which are not all that positive. Radicals, by and large, shake the status quo. This, if you happen to like how you are being treated by the status quo, can be more than a little disconcerting.

O, who are we kidding, if the status quo is meeting our needs (and quite a few of our wants), then the last thing that we want to show up is a radical, because then that means that we are going to be uncomfortable.

Politically, socially, artistically, fiscally: radicals cause people to feel uncomfortable.

With that supposition in place: do you feel that Jesus is a radical? AKA: does Jesus cause you to feel comfortable or uncomfortable?

Because here's the thing: I think a lot of us have neutered the message of Jesus so that we are able to make it support whatever our version of the status quo might be. We pick and choose the things that we want to hear, and the other stuff? Well, we either ignore it or put it through a filter that, once again, has Jesus becoming the best 'yes man' that we could ever want. For many of us, Jesus has become a face of conformity.

And that is so screwed up.

Jesus was a radical. Jesus is a radical. Jesus will always be a radical. His radical nature should affect all of us differently (as all of our realities are unique), but Jesus should make us feel...uncomfortable. If he's not,...well...just saying.

That preface brings us to what the author of our Lenten devotional refers to as the 'heart' and 'soul' of the Gospel. It is in these two places that the radical nature of Jesus message is able to be experienced, and that is regardless of the socio-economic rung that you may currently find yourself upon.

The 'heart' of the gospel? Generosity (and no, I did not pick this out because we're going to be talking about Stewardship next week). The verses that we are about to hear speak to how those who are generous are able to be blessed...and that has nothing to do with some sort of contrived give in order to get scheme.

Listen to these words; reflect on what you have and ask yourself: how uncomfortable do these words make me feel? The scripture reads this way.

### **Proverbs 11:24-25**

<sup>24</sup> Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want. <sup>25</sup> A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water.

### Matthew 6:7-15

## Intro

The verses that we shall hear speak to us in very familiar tones (in fact, we've already quoted them this morning), and they speak directly to the 'soul' of the Gospel. Listen. Hear. Forgive. Where's your level of un-comfortability now? The scripture reads this way.

### **Matthew 6:7-15**

<sup>7</sup> 'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

<sup>9</sup> 'Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

<sup>14</sup>For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; <sup>15</sup>but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

### **'Rediscover Jesus: Heart and Soul'**

As the calendar turned from 2018 to 2019, there was a wave whose discernable force was able to be felt in multiple corners of the American culture.

Which is kind of interesting considering the physical size of its author. But I digress.

The interesting thing is, this discernable force started its way into public consciousness all the way back in 2011, to the point that it's author was one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people in 2015. But it wasn't until Netflix released her show, 'Tidying Up' that her presence seemed to become omnipresent.

How many of you have heard of the KonMari method of organization or its author, Marie Kondo?

Well, up until the turn of the calendar, neither had I.

But once the calendar flipped...forget about it! She was everywhere! TV. Internet. Print. Radio (even sports talk radio!). Her ideas and her presence crashed into the American consciousness and caused many to pause and reflect upon their lives.

Now a lot of people may look at her ideas and say, 'it's just a different way to fold your clothes? What's the big deal?'

Folding is an outpouring of her ideas...but it's not the idea. Her idea, which arises out of her Shinto beliefs, invites the individual to only keep those items that 'spark joy' and then treasuring each of those items regardless of the monetary value that they may have by treating and using them with respect that they may have.

How does this play out? Well, let's use clothes as an example. If you piled all the clothes that you have into one place, say your bed: how big would the pile be?

Because that's how her method starts.

Anyone feel uncomfortable?

Yeah, I know I did...and I know that the pile that I created was navigable compared to the piles that many others had (yes, I have watched about half of the episodes).

Looking at that pile messed with me, not only because there was a whole lot of stuff in the pile that I didn't need, but because of the level of importance that I had given to things...that were not that important.

The reason that I bring this illustration up is two-fold.

First, isn't it remarkable the level of importance and influence that we are willing to hand over to voices that we hear in the world? Again, I think that what Marie Kondo is offering can be incredibly valuable for a whole lot of people...but is she more influential than the one who showed himself to be the Son of Man?

The other reason that I bring her method up is because what she shows, is how many of us have been incredibly generous to ourselves (as we try and meet an emotional and, I believe, spiritual need which is never able to be met by the stuff that we acquire and hold on to)...which, when more appropriately addressed, is then able to be redirected toward being generous to others because we are more at peace in ourselves.

Jesus, the Son of Man, calls for all children of God to be generous. He, as Matthew Kelly writes in our Lenten devotional, 'wants us to astonish people with your generosity.' Yes, Jesus wants us to be generous with our time, talent, and treasure. But he also 'wants you to be generous with your praise and encouragement; your compassion and patience. He wants your generosity to reach into every area of your life so that through you he can love and intrigue the people in your life.'

Because that is the radical level of commitment that Jesus calls for us to take on. It's more than just a, 'I don't use this stuff...so here, you can have it!' mentality of generosity.

It is a life shift that has you looking around to others first...and not just waiting till a cultural wave shows up that has you looking in your closets in a different way. Knowing Jesus, walking in faith with Jesus frees us from the fear of not having enough, and inspires us to bring Christianity to life through an astonishing and perpetual life of generosity. Does that sound like you?

Are you feeling the least bit uncomfortable yet?

Should you be?

Well, if you were able to navigate the call to a life of generosity, the 'heart' of the Gospel, then maybe the radical call to the 'soul' of the Gospel, forgiveness, or lack thereof, is where you feel tied down to the ways of the world.

Because while some people get tied down by stuff, others get tied down by being unwilling and/or unable to forgive: they get tied down by emotional lodestones.

And the radical teachings of the Son of Man remind us over and over again that not only are both able to keep us from that closer walk with him, but that both can lead us down paths that head in directions that are the direct opposite of how Jesus would have us live with him, live with each other.

How radical is the call to forgive? Well, when Jesus says to Peter that you should forgive 77 times, or by some language authorities, 7 times 70 (that 490 times), Jesus was not just moving the bar in terms of how often we forgive (because Jewish law says that once you get to seven times, then you can be done with the people in question), but destroying it. The number that is given is, essentially, a play on words to teach the disciples that forgiveness needs to be the bottomless 'soul' of their faith walk: it needs to be unending. Even to the point of loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you. Because, as our devotional rightly articulates, 'choosing not to forgive someone is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. When we choose not to forgive, we turn our backs on God and the-best-version-of-ourselves.'

Why do I believe this statement to be absolutely true? Because, as an example, of how we are dealing with one another in regard to our political stances. A group of mainly church-going people has been getting together for, let's say the last 20 years. They have been there for one another, supported one another, cared for one another.

Just prior to the last Presidential election this group was gathered together enjoying each other's company when conversation got directed over to the two major party candidates. One person said that didn't feel like they could trust Hilary Clinton (a sentiment which was supported by another person in the group), which got flipped into, 'well then that means that you support Trump', which neither of them did. The disagreement continued to explode to the point that those two people had to leave...yes, that particular gathering...but even to the point that they are no longer welcome in that circle of relationship...which they had been in for years...not because they supported someone, but because they said they felt like they couldn't trust someone else.

We need to love, pray for, and forgive those whom we feel those and who actually have wronged us. We need to love for, pray for, and forgive Trump, Pelosi, bin Laden, Weinstein, child molesters, and people whom we disagree with theologically. The level of forgiveness taught is that radical.

Are you feeling uncomfortable now?

Look, Jesus did not say, 'pick up your cross and follow me' because the call to live faithfully, to live fully was going to be a cakewalk. Pick up your cross and follow me was said by a radical, who, paradoxically stated in Matthew 11, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Put down the heavy burdens that you carry and pick up the yoke of generosity and forgiveness. Jesus knows just how challenging it is to carry the 'heart and soul' of the gospel out into the world and that is why he promises to be with us, learning from him, especially in the days when we stumble and fall.

Exceptional generosity and forgiveness in what will feel like even the most of extreme circumstances.

These are the calls that are placed before all the sons and daughters of the Creator of all.

Feeling a little uncomfortable?

That's ok: Jesus can handle it. Put down the heavy burdens that you carry and pick up the yoke that we have been led to by the Son of Man. Knock on that door. Jesus will be waiting.

**After Sermon Prayer**

Holy and Gracious Lord, Your radical son has shown us in word and action the depth of the 'heart and soul' of the Gospel. Lord, spur us on to put our burdens down so that we are able to take up the yoke of generosity and forgiveness that will allow Your Spirit to flood into the world in ways that are desperately needed...for us as well. Lord, hear our prayer...and let it be so! Amen.