

## Message Notes August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

### Beautiful Outlaw: Encountering the True Personality of Jesus

Week 10: The Trueness of Jesus (John 7:18; Matt. 14:6-10; Matt. 12:46-50)

#### • Fake News

- I love music. You all probably know that, if you follow my social media, I think I post a couple songs to my story every day... Right now the two things I'm listening to the most are Lecrae's new album, *Restoration*, and a new band called "We the Kingdom." They have this song called "Cages" and here are some of the words:
  - "What if I got real honest? What if I took a risk? What if I opened up my heart and let you see in? What if I took my mask off? Trying to fit in, I don't wanna be a mannequin. What if I let my guard down? What if I took a breath? What if I wasn't perfect? What if I was just a mess? What if I bled my soul out? Given all I could give, I'm so tired of pretending. I'm coming out of my cages. I'm stepping down off my stages. I'm sick and tired of faking it. What I wouldn't give to be known."
  - Wow. What do you think of that? I love the boldness and vulnerability coming from a contemporary worship leader with a platform.
- Last week, Scott brought us a great word from Proverbs about *wisdom* and *truth*. He asked about where we get our news from, what sources we look to for information and truth.
  - We all live with this tension today: fake news is a thing. We don't know who to trust, because everyone seems to have a slant, a deeper motive, a hidden agenda. Everything seems geared towards getting the most clicks or getting you to take a side. It's totally overwhelming.
  - What is true? Who is sincere? Can *anyone* be trusted? Is there *anyone* who's for real, who's not faking it to get approval?
    - And we can blame the world, we can blame the media and the powers that be—but *we, the people*, are the ones who consume this stuff. Most people spend more time in the news than they do in the Scriptures. We complain about the fact that only the *bad news* gets reported, but it's the *bad news* that gets the most views! There's a saying in media, "If it bleeds, *it leads*."
    - What I'm saying is, we're part of the problem. There's something in us that helps feed into all this in our world. All of us project "fake news" about ourselves on a regular basis, don't we? All of us have things we hide; all of us want others to think we're better than we really are; all of us have made little compromises or told little lies to keep peoples' approval. *No one is really true*. Until we acknowledge *our* problem—the logs in *our* eye—we'll never be part of the solution.
- The Old Testament Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "*The human heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*" (17:9). Psalm 14 laments, "...*there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on all humankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one,*" (14:1-3).
  - No matter how much we point the finger at others, the mirror is still pointing back at us: we are all *crooked*. We all have our masks. We all desperately need grace. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone," right?
- *And then there is Jesus*. One of the reasons Jesus is so compelling, so disrupting, so beautiful, is that here, at last, is *one who is true*. In a world of Fake and False, Jesus is utterly True.
- Here's John Eldredge on the "trueness" of Jesus: "*Every era has its problems when it comes to Jesus. One of ours is this: having lost all confidence in the noble, the heroic, even the consistently good, we have come to celebrate the neurotic. Really. The heroes of our novels and movies are antiheroes, broken characters ridden with addiction and self-doubt. In fact, doubting—masquerading as humility—has become a condition for acceptance in our times. People of strong conviction and bold claims are suspect. We fear them. They might be a terrorist, or a Christian. Part of this is entirely understandable... When you live in a world rocked by scandal and exposé multiple times a day, you just grow cynical. Who is it this time—some politician, multinational corporation, the church?...*"

*We've reached the point where we presume corruption or, at least, that every story is tainted...Skepticism has become a virtue.*" (Beautiful Outlaw, © 2011 FaithWords Publishing)

- There are many names for Jesus in the Bible, but here is one we don't hear in the Gospels, from Revelation 19:11, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True..." *Faithful and true*. These are rare qualities in this world: how many public figures do you know who could really be considered *faithful and true*? Jesus is. And he stands out all the more in our world of *so many pretenders*.

- **False Self, True Self**

- Before we go further into this characteristic of Jesus, let's take a deeper look at ourselves, at how the Bible frames *humanity*. To understand the Bible's view of humanity, you have to go back to the beginning:
  - What does Genesis say? Humans, male and female, were created *in the image of God*.
  - Did you know that the word the Bible uses for "image" here is literally like a statue that kings would make to represent their rule throughout the empire, or even like the graven images made of idols?
  - In these ancient cultures surrounding the Israelites, they would skillfully craft images of their gods, then conduct elaborate ceremonies to "animate" the idols that they could be like representatives of the deities.
  - So, the way Genesis 2 tells the story of God's creation of humankind is like a counter-cultural narrative to all the gods we make in our own image: the Bible shows us that long before humans made statues of false gods in their own image, God created us in His image to walk the earth. Look no further than the mirror or the neighbor beside you to catch a glimpse of the image of God. Isn't that cool?
- What happened though? People wanted to become our own gods; we were deceived and we reached for *life* apart from God—and we proceeded to fill the earth with *death*. What is the first thing Adam and Eve did after disobeying their Creator?
  - *They hid. They were ashamed of their nakedness and they hid.* Humanity has been hiding and covering up with the "fig leaves" ever since.
  - We reached for our own life apart from God and something in us *died*. The image of God is still in there, in every person, but it's been marred and distorted and we are all born with this brokenness. (Have you ever wondered why there are so many problems in the world?)
  - In the New Testament, Paul says that we are *spiritually dead* apart from God's restorative work in Christ—we are all like the *walking dead*. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to see the Kingdom of God you have to be *born again*, born from above. When you accept the grace of Jesus, the life of God enters your life again and something inside you is restored, reborn. You are able to live the way humans were created to live again: in union with the God who gives you eternal life.
  - But even as we enter this new birth, this freedom in Christ, we still wrestle with the Old Ways that we've had so much practice in. The Bible says there is this war within us, there is an "old me" in sin and a "new me" in Christ, a *false self* and a *true self*.
  - In Christ, you are forgiven and free, you are a child of God, you are a new creation, you are being transformed. But there is a false self that needs to be crucified with Christ—we need to be transformed in the renewing of our minds to live the new life and become our true selves.
  - You are God's masterpiece and God is like the master artist painstakingly restoring his favorite piece that was lost and damaged, little by little until you shine with the original glory of the artist.
  - I love how David puts it in Psalm 51:6 "You desire truth in the inward being..." *You desire honesty in my inmost being*.
- For us to be *true*, we've got to acknowledge just how broken we are.
- For Jesus to be *true*, he just has to be *himself*. Jesus doesn't have a sinful nature, Jesus doesn't have a false self; he is simply *true*. And that's why he can be our savior and our model.

- **True Savior**

- Think about how the false self plays out in so many in our decisions and actions. Listen to what Jesus said in John 7:18 again: *“Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.”*
  - We speak for ourselves and we seek our own glory. We care so much about other’s opinions and approval because we’re still hiding, we’re still covering up with those fig leaves; we’re still afraid of being exposed.
- Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, was killed because of this—Matthew 14: this prophet who prepared the way for Jesus *spoke truth* to a very powerful, conceited, fearful man (a *really* dangerous mixture, by the way). John was thrown into prison for speaking out, because King Herod divorced his wife and wrongfully took the wife of his brother, the whole thing was corrupt. Herod hosted a fancy birthday party for himself, with important people. His step-daughter performed a dance for everyone, he got so worked up he made a prideful display of power: “I’ll give you anything you want, up to half my kingdom.” The daughter conferred with her mother, Herod’s new wife. She wanted to get revenge against John the Baptist for calling out this mess of a marriage, so she seized the opportunity and told her daughter to request John’s head on a platter.
  - What do you do when you show off and you’re caught in your own words? Herod was trapped: he feared the consequences of the people who supported John, he wondered if the man was a prophet from God, but the weight of everyone’s expectations were bigger than he was—he caved, and had an innocent man, a prophet, killed *“because of his dinner guests.”* It’s pathetic. And it’s an accurate picture of the false-self, of something we all deal with every day.
- Then there’s Jesus. He has no need to show off, no need for approval, nothing to prove, no false-self to hide. Here he is in Matthew 12 a public situation of his own, where the attention is on him. He’s in the middle of teaching, and not even his own mother and brothers can pressure him to part from his course. In a culture where maybe honoring your family was the most important thing you could do, he brushes it off and let’s them wait at the door, he won’t be deterred. It’s kind of harsh, Jesus!
- Here’s John Eldredge one more time: *“Jesus is simply himself. Playful, cunning, generous, fierce—not one moment of it is contrived. He never plays to the audience, never [bows] to the opposition, never takes his cues from the circus around him. He is simply being himself. I think this will help us with one of the confounding experiences we have reading the Gospels. The diversity of Jesus’ actions, timing, manner, words, dare we say moods; his sudden changes of direction, then his stillness—it’s hard to keep up with. It certainly is colorful, but almost dizzying, like a Byzantine mosaic, alive and shifting like the northern lights. Dazzling, but nearly to the point of leaving us confused. As soon as we’ve grabbed on to one dimension of Jesus—his generosity, his compassion, his honesty—he seems to turn it on its head, or us on ours...Perhaps the Gospel stories seem dizzying only because we’ve never seen anyone act like this before. Maybe what we are witnessing is actually one single quality, not many. Maybe Jesus is simply being true.”* (Beautiful Outlaw, © 2011 FaithWords Publishing)
- How does all of this hit you? With all of this in mind, listen to the words of this song one more time:
  - *“What if I got real honest? What if I took a risk? What if I opened up my heart and let you see in? What if I took my mask off?...What if I let my guard down? What if I took a breath? What if I wasn’t perfect? What if I was just a mess?...I’m so tired of pretending. I’m coming out of my cages. I’m stepping down off my stages. I’m sick and tired of faking it. What I wouldn’t give to be known.”* (We the Kingdom © 2020)
- If you want to be free, if you want to be true, if you want to come out of hiding, if you want to be known, if you want to stop being captive to the fear of others’ approval, *stick with Jesus*. Let the false-self be crucified and become who you truly are—who God made you to be. You don’t have to hide anymore when you’re with Jesus. You don’t have to live in fear of losing others’ approval, because the only one whose approval matters is with you and he’s *for* you. Amen.