

Gospel-ized Humanity

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[0 : 0 0] After I had finished preaching the whole of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount one Sunday morning in Sacramento, a member of the congregation turned to his circle of friends and said, maybe we better think about switching churches.

It looks like things are going to be changing around here. The gentleman was right, not about the need to switch churches, but about the certainty of change.

No one can hear Jesus' great sermon and return to business as usual. Some sort of change is inevitable. This is the case whenever Jesus speaks, but especially so when he speaks the sayings recorded for us in Matthew 5, 6, and 7.

Jesus' word not only informs, it performs, it transforms. Jesus' word brings into being the reality it announces.

The preacher on the mount speaks his Sermon on the Mount, and something always happens. I invite you today to join me in a six-month adventure, to join me in a six-month-long in-depth study in Jesus' brilliant sermon, which is to say, I invite you to join me in a season of transformation.

[1 : 3 1] No other sayings have impacted the human situation the way these sayings have. Whenever they have been taken seriously, the process of sanctification escalates.

Whenever they have been heard and acted upon, there has been a revolution in every dimension of life. I use the word revolution deliberately.

The preacher on the mount speaks, and something happens, something deep, something radical, something revolutionary. I believe that in the years to come, we will look back at the first half of 1995 as the period of time in which we as individuals and as a Christian community experienced a powerful release of new life.

Before I preach Jesus' sermon today, it is important to ask, what is it? What are we to make of it? It has been called the Manifesto of the King.

It has been called the Royal Family Code. John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite, calls it the Messianic Ethic. John R. W. Stott, an Anglican, calls it the Christian Counterculture.

[2 : 5 5] Helmut Tillich, German Lutheran, calls it life can begin again. In the years before my family and I went to the Philippines, I like to refer to the sermon with the phrase, living right side up in an upside down world.

Living right side up in an upside down world. That seemed to capture it for me. For Jesus' words do affect a transvaluation of values.

Jesus' words do call us to a radically different way of living. But during those four years in Manila, I found that all of those titles were less than satisfactory. I suppose that will always be the case, for how can one word or one phrase do justice to Jesus' brilliance?

Yet I felt I needed to come up with some sort of little phrase, however inadequate, which enables us to get a handle on, or as I should say, be handled by, Jesus' words.

I want, therefore, to toss one more title into the hopper. It is not as glamorous nor as immediately catchy as the others, but it does, I think, get at the essential nature of this sermon.

[4 : 08] I suggest we give Jesus' sermon on the mount the title, Gospelized Humanity. Gospelized Humanity. Both words are important.

The word humanity helps us remember that the sermon is not just about principles, which can be discussed and debated. It's about everyday human beings who incarnate those principles in everyday living.

I should say, everyday broken human beings who incarnate those principles in a broken world. Jesus, in the sermon, speaks of people who are angry with a brother or sister, people who are being insulted by others, people who are being taken advantage of others, people who are tempted to treat the opposite sex as an object for lust, people who are wanting to look good spiritually, people who are wrestling with where the next checkbook is going to come.

The subject of the sermon is not just revolutionary ideals, but flesh and blood human beings who have been revolutionized by the ideals, gospelized humanity.

The word gospelized helps us remember that these real people are the product of the gospel. You're going to hear me say that again and again throughout this series.

[5 : 30] These real people whom Jesus blesses are the product of the gospel. The people Jesus blesses do not become what they become as a result of who they were or what they did.

They become who they become as a result of the creative and saving power of Jesus' gospel. The word gospelized keeps the Sermon on the Mount in the original context.

Jesus first preached it right after He had preached His gospel. Separate the Sermon on the Mount from its context and it gets distorted either into frustrating idealism or oppressive legalism.

The Sermon must be kept in its gospel context. The question then becomes the question we need to regularly ask ourselves. The question is what is the gospel?

More specifically what is the gospel according to Jesus? What is the good news Jesus Himself preaches? Just before recording the Sermon on the Mount Matthew records Jesus' first sermon.

[6 : 45] It's one line Matthew 4.17 Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near. Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Mark puts it more boldly. Mark 1.14-15 Listen After John the Baptist had been taken into custody Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God saying Listen The time is fulfilled The kingdom of God has come near Repent and believe this good news.

Turn around and put your weight on this good news. The gospel according to Jesus is the announcement of a great fact. The gospel according to Jesus is that in His coming into the world history has reached a crisis point.

The time is fulfilled. The gospel according to Jesus is that in Him the long-awaited kingdom of God God's glorious rule of light and justice and mercy is breaking in upon the world.

As a South African scholar summarizes it in the coming of Jesus the kingdom of God ceases to be merely future reality towards which we are on the way. It has invaded and permeated our earthly historical existence and is in the process of transforming it.

[8 : 06] The gospel preached by and about Jesus is good news not only because it offers us forgiveness of sin and unconditional acceptance before the judge of the universe.

The gospel preached by and about Jesus is good news not only because it offers us the gift of adoption into the family of God and the gift of the indwelling spirit. The gospel preached by and about Jesus is good news not only because it offers us the gift of eternal life with the everlasting God.

The gospel preached by and about Jesus of Nazareth is such good news because in him a whole new order of existence is breaking into the old.

The kingdom of heaven has come near. A new world order which pervades and changes every sector of our life. The private and the public the religious and the secular the visible and the invisible.

The gospel according to Jesus is such good news because in him another kingdom is infiltrating and displacing the kingdoms of this world.

[9 : 16] The good news is that in Jesus a divine revolution is taking place. Now what does this have to do then with a study in the Sermon on the Mount?

It has everything to do with it. In his sermon Jesus is not legislating morality. Jesus is not simply laying down his new law.

Rather in his sermon Jesus is describing what happens when his gospel becomes a reality in human lives.

In his sermon Jesus is describing what happens when the gospel of the in-breaking kingdom of God gets hold of individuals and communities. In his sermon Jesus is portraying in concrete terms what repentance and believing look like.

What turning around and embracing his rule looks like in everyday circumstances of everyday life. In his sermon Jesus is describing gospelized humanity.

[10 : 19] Good news eyes humanity. Evangelized humanity. Kingdom eyes humanity. Spirit baptized humanity. Charismatic humanity. Born again from above humanity.

However you want to put it. He is describing humanity upon whom the light of grace has dawned. Jesus tells us then that gospelized people begin to develop new character traits.

They become beatitude people. People who know and admit their spiritual poverty. People who hunger and thirst for right relationships. People who are gentle and merciful.

People who are pure in heart and will do anything to make peace. Jesus tells us that gospelized people begin to develop a new righteousness. A new right relatedness.

A new lifestyle with new motivation and new ambition. For instance the gospelized begin to take words seriously. They begin to realize that to call a person fool or blockhead is just as dehumanizing his murder.

[11 : 22] They begin to realize that in order to have authentic human community yes must mean yes and no must mean no. They begin to have the power to resist the old humanity's temptation to retaliate.

When insulted they do not insult back. When slapped on the right cheek they turn to their assailant the other cheek also. They are no longer mere echoes of their enemies ways.

They do not give the playing field away to the enemy. Jesus tells us that gospelized people begin to no longer do spiritual exercises in order to be affirmed by other people.

When they give to charity for instance they don't let the left hand even know what the right hand did. The gospelized stop fretting and stewing about what to eat and drink and wear.

Instead their preoccupation becomes as of first and primary importance to seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God. God the point I want to stress and will stress again and again as we make our way through the Sermon on the Mount is that the character traits the right relationship the lifestyle blessed by Jesus are not the result of our own effort.

[12 : 36] They are not the result of our own effort. The Savior and King has not come into the world to challenge us to pull up our bootstraps and to change ourselves. He knows we can't change ourselves.

Rather he is telling us that when his gospel gets hold of us we cannot help but change. Which means then that in the final analysis Jesus commands our promises.

In the final analysis Jesus commands our promises. His word not only informs it performs it brings into reality what he commands. That's grace that's glory.

the foundational command of the whole sermon is Matthew 5 48 therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Frustrating idealism oppressive legalism no it's liberating gospel Jesus is saying that when his gospel finally gets hold of us we will be like the father.

When therefore we fail to be and do what Jesus calls his disciples to be and do it simply means we've lost touch with the gospel with the good news and instead of beating ourselves for failing and instead of trying to muster up heroic strength to achieve we need only turn around and let Jesus gospelize us again let his gospel do its thing on us.

[14 : 07] You see then that the fundamental issue posed by the sermon on the mount is the preacher on the mount. The real issue is going to be Jesus the preacher Jesus the gospelizer is he as good as this good word is he as powerful as this powerful word is the great fact he announces fact has history reached a crisis point in him is the future already breaking into the present in him does Jesus know what he's talking about the crowds which first heard him preach the sermon thought that he did they concluded that he does know what he's talking about Matthew tells us in Matthew 7 28 and 29 that after Jesus finished the sermon the text says the multitudes were amazed at his teaching for he was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scribes one having authority mark that word authority the word that Matthew actually uses here is the word *exousia* and it literally means out of being out of reality out being authority out of the really real the multitudes were dumbfounded because

Jesus words which though cutting cross grain against everything they knew nevertheless resonated with the really real his words were not frustrating idealism or oppressive legalism they were life itself thus E. Stanley Jones one of the great missionaries of our century could write this Jones writes the greatest need of modern Christianity the greatest need of modern Christianity is to rediscover the Sermon on the Mount as the only practical way of life he goes on yes we feel that the Sermon is trying to give human nature a bent it will not take it's trying to force on us something for which human nature was not made G.K.

Chesterton says that on first reading you feel it turns everything upside down but the second time you read it you discover it turns everything right side up the first time you read it you feel it is impossible the second time you read it you feel nothing else is possible now E. Stanley Jones had good reason to speak that way and to make that claim at the time he was serving in India as a missionary and he watched along with the whole world as a Hindu lawyer Mahatma Gandhi took Jesus seriously Gandhi lived out the words of Jesus which the Christians at that time were rationalizing and toning down while Gandhi was trying to take it seriously the Christians were saying be realistic Jones goes on to write a little man in a loin cloth in India picks out from the sermon on the mount one of its central principles applies it as a method of gaining human freedom and the world challenged and charmed bends over to watch the significance of the great sight it is important of what happens if we would take the whole of the sermon on the mount and apply it to the whole of life it then

Jones speaks a prophetic word a word for this last decade before the third millennium begins Jones writes our present day Christianity anemic and weak from parasites that have fastened themselves on its life through the centuries needs a blood transfusion a blood transfusion from the sermon on the mount in order to renew radiant health within it that it may throw off these parasites and arise to serve and save the world could you use a blood transfusion today I know I can listen again to the word of Jesus the gospel liser Matthew 5 6 and 7 much more than we can take in in one sitting that's okay just listen it goes like this blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see

God blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely on account of me rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you you you you are the salt of the earth but if the salt should lose its saltiness how can it become salty again it's good for nothing but to be thrown on the street and trampled underfoot by people you you you are the light of the world a city set on a hill cannot be hidden people don't light a lamp and then put it under a bushel they put it on a lamp stand and it gives light to all in the room let your light shine before others so they may see your good deeds and glorify your father who is in heaven do not think that I came to abolish the law and the prophets

[19 : 57] I did not come to abolish but to fulfill truly I say to you heaven and earth shall not pass away until the slightest stroke of the law or the slightest letter of the law is fulfilled whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven but whoever keeps them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven for I say to you that unless your righteousness unless you will not even enter the kingdom you have heard that it was said you shall not murder and whoever murders is guilty before the court but I say to you whoever is angry with his brother or sister is guilty before the court whoever says to his brother or sister is guilty before the supreme court whoever says to his brother or sister you fool is guilty enough to go into the fires remember that your brother or sister has something against you leave your gift there go your way first be reconciled to your brother and sister and then come and present your offering be quick to make friends with your opponent at law while you're on the way otherwise when you get there he'll turn you over to the judge and the judge to the officer and the officer will put you into jail and truly

I will tell you you will not get out of there until you've paid every last cent you have heard it was said you shall not commit adultery but I say to you whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart if your right eye causes you to stumble pluck it out and throw it away from you it is better that one part of your body perish than your whole body going to hell if your right hand causes you to stumble cut it off throw it away from yourself it's better that one part of your body perish than that your whole body go into hell you have heard it was said if a man sends away his wife he ought to give her a certificate of divorce but I say to you whoever divorces his wife except for the cause of unchastity makes her commit adultery and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery you have heard it was said you shall not make false vows and you shall keep your vows to the Lord but I say to you make no oath at all either by heaven for it is the throne of

God or by earth for it is his footstool or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king and do not swear by your head you cannot make one hair of your head black or white your statement simply needs to be yes yes no no anything beyond that is of the evil one you have heard it was said an eye for an eye tooth for tooth but I say to you do not resist the one who is evil whoever slaps you on the right cheek turn to him the other also if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt let him have your coat also if anyone forces you to go one mile go with him too give to the one who asks and do not refuse the one who wants to borrow from you you have heard it was said you love your neighbors and hate your enemies but I say to you love your enemies pray for those who persecute you so that you might be children of your father in heaven for he sends his rain on the evil and the good and he causes the sun to shine on the righteous and the unrighteous if you love only those who love you what reward do you have do not the tax gatherers do the same if you greet only those who greet you what reward do you have don't the gentiles do the same therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect now beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be noticed by them otherwise you have no reward with your father who is in heaven when you give alms do not do as the hypocrites do they sound the trumpet in the synagogue and on the street corners in order to be seen by others as giving

I tell you the truth they've had their reward in full they've been seen by others but you when you give alms do not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing so that your giving is in secret and your father who sees in secret will repay you when you pray but you when you pray go into your closet and when you have closed the door pray to your father who is in secret and your father who sees in secret will repay you and when you pray do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do they suppose that they're going to be heard for their many words do not be like them your father knows what you need before you ask him when you pray pray like this our father who art in heaven your name be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven your will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread cancel our debts as we cancel the debts of others and when you lead us to the test do not let the test become a temptation but deliver us from the evil one for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory now if you forgive others their transgressions your heavenly father will forgive you but if you do not forgive others your father will not forgive your transgressions and when you fast do not do as the hypocrites do they put on a long face they neglect their appearance in order to be seen as fasting do not do that when you fast noint your head wash your face so that you are not seen by others but seen by your father who is in secret and your father who is in secret will repay you do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves can break in and steal store up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal for where your treasure is there your heart will be also the eye is the lamp of the body now if the eye is clear your body will be full of light but if the eye is bad your body will be full of darkness and if the light in you is dark how great is that darkness no one can serve two masters either he'll hate the one and love the other or he'll cling to the one and despise the other you cannot serve

God and man for this reason I say to you do not be anxious for your life as to what you shall eat what you shall drink or be anxious for your body and what you shall wear is not life more than food and birds of the air they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns and yet your father in heaven feeds them are you not worth much more than they and which of you by being anxious can add a cubit 18 inches to his lifespan and why are you anxious about the clothes you wear look at the lilies of the field they neither toil nor spin yet I tell you that not day and thrown into the furnace tomorrow will he not clothe you oh people of little faith therefore do not be anxious stop being anxious saying what shall we eat what shall we drink what shall we wear for these things that

[27 : 50] Gentiles eagerly seek all day long your father knows that you need those things you seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God and all these things will be added to tomorrow tomorrow will be anxious for itself today has enough trouble of its own do not judge lest you be judged for in the way that you judge you will be judged by the standard of measure you use it will be measured to you why do you see the speck in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye how can you say to your eye when look you have a log in your eye you hypocrite first take the log out of your eye then you can see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye do not put what is holy before dogs do not cast your pearls before swine otherwise they'll take those pearls on the ground and they'll stomp on them and they'll turn and tear you to pieces ask and it shall be given to you seek and you shall find knock and the door will be opened to you for everyone who is asking is receiving everyone who is seeking is finding and to the one who is knocking the door will be opened what man among you if his son shall ask him for a loaf of bread will give him a stone or if his should ask him for a know how to give good gifts how much more will your heavenly father give what is good to those who ask him so however you want people to treat you so treat them this is the law and the prophets however you want people to treat you so treat them this sums up the law and the prophets enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and many enter by it but the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they're ravenous wolves you'll know them by their fruits grapes are not brought up from thorn bushes are they you don't get figs from thistles do you a good tree bears good fruit a bad tree bears bad fruit a good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire so you'll know them by their fruits not everyone who says to me

Lord Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one of my father who is in heaven many will come to me on that day and many will say Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name did we not cast out demons in your name did we not do many miracles in your name and I will say to them I never knew you depart from me you who do lawlessness therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and acts upon them can be compared to the wise man who built his house upon the rock the rains descended the floods came the winds blew and burst against it and it did not fall because it was founded on the rock but everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act upon them can be compared to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand and the rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and burst against it and it fell and great was its fall you need to gospelize us you need to work your good news deep into the fabric of our being that this new order of existence this kingdom might have its way in us and be manifested in every part of our lives make us signs to the world that the kingdom has come near praise and honor and glory be to you now and forever more amen to her is

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