

People Change with Jesus (2)

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Date: 21 June 2015

[0:00] Amen. And God, we ask that you would take our eyes and see through them.! Take our ears and hear through them.

! Take our minds and think through them. Take our mouths and speak through them. And Lord, take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you.

Amen. And please be seated. Amen. So there are all these professors' last lectures that give you one point, one thing that they would like you to take with them.

And I figure we might all be blessed by knowing some of the things. What if you were to guess at one point that's what's on my heart to share with you today? What would it be?

Stay the course. Stay focused. That would be really good. Beverly. Beverly. Yeah, we have the victory in Jesus. That is one of my core messages.

[1:22] Be a light. That's another of my core messages. Fulfill the Great Commission. Yeah, fulfill the Great Commission. You've got another. You're probably sick of me telling you, go out.

Go. The one that's on my heart for today, the one that I think summarizes all these different things, stay the course, be the light, fulfill the Great Commission, is that people change.

Again, people change. The core, the heart of the Gospel is that when we accept relationship with Jesus, we are changed.

When we present Jesus to someone who seems unreachable, untouchable, awful, like this demon-possessed man, Jesus changes them.

When we proclaim that I am stuck in my ways and set how I am, if we let Jesus in, He still changes us. Again, my last message, the one point if you're tuning out, is people change.

[2:44] But the change we want is this change that comes from relationship with Jesus. There is a spiritual battle keeping us from change.

Churches often set ourselves up to protect protect what we know. We know people for years and years, many of you for decades and decades, as we learned on our retreat.

But if we can't look at our brothers and sisters and go, how is Jesus working in your life today, setting you free of things that held you back in the past?

We've succumbed to the one who would keep us from changing, who would keep us from being who Jesus calls us to be. And settled for much less.

But in this battle, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[3:51] Or if it's something you don't see that you can overcome, I have said these things to you, says Jesus, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world. Or to tap into that victory message and people changing, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's gospel opens with this story of a terrible storm. And there are a bunch of boats out at sea and they are flooding. The waters are coming in. People are overwhelmed.

I feel the very slightest bit of that than what I have to pack up between now and Saturday. But in that overwhelm, in that moment, the people in the boat have lost sight of who they have with them. Or put another way, their eyes have gone on to the problem and they're afraid and they're perishing. But then they remember a key thing.

[5:09] Jesus is with them. Jesus is with them. They change their focus. They wake up this guy who's sleeping. How could he do that?

When my problems are so big, how can he have such peace? But they wake him up and he rebukes the storm, says, Peace, be still.

And it's still. And rather than being overjoyed, they're afraid. filled with a great fear, as Mark 4, 41 says, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

And yet that is our Savior who comes to us in the face of problems, in the face of overwhelming storms, in the face of things like the shooting in South Carolina, and gives an overwhelming peace that confronts evil with the messages some of you may have seen of repent and return to the Savior of your soul.

People change. So, you'd think people coming off this storm, storm experience, or this peace in the storm experience would come ashore going, Wow, we've got Jesus with us.

[6:41] But instead, this guy comes running at them. The scariest of the scary, running at them. Capitalizing very basically on the fear that they may not have let go of all the way in this storm.

See, Jesus just overcame the un-overcomable in this storm. He changed the environment. And this man, he's an outcast.

He's the one the community has gone, we can't have you around, you're screaming out all night, you mess up our sleep. To keep him from coming into the village, they've tried to chain him, but they've chained him so many times that the chains are totally ineffective.

He breaks free. So they confine him to a cemetery. Maybe he confines himself in this cemetery thinking of what I'd imagine are harsh words from everyone who's terrified of him.

and is cutting himself day and night, screaming out day and night, just in this place of utter terror.

[8:11] terror. And Jesus sets him free. Jesus changes him.

Jesus changes a storm, the environment, what wasn't possible to change. Jesus changes this man, this demon-possessed man. but again, what do most people do in the face of the really big hope that people can change, that environments can change?

in Mark 5, verse 17, they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. I was listening to NPR this week and in one of the stories, it went to great length to say what we tend to do as people, this is not Christian perspective, but just what we do as people, is surround ourselves with people who massage our egos and let us be where we are and fail to change.

And that's not Jesus. Jesus has brought us into a denomination where here we're overseen by Nigerians and the Kiwi.

Where we have cultures intermingling and intertwining that keep us when we pay attention from that self-absorbed focus in our own issues and problems and bring us to that place where we really can say, as Paul says to the Galatians, there's no Greek or Jew, no slave, nor free.

[10:18] Because when we get in Jesus, we've been changed. And then the most unremarkable statement in this passage, at least to me, is that Jesus, unwelcome, being told to go out, gets in the boat.

And then the unremarkable part is the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. wouldn't you? Wouldn't you want to go with Jesus when you had been so profoundly changed?

Wouldn't it make sense that Jesus would want to bring this great story, this great testimony right alongside with him so that everywhere Jesus went, there'd be be this man?

Wouldn't this man have every fiber of his being wanting to escape the looks and the comments of the people who had spoken poorly of him, chained him, thrown him to the cemetery?

And again, so simple to stay and well, he's stuck where he is, he can't change, let's leave him over there. But then the remarkable thing, Jesus did not permit him to come in the boat, but said to him, go home to your friends, he must have had friends at some point, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.

[12:12] See, when we're changed, we have a story. When we've encountered Jesus, we have a story. When our churches, when our friendships are less than that fullness that rubs us and challenges us or to pull in another scripture that's less than iron sharpening iron, we don't have any kind of story to share with the world.

They go, oh, well, if I've got to become exactly like you and that's the fullness of change, I don't want it. But in Jesus, people change and our change is so dramatic that the world looks at it when we do it right and well as, I want that.

I want what you have. And it's simply about that kind of story of how God has moved with you, has changed you.

So, and this reading ends again with this really unsurprising thing, the surprising thing being that Jesus said, stay home, but that's exactly what he does for most of us.

I get to go, having grown because of all of you, to a new place. They don't know what foibles and mistakes and messes I've made with all of you.

[14:06] And I get to tell stories of how I've been changed. In fact, how I would be totally unprepared to take this call if I hadn't had this time with you. But you all stay here with your friends, continuing to tell stories of how you are changed and how you know Jesus and your friends.

They know you. They see the change. They rejoice with you. And you keep working together to love Jesus more, to know him closer, to find whether you realize it or not that he changes you.

and in that change, for this man who went to the Decapolis, that's a ten-city region, for this man who told how much Jesus had done for him, everyone marveled.

And the same is true for each of us. when we remember where we were before Jesus, where we were three weeks ago when some facet of our lives was without Jesus, and we repented and turned to him.

Our change causes marvel. So let me pray. Let me