

Day One: Changing Our Functional God

Watch “Changed Lives” by Tim Keller

(Go to the Living FDFD website, week Five to download this sermon.)

Scripture:

John 4:1-26 | *Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. 4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you*

would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” 11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” 15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” 17 “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.” 19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come

when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth.” 25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” 26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

Meditate:

Conviction:

Connect:

Day Two: The Importance of Being Poor In Spirit

There are two kinds of people in this world—lost people and found people. Unfortunately, we have a tendency to think of people as good or bad. Jesus said it clearly: *“there is only one that is good”* (Matt. 19:17)—God Himself!

So with that in mind, we want to look at what it means to be poor in spirit. This is the understanding that we are sinners in need of a Savior. It means that we admit that instead of reaching out to God for rescue, we have tried to rescue ourselves by seeking what only God can give from things and other people. Without being “poor in spirit,” we will never value God’s rescue in Jesus Christ. So let’s look at what it takes to replace the “rival gods” that we had hoped would cure our fears and insecurities with the one true and holy God. When we trust in Him for TRUE RESCUE from a life of condemnation, we will discover that being reconciled with God is the first amazing step toward a life of healing and hope, a life where we are no longer dominated by our fears and insecurities.

So far we have seen that the Gospel is BAD NEWS before it is GOOD NEWS. Let’s review:

First, God CREATED everything, and the crown of His creation was the creation of man and woman. He not only made them in His image, giving them a very important purpose, but He also established a relationship with Adam and Eve that was built on trust.

Second, because God created Adam and Eve, He had the right to COMMAND them. His command was that they don't break trust with Him; that they trust Him enough to not eat from the forbidden tree. In the Garden, trust in God was demonstrated by obeying that one command.

Third, Eve was lied to by the Serpent and she influenced her husband to eat from the forbidden tree. Once they both ate they experienced something they had never experienced before, they were ashamed. **They moved from a life-giving relationship with God to SPIRITUAL DEATH.** Immediately they experienced the insecurities common to all who rebel against God's leadership in their life.

One of the most difficult things to do as a Christian is to convince ourselves and others that we are sinners in need of a Savior. In other words, very few people want to admit that they have a "sin problem." Most will admit that they have made mistakes, but to be called a "sinner" is just too much for them to handle. Let's face it, to admit that we are in rebellion against God is frightening. And it's frightening because we don't want to be held accountable.

This is **THE PROBLEM** for so many people. In order to be **RESCUED** from our **SIN** and its consequences, we must honestly say, "I did it. I knew that it was wrong, but I did it anyway. Will you forgive me?" This is what it means to be **POOR IN SPIRIT**. It is coming to the place where we finally admit that we bring nothing to God that would compel Him to rescue us except our brokenness and sin. In His kindness, He responds to our spiritual poverty with forgiveness and redemption.

If Satan was the one convincing Eve that God did not have their

best interests at heart, then I am convinced that Satan is continuing to lie in order to keep us from being restored to a trusting relationship with God. The lie that Satan tells today takes two forms:

1. "You are fine. You are a good person. You are, at least, as good as those Christians. You don't need to be rescued."

2. "You have really blown it big time. There is no way a righteous God would ever have anything to do with someone like you. Don't bother trying to get back into God's good graces, it won't work after what you have done."

Sometimes we forget that Jesus came to rescue **LOST PEOPLE**. If a person doesn't think they are lost, naturally they won't reach out for rescue. An illustration of this is the time my wife and I were body surfing off the southern California coast.

Without realizing it, we had drifted out from the shore to the point that a life-guard decided that we might be in trouble. When he swam up to us with his red flotation device, we were a bit embarrassed. We didn't want to grab onto the life saving flotation device since we considered ourselves strong swimmers who didn't need rescue. But he insisted, so we took hold of the device. That reluctance is similar to what most people feel when they are told that they need a Savior, that they need rescue.

So many people never embrace Jesus because they don't consider Him to be the answer (rescue) to what their **REAL** problem is. True redemption starts with us being

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POOR IN SPIRIT; that is, understanding that our REAL PROBLEM is SEPARATION FROM GOD resulting in SPIRITUAL DEATH. All this came as a result of our willful sinful rebellion against His authority. According to Jesus, the only people that cannot be saved are those that won't be honest about their sin and embrace God's kind rescue through Jesus Christ.

Being "poor in spirit" means...

1) We humbly and gladly trust God as our AUTHORITY. We invite Him to tell us what to do, what is true and what leads to a life of flourishing.

2) We humbly and gladly receive our IDENTITY from Him. We are who He says we are. The most essential thing that can be said about us is that we are IN HIM.

3) We humbly and gladly DO FOR OTHERS what He has done for us. We take all the love, grace, and kindness that we have received from Him and give it out to others, in His name.

HUMILITY and GLADNESS are the most common characteristics of a follower of Jesus that has moved from a self-centered life to the Christ-centered life begun by being poor in spirit.

Scripture:

Mark 2:17 | *On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Matthew 5:1-3 | *Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

Meditate:

Conviction:

Connect:

Day Three:

The Irreligious Substitute = “I’m A Mistaker”

Today’s Reading: The Parable of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-24 | *Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.*

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

SIN. It’s such an abrasive word; we rarely use it anymore in polite company. Sin makes us think of judgment and the idea that I might one day have to beg God for forgiveness. So it just feels better not to use the word. In America, the word “MISTAKER” seems preferable. The dictionary defines sin as “a transgression of divine law.” Sin is a willful or deliberate violation of some religious or moral principle—we did it on purpose. No wonder we don’t like this word. We would rather say, “I didn’t sin. I just made a mistake.” The dictionary defines mistake as “an error in action, calculation, opinion, or judgment caused by poor reasoning.” This feels like such a better word, because when we’re caught doing something wrong, we can say, “Aw, my bad; my mistake.”

But there’s a big difference between “SINNERS” and “MISTAKERS.” Let’s compare and contrast the two attitudes...

- If everything I do wrong can be dumbed down to where it’s just a mistake, then that makes me a “mistaker”—which means I don’t have “sin” in my life.
- If I don’t have sin, I’m not a sinner, and if I’m not a sinner, I don’t have any need for a Savior.

- If we're just a "mistaker," then all we have to do is - do better. But on the other hand, if we're a sinner, then trying harder isn't going to get it done; we would have to REPENT.

Here is the problem...

- We know that what we often do is intentional—that it wasn't a mistake.
- The guilt we feel is not appropriate if what I did was a mistake, but it is appropriate for a sin. If there was no sin, and we are not a sinner, and there's no need for a Savior, where is all that guilt coming from?

The people who wanted to justify their sin (mistaker) did not like Jesus, because he made them feel so bad, while the people who knew they were sinners loved him. Why? Because they had taken an honest

Recognizing our sin paves the way to restoration and redemption

look in the mirror. In Matthew 5:17 (*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."*), Jesus insists he did not

come to dumb anything down or lower the bar of the Law. Instead, He came to fulfill all that was taught in the Old Testament. This was the way Christ would become OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. He lived the life that we should have lived. We now spend eternity with God based on His moral record, not our own.

In Matthew 5:19 (*"Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the*

kingdom of heaven."), we see Jesus raising the standard by explaining that our heart attitude is just as bad as our actions.

- Jesus equates murdering someone with just thinking about murdering them.
- Jesus calls every man who's ever looked on a woman lustfully an adulterer.

If we understand that these are the standards, the moral checklist, that we need to achieve in order to get into heaven, none of us are going to be there! Jesus wanted all of us to know that obedience to the Law would never save us—He would save us. He needed to preach the Sermon on the Mount in order to convince "good people" (Pharisees, etc.) that they are sinners in need of a Savior. When we embrace this reality, it is really GOOD NEWS. The GOSPEL is this: God, in the person of Jesus lived the life we couldn't live and died the death we should have died. In other words, He took our place. He took the proverbial bullet for us.

Message One: We're sinners; and we're in trouble.

Message Two: God loves sinners and sent a Savior to rescue us from that trouble.

It is worth noting that the prodigal son doesn't say, *"I made a few mistakes; I'm young and stupid; I hope you can overlook the stuff I did."* Instead, he says, *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you"* (v. 21). The Father, in great grace, embraces him and celebrates his return immediately. The moral of the story: the sooner you and I embrace our sinfulness, the sooner

you and I are candidates for God's grace. Jesus came to bridge the gap created by our sin—not our unintentional mistakes, but our sin. Recognizing our sin paves the way to restoration and redemption. Jesus isn't put off by your sin. He's ready to forgive your sin and restore God's relationship with you.

Scripture:

Romans 3:23 | ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23 | For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Meditate:

Conviction:

Connect:

Day Four: The Religious Substitute = “I’m Owed”

Today’s Reading:

Luke 15:25-32 | *Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’*

28 *“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’*

31 *“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”*

Yesterday you read the story Jesus told about the lost son who came to his senses and asked his father for forgiveness. That son understood his lostness quite well. But there is another son, the older brother. His story has just as much to say to us. In fact, to the original listeners of this story, the religious leaders and Pharisees, Jesus’ point was personal;

they were just as lost as the younger brother. Jesus recognized that it was easy for the younger brother to understand his lostness, but not so for the RELIGIOUS LOST - people like the Pharisees.

Some characteristics of an “Older Brother” or “The Religious Lost” are:

1) They think God will save them because of their moral goodness.

The older brother thought that his father owed him because of his obedience. He wasn't like his younger brother who openly rebelled..

2) They look down on the “losers” who can't control their impulses and make a wreck of their lives. The older brother looked down on his younger brother because he felt MORALLY SUPERIOR to him. He was proud of his righteous behavior.

3) Their goal is not to honor God with their life, but to get from God what they feel He owes them (their inheritance). They obey in order to obligate God, not

from a heart of gratitude. The older brother didn't really love the father, HE LOVED THE FATHER'S MONEY. Therefore, he was just as lost as his younger brother. He was angry at his father for killing the fatted calf and throwing a barbecue

to celebrate his brother's return home. The reason for his anger at his father's kindness and generosity was that it was going to cost him personally. All the money spent on the celebration was now not going to be his. He felt that he had a right to all of the estate; now that amount would be shrunk. He felt that all the younger brother left behind when he ran off was now HIS inheritance. The idea of a lavish party for someone like his younger brother—someone who was going to reduce his net worth—was unacceptable to him.

The reasoning behind this attitude is consistent to RELIGION. Religious Christians think, “If I do all the right things, the Father is obligated to give to me what is OWED to me.” In the older brother's case, it was land and money. In the case of a religious person, what is OWED could be health, prosperity, great relationships, or any number of other things that are called “blessings.”

They are angry when those that they think deserve punishment get grace. Therefore, any kindness to the younger brother, who had already diminished the estate, was seen as a betrayal. The kindness of the father to the younger son was a violation to what the older brother thought to be fair. He wanted justice for all because he thought that he would win in that world.

It is important that we understand that Jesus, and all that is found in a relationship with Him, is our reward and blessing. Too often Christians have fallen in love with the gifts instead of the giver. It was clear that the Younger Brother didn't love the father as he should. After all, asking for his inheritance early was the same thing as saying to his father, “I wish you were dead.” On the surface, it looks as if the Older

NOTE | I invite you to go to the Appendix for a discussion of The Old Covenant vs. The New Covenant. Many Christians do not understand that BLESSING was promised to Israel for faithfulness for a limited amount of time and for a very specific reason. Nor do they understand that the Mosaic Covenant was repealed and replaced by the New Covenant. When Jesus held up the Cup of the New Covenant at the Last Supper, he was proclaiming that there was now a new arrangement with the people of God.

Brother was the GOOD ONE. After all, he continued to work for his father and did not spend the family money on wine, women, and song. But when the Younger Brother returned, and the Older Brother refused to celebrate, that was the same level of disrespect for the father that his Younger Brother had shown. Now the true colors of the Older Brother shone through —He was OWED.

Take a look at Ephesians 1:3: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”*

1) No longer did would God bless a NATION.

2) No longer were blessings MATERIAL.

3) The moment we placed our faith in Christ we would enter into a blessed life. There is nothing we can do to get MORE BLESSED since we WERE BLESSED in Him.

So, none of us should ever think like the Older Brother—“If I’m good enough, God will bless me.” Everything we do should be done out of delight and gratitude for what God has already done for us in Christ Jesus.

Scripture:

Ephesians 1:3 | *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Meditate:

Conviction:

Connect:
