



**Back to the Bible Daily Program #00494**

**Message Title: Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing pt. 2**

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**Original: BC – While Going**

While going, what are we to do? The commandment is to make disciples. Now, it's very important to notice. The text does not say make converts. It's make disciples. That's a very important distinction. What do you understand the mission to be will directly affect your methodology.

When it's a presentation, when it's making converts, it's in, out, presentation made back to my comfortable life. Discipleship is we're going to walk this together and it's going to probably be pretty messy. Once we understand it to be discipleship, then we have to make sure that the main thing is the main thing.

Now you're thinking, what does that mean? Here's what it means. The main thing is Jesus. Let's go back to a discussion we had out of the book of Proverbs, about Shalom. Shalom, kind of a complicated Hebrew word, but we defined it as the idea of mutual flourishing, the idea of wholeness that all of us together flourish, and I suggested that at the end of the day, the overwhelming majority of people in a community actually want that. We may have different ideas about how to get there, but that's really what we want for our community to deal with the problems that affect us all and to create a community where we all flourish. But do you see Shalom as the goal or do you see it as a reward? How you answer that question will dramatically affect your strategy.

Shalom is not the goal. Shalom is a reward. It's the outflow of people's lives who have been radically changed by the power of Jesus. That's how you get to Shalom. Which means if at any point my conversations with people around anything, including politics, creates an environment where that person is less likely to listen to the message of Jesus is a strategic mistake.

I think some Christians are more passionate about their politics than they are about Jesus. It's what they think about. It's what they focus on. It's what they talk about and it's what they create conflict over. You literally have people in our community that hate each other. We simply do not have the ability to come together and create Shalom and solve our problems because we hate each other over this toxic thing that has become politics. And at some point, somebody has to say, that's enough. There's got to be a better way. And why wouldn't that be the church? Why wouldn't that be the church? Why can't we decide, that we don't have to correct everybody. We don't have to fix everybody. We don't have to argue with everybody. Every time somebody says something that doesn't line up with our thinking, we don't have to argue about that. We don't have to fix it. We don't have to correct it.

We tend to think we need to take our stand, but you have to ask yourself, what is that accomplishing? What does that really mean? If at the end of the day, I've just created conflict, I've created a barrier to the one hope that can bring about the change that we long for. I think it

takes a tremendous amount of pressure off, that with my neighbors, with the people that go to school with, with my coworkers. I don't have to constantly correct them. I don't have to fix them. I don't have to straighten them out. I don't have to constantly have these conflicts because the reality is until they know Jesus, they're never going to see it from God's perspective. And the only thing that really matters at that point is to create an environment where we can have a very loving, compassionate conversation about Jesus. Because at the end of the day, Shalom is the reward of lives that have been changed by the power of Jesus.

When we begin to understand it that way, we begin to rethink how we interact with people, what conversations we have, what ultimately matters, what is the main thing? Now, I know there's going to be people that would say, but Bryan, you don't understand. There's some really important issues here. I mean, we're talking about abortion and we're talking about marriage and we're talking about poverty and we're talking about sex trafficking. We're talking about all of these things that concern us. I would be the first one to say, I totally agree. I totally agree. And that's why it really matters that we get this right because the only way you change those things is if people experience change through the power of Jesus. Cultures are changed one person at a time, and when cultures change, communities change, governments change. It's the route to Shalom.

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When God became flesh and walked among us, what was the mission? He entered into an environment dominated by the Roman government, a government far more oppressive, more evil, more immoral, more unfair, more abusive than any government we've experienced. And yet what you don't see is Jesus crusading against the government. As a matter of fact, when he had his chances, he actually said, give to Caesar what's Caesar's. It's the right thing to do and to give to God what is God's. Now, some would try to make the case that Jesus was very political because of his exchanges with the Pharisees, who in a sense, were political leaders as well as religious leaders. But yet if you go back and look at every exchange Jesus had with them, it was not political in nature. It was theological in nature. It was about how they have corrupted the view of God, how they have corrupted the scriptures, and it was about cultivating a right view of God. That was the nature of all those debates.

If, in the Jewish culture you could identify the two top categories of offensive sinners, the bottom of the barrel, one would certainly have been the prostitutes. The culture already had a very low view of women. Add to that sexual immorality and prostitution. They were the bottom of the barrel. And yet it's so interesting to me that Jesus, God in the flesh, perfect in his holiness, was so attractive and winsome to those who were considered to be the worst of the worst. Rather than running and hiding from Jesus, they couldn't get enough of him and they were continually crashing through social barriers, religious barriers to sit at the feet of Jesus, which is exactly what happens in this story.

Pick it up in verse 36, "Now, one of the Pharisees was requesting him to dine with him and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table, and there was a woman in this city who was a sinner. And when she learned that he was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume and standing behind him at his feet weeping. She began to wet his feet with her tears and kept wiping them with the hair of her head and kissing his feet and anointed them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisees who had invited him saw this, he said

to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching him that she is a sinner."

No question the reference there is to a first century prostitute and you just can't really imagine how many religious and social barriers she crashed through in order to get to the feet of Jesus. And yet Jesus does not give her a lecture. He receives her. It's so interesting that Jesus was so, uh, so desirable. So winsome that she shall long to be with him, if there was ever anyone who was actually holier than now, it was Jesus. He was.

When people in our community sin, we don't like it, but it's not personal. They're not sinning against me personally. For Jesus, it was! Every sin is ultimately sin against God. It literally was personal! And yet rather than Jesus sending her away, he responds to her with love and kindness and compassion and for whatever reason, she believed Jesus to be a safe person and held out the hope that Jesus had, that she had been longing for her whole life. The Pharisee is so upset by this that he reasons in his mind that there's no way this guy is a prophet because if he was a prophet, he would know what kind of a person she is, and he would never allow this. He doesn't even have a category to comprehend the possibility that Jesus could actually be a prophet, that Jesus could actually know, and Jesus is still allowing her to touch him. It just was so beyond the radar that Jesus could have known that and still somehow it was acceptable.

Jesus enters into a conversation with the Pharisees. I want to pick it up again then in verse 48, "Then he said to her, your sins have been forgiven. Those who were reclining at the table with him began to say to themselves, who is this man who even forgives sins? And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace." So here's the question. This is a social problem. How do you stop prostitution? Answer: One prostitute at a time, experiencing a deeply meaningful saving relationship with Jesus. That is the beginning of how you change a culture, how you change a community, how you begin to take one step toward Shalom.

The second story is in Luke Chapter 19 the second category of most offensive to the first century Jew would have been the tax collectors. As a matter of fact, often there's a reference to sinners and tax collectors. It's like sinners or this category. Tax collectors are in their own category. The worst of the worst would have been the chief tax collectors. In essence, they were the most successful. To be a Jewish tax collector, you worked for the Roman government and you basically then betrayed your own people by squeezing a tax out of them to give to the Roman government. You also extorted more from your own people above and beyond what was required, and that's what you lived on. That's how you made your living. So virtually the richer you were as a tax collector, the more money you extorted out of your own people. It's hard to describe how hated these people were by first century Jews.

Verse One, "He entered Jericho and was passing through and there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see him for, he was about to pass through that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry, and come down for today. I must stay at your house. And he hurried and came down and received him gladly. And when they saw it", who's they? Probably everybody else, "When they saw it, they all

began to grumble saying he's gone to be the guest of a man who was a sinner. Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "behold Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." And Jesus said to him today, salvation has come to this house because he too is a son of Abraham, for the son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost."

Zacchaeus climbs up into a tree. I think over the years we've become so fixated on Zacchaeus size that he was a wee little man that we missed the whole point of the story. The story is not that he's short. The story is that he was a tax collector and he was a sinner and that people hated him. When the text says he was rich, it saying he was rich at their expense, they just virtually hated this man. And so when Jesus invited himself to dinner, which in a first century culture was a high level of relationship. They grumbled, and yet what does Zacchaeus do? He begins to give back all of the money he has taken. He begins to pay back those whom he has cheated and defrauded, he begins to care for the poor. He begins to bring back Shalom. Why? Because he had a meaningful encounter with the Jesus who saved his soul. How do you clean up a corrupt tax system in first century Judaism? Answer: One tax collector at a time. As Zacchaeus began to bring back Shalom to his community.

The only way anything of significance will ever change is one sinner at a time, and anything that we do or say, that creates a barrier to having a meaningful conversation with someone else about the Jesus who has saved my life is a strategic error, and it's disobedience to the mission we've been given. Over the years it's been common for people to display the letters. W, W, J. D. What would Jesus do? What would Jesus do? Jesus would do just what he did, seek and to save those who are lost. That is the main thing that we as the people of God have been called to.

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Cara: Bryan, you talked today about not always correcting others, not getting wrapped up in conversations about politics. How do we skirt the issue of politics and bring that conversation back to Jesus?

Bryan: Yeah. So very carefully. You know, we've become such an angry culture and politics has become so toxic that people in workplaces and neighborhoods hate each other just because they're on different sides of political issues. So when you think about try to advance the gospel, that's not really helpful that I'm getting in heated conversations with my neighbors when I'm supposed to be reaching them with the Gospel.

Bryan: So I think one of the things is helpful is, is just not to get sucked into that, but also to try to find that common ground. So, a lot of people want the same thing. They just have really different opinions about how to get there. But everybody eventually wants, they want safety, they want to be loved, they want to love a, there's core things about us because we are people made in the image of God. So lots of questions. Why do you think that, why do you believe that? Uh, but I think sometimes we just have to stay out of it. Sometimes there's wisdom in just keeping our mouths shut. It's interesting how many times in proverbs it tells us that if we're wise, sometimes we just keep our mouths closed and I think you have good discernment to know this is going down a bad path. Starting to heat up and put the brakes on it and getting out of it because it's not going to accomplish anything good. I think we as Christians have to be way more

thoughtful about this stuff or, or we're compromising the gospel cause we want to, we want to spew forth our political opinion.

Arnie: I'm noticing with older people, they spend a lot of time listening to these news shows and it just sucks you in. And it's so much easier to talk politics versus talking about Jesus but once you go down the politics road it really doesn't promote the Gospel.

Bryan: The enemy's very clever. And you know, 24 hour news cycle means they have to create drama. And I don't think that's been a good thing for our culture. And they have a vested interest in making everybody mad and as a result, yeah, people sit and they feed on that all day long and they end up genuinely disliking even hating people that they're supposed to be reaching with the Gospel. There's something about that that has to be rethought.

Bryan: And I figured out years ago, if I feed on all of these things that rile people up than I get in the frame of mind where I pop off, right, what I shouldn't, and I don't want to do that. So I'm really cautious about what I allow my soul to take in.

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