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Sermon

Conversations that Connect: One mouth to speak with

Luke 15:25-35

14/9/14

Adapted from an outline provided by Dave Mann of the Hope Project. © 2014

Introduction:

This is the final message in our four-part series. We've looked at the way Jesus conversed with the people around Him every day. He had:

- Two ears: We've seen that we need first to listen to the other person.
- One spirit: We need to keep alert to whatever leading the Holy Spirit may give us.
- One heart: We need to relate in love and seek to discern the heart issues for the other person.

Today we are going to finish by coming back to the gospel. God has given us a message to take. It's the most important message in the world!

Revision

In this series we have discussed the idea of 'sour notes' – things that might seem contradictory to us in people's worldviews, these being gateways for meaningful conversations about spiritual things. Here are some with possible answers for you to hold onto:

All religions are essentially the same.

This makes little sense if you know what the religions actually teach.

Truth is relative

This statement is self-contradicting, because it is a truth-statement itself! The belief that 'truth is relative' must then also be relative.

Morals are relative

This is a terrifying view, because there is no fixed definition to stop us determining what is right and wrong for ourselves. Without belief in a Creator God there is nothing to say human life is sacred. Consider Nazism and Communism which resulted in more deaths in the past 100 years than all the religions combined in the last 2000! With no moral compass there is nothing left to stop evil.

Through questions we can help people reflect upon what they are saying, and consider its logic (or otherwise). This can help them take a step toward Jesus.

Luke 14:25-35

Let's take a brief look through this passage, highlighting a few points.

Verses 25-26: Sometimes it's a popular thing to do to follow Jesus. It was like this on that day – large crowds were following Jesus. Christian life can be really fun. Sometimes we're part of a vibrant Christian community. But we may misunderstand all this and think that the purpose of our Christian faith is all about helping us feel fulfilled in life. In reality it is about laying our lives down for the purpose of Christ in this broken and temporary world.

In verse 26 Jesus spoke very directly those who followed Him with joy, and reminded them of what it would cost truly to follow Him:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple."¹

We all know that this is hyperbole. Jesus is overstating the point to emphasise it. And it works! A while ago, we had a similar passage in Matthew 10 and someone talked to me about it assuming that it contained this reference to hating one's family. It doesn't. I checked at the time and found that there is only one reference to it in the gospels - here in Luke. It is such a powerful statement that it rivets our attention.

God wants us to be head-over-heels in love with Him - in love with Him more than any other person or thing. If we commit to follow Christ, wholeheartedness is expected! This love for him means we must make choices. To devote oneself to God is to turn away from other things. There is a cost. Jesus then illustrates this with two stories about counting the cost.

Story one: v28-30 - a man who makes an investment calculates beforehand whether he can complete it. Story two: v31-32 - a king who goes to war calculates beforehand whether he can win. But then Jesus comes to the punch line:

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."²

Who could say they have given up everything they have? We have discussed 'sour notes' in conversations where this is a contradiction or a discord. Here are some 'sour notes' in Christian life:

- A Christian who hates, lies, steals, cheats.
- A Christian who worships wealth – it shows their heart.
- A Christian who doesn't share the gospel.

Are we really following Jesus? What about these possible sour notes of Christianity?

- A Christian who thinks all roads lead to God.
- A Christian who thinks morals are relative, and thus things like sex outside of marriage are ok.

Let us be reminded – there is a straight and narrow path that we are called to walk on; there is a cost associated with being single-minded and there is a call – to make Christ known. This is our primary mission; it is the mission of the Church.

Could it be that we've allowed the things of this world to cloud our minds, and to ensnare our hearts? We are concerned with our financial wellbeing and assets, our many hobbies and pleasures, our own families but so much so that we give little diligence to our mission – while, all the while, our neighbours and colleagues and friends are going to an eternity apart from Christ. They are all around us every day, yet we say near to nothing about it.

Jesus finished the teaching as recorded in v34-35. "Salt is good but if it loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for soil or the manure heap, it is thrown out."

These are sobering words. What if a faith without works really is dead? What if you actually have to follow Jesus to get to heaven –and a simple prayer or half effort is not actually enough.

¹ Luke 14:26

² Verse 33

We need the grace of God, because we'll never be perfect, but God wants sincerity. He wants our devotion – including our devotion to His mission because He loves all the people who are around us more than we can imagine and He died for their benefit as much as He died for ours.

Evangelism is not an optional extra in Christianity. It is our core business. So we need to consider seriously how we might apply what we have learned in this series.

Being clear about the Gospel

If we are going to be witnesses for Christ, the most basic thing we need to know is: What the Gospel is and how to share it clearly.

You can view a video of a gospel presentation by Dave Mann at:

<http://alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos/#video5>

Conclusion:

Scripture exhorts us: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”³ Any of us could be prepared if we would make a commitment to it - and it is not difficult to do.

There will be an opportunity to review and think further about this in home groups this week.

Now, if you want to create a **sustained** passion for the gospel in your heart and life, you need to do these simple things:

- Read your Bible – because God’s heart is for the lost. The Bible’s primary focus from the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 right through to the last chapter of Revelation, is that people will be saved!
- Pray for the lost – because each time do you are forced to reconnect with God’s heart, thus encouraging you to reengage your shared mission.
- Meet with a group to reach out to the lost. There, pray for those who don’t know Christ, and discuss what you could do as a group to reach out to them.
- Finally, find speakers, authors, and videos that inspire and motivate you to reach out to the lost because the reality is that we all ‘leak’.

With regular input from such resources, as well as the Scriptures and encouragement from others in our small group, we can grow to become sustainably focused on the mission God has given us – and there is no question that, if we will do this, there will be increased fruit as a result.

Response:

Are you willing to make a fresh commitment to Jesus’ mission? If so, what is it that you are going to do?

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³ 1 Peter 3:15