

Sermon Series: The New Normal
2 Corinthians 5:16-17
Jesus is Normal; We're Radical

We have all heard the expression of coloring outside the lines. When we hear that it tends to mean there will be some people who will speak and do things that fly against what seems normal. Early education school teachers will always encounter the student who doesn't want to color pictures inside the lines of a page in a coloring book. That student sees from their unique point of view a need to color outside the lines to express themselves. My sense is that there is a growing appreciation to not negatively label those types of students.

Today we begin a new sermon series. Instead of looking at Jesus as radical we want to look at him as normal. Instead of viewing his teachings as coloring outside the lines, we look at Jesus as normal and were the radicals. We take this approach based on the following scripture.

Second Corinthians 5:16-17

The Apostle Paul was stressing to the church to be mindful of a new perspective they were to have and not live by their current assumptions about God and life. You hear this when Paul says **“from now on.”** He is indicating there needs to be a change. Paul said **“we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him no longer.”** The change and shift is about spiritual vision to look at Jesus, people and circumstances in life differently. There are many people and situations we can view with assumptions that might miss the reality of what is taking place and miss God's truth. Our assumptions can be flawed. There was a cute video that may have been in top ten on youtube this past year that illustrates the point. Take a look.

Video of the babies talking - The perception might be that they are just jabbering back and forth and no real communication is occurring. But who knows that may not be jabbering for them that might be communication. We may have it backwards about what is really going on.

The teaching from the Apostle Paul could be used to say we can have our view of Jesus backwards. Paul said, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creature; the old order has passed away, behold the new has come.”** (v.17) So when Christ comes into our lives, there is to be a re-ordering of how we look at everything in life through him. Since being a Christian is a growth process and not a spiritual microwave moment, the changing of our spiritual vision is on going. So in this new year, we thought perhaps a way to understand this scripture is to look at both Jesus and our selves in a new way, really a more biblical way.

The Bible’s view of what is normal: Matthew 5:48

About a month ago I caught an article by Pastor David Platt. He made a comment that really was the inspiration for this sermon series when he said, **“Too often we describe Jesus as radical but really he was normal.”** I think he is right. When I shared that quote with the worship team this week, one of the team members said, **“In a sense Jesus was a sane man that entered an insane world.”** **We have our view of Jesus backwards.** He is often described as a radical. Preachers write books about living radically like Jesus. We have our view of Jesus backward. He is normal, we’re radical. On top of that, he call us to be normal like him. In the Sermon on the Mount he said things like **“Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.”** **Matthew 5:48.”** **That’s normal. Perfect means whole and complete. Our goal is to seek for our lives to be like Christ and see that as normal not a radical goal, not a super spiritual goal only a few attend.**

The Bible's view of what makes us radical: Romans 7:15

Over the next few weeks we are going to look some topics to see whether we are striving to live normal like Jesus or content with be radicals. I hope by the end of the sermon series we'll move away from thinking and talking about how radical Jesus was because that type of description gives us an excuse to say we admire Jesus, but we could never come close to living the life he calls and commands us to live. See that is the other thing about what is normal in the world of Jesus and the Bible. God has commandments that are non-negotiable; yet we are so radically out of God's will because we refuse to live out what God commands. **It's not always the case that we try to live Christ's teachings and then fail. Its that we take the teachings of Jesus and others biblical instruction and those that stand in the way of our preferences and pleasures - we say they don't apply to us for today.**

I recommend we look at the Bible like we would the pilot in a plane. No one would get on a plane if they knew the pilot was good at taking off but horrible at making a landing. Nor would we trust that pilot if he only knew how to land a the plane, but not take off correctly. Nor would we trust him if he could take off fine, land the plane fine, but once up in the air had no skill to know his altitude, speed, direction or location. You trust a pilot like that and you're not landing safely. We want a pilot that can take off, get us where were going and land safely. Either we trust him totally or we don't get on the plane.

Yet some may say they trust the scripture about promise of going to heaven, but discount the scriptures and commandments for how we live today. Either we trust the scriptures for all aspects of our lives or what were really saying is the Bible is like that incompetent pilot.

The Bible tells us who we are and defines what is the norm for living. We don't interpret the scriptures as much as the scriptures interpret us. I think the Apostle Paul described what makes us radical and miss seeing Jesus as normal. In Romans 7:15, Paul said **“I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”** There are teachings from Jesus that are suppose to be the norm for us, but we resist doing them.

Servant-hood

Jesus said many times in the gospel we are to be servants and refers to his followers sometimes as slaves. Why? Its not that he was trying to diminish our sense of worth? No. He taught for us to have a servant/slave mentality because servant hood is the greatest expression of Christ-like love. Servant-hood is an expression of strength. Read Philippians 2:5-10. To live to serve God and others is normal. But the radical ways of the world say lookout for just yourself.

We Christians can stray away from the norm of being servants. We say things like “we have done our share.” We say that about serving on the council maybe committees in the choir, teaching bible studies, especially kids. Be careful about that mentality because it leads us away from living normal like Christ to serve.

The resistance of Christians to serve is the very reason ever so often that story makes its way around about the man who died and he was taken to a beautiful banquet room with a table filled with great food. But what he noticed next was awful. Although the table was covered with food the people seated at the table were thin from starvation. They had long forks and spoons to use but every time they attempted to feed themselves the food dropped in their laps and they were going hungry. The guide said to the man “this is hell because everyone was only concerned with feeding themselves.

The guide took the man to another room. The room had a table filled with the same food, and same long forks and spoons were being use by which to eat. But the man notice the people in this room looked healthy. Then he noticed the reason why. The people in this room were using the long forks and spoons to reach out and feed one another. The guide told the man this was heaven because people served each other.

Prayer

Prayer is another area where we really can be radically outside of God's will. I mean think of how many people will talk about how bad it is that prayer has been taken out of the public schools. We are shocked about how careful teachers have to be about the use of references to God and Jesus Christ. Some schools will not display things that promote our Christian faith such as the Ten Commandments. However this past Wednesday night we had a brainstorming meeting here and we were reminded how challenging it can be to get people to teach Sunday school classes, especially for kids; but yet we say we're tore up about prayer no longer in the schools. Many churches have few who will show up for prayer meetings. If you're one of those who say isn't it a shame they have taken prayer out of the schools, we now have a standing prayer meeting on Wednesday night at 7:00 PM. The average worship attendance at that prayer group where we pray for others, the ministry of the church and ourselves is 3 people. If we want to be normal like Jesus we have room for more to come pray.

Forgiveness

Forgiving others can be another issue for us as Christians to live more normal like Jesus. Giving and receiving forgiveness is something Christians resist doing. Jesus said things like Love your enemy. He said love your enemy, your antagonist, your thorn in the side and yet, like Paul said, the things we would do we don't. We don't live normally and forgive.

I may have told you about a sad and yet it was funny situation of two Christians who refused to forgive each other. They were in the church I attended as a young Christian. They were best buds and then something happen. All I know as a young Christian, I would see these women go forward to pray at the altar during the invitation. One would go to one side and one to the other. They would pray and when they returned to their seat they would make sure they turned away from each other so they didn't even have to look at one another. It was a church with less than fifty people who attended. I was a young Christian and a friend of mine who was more mature in his relationship with Christ and understanding of the Bible took me aside and explained that what was going on was not normal. They refused to work out their differences it was radically wrong.

**The Bible's view of what our response needs to be to God:
Matthew 6:10**

The way to move to living more normal like Jesus is to surrender to the right leading over our lives. I say this based on scripture like Matthew 6:10. It's part of the Lord's Prayer we pray every Sunday. **Jesus said pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's will is completely and always done in heaven. Jesus was saying pray for heart that surrenders to God like that. It takes us surrendering, yielding to God's will to live more normal like Jesus.**

Author and speaker Beth Moore does a great job to describe the importance of surrendering to God. Take a look.

Sometimes instead of being normal and following him, we follow what pleases us. In every church I have served, I have always had people tell me they wouldn't want my job because you have to make everyone "HAPPY!"

But making everyone happy is not the norm taught in scripture. The Bible in Ephesians 4:11 says the pastor and other leaders of the church are to **“equip the saints/believers for the work of ministry”** - it doesn't say anything about making people happy.

The Apostle Paul wrote to a pastor by the name of Timothy and he told Timothy **“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped with every good work.”** (2 Timothy 3:16)

Paul said nothing about making people happy in those instructions. Paul said in fact there will be times to use scripture to not just teach people about God but **reprove/confront** their misconceptions and **give correction** so people are **trained in righteousness**. If pastors and spiritual leaders/teachers are going to teach, correct, and reproof that means we are going to have to make some evaluations and judgment calls that will make some people unhappy. This is what is the norm for pastors and leaders of the faith do.

As a matter of fact earlier in that same chapter Paul even warns Timothy there will be some people in the church **“who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”** (2 Timothy 3:7) There will be some who want more information, one more bible study, one more sermon but there is no transformation of their lives to be more normal like Jesus. My hunch is that happens because they just want to be happy!

In the kingdom the norm is to please God; not make sure everyone is happy.

Closing

One of the best things we can do to begin to live more normal like Jesus is honor him and praise him. He is worthy of our praise. Each of us needs to make a decision decide to let God be king over our lives and seek to praise him not just with words but praise by our lives lived more like Christ. If you want live more normal like Jesus it begins by praising him, honoring him with words and actions. As we lift him up, we grow in surrendered hearts for doing his will. We're going to sing Shout to the Lord, a great song that reminds us God is our hope, strength and source of true happiness.