

The Messy Manger

2021-05-02 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Proverbs 14:4

CG Flow:

- Graves Into Gardens
- I Surrender All
- Teaching
- I Am Not Alone (Psalm 23)
- It Is Well With My Soul

Facebook Live Description:

Join us in person or online for Church in the Club! 10am Sunday mornings at the Boys & Girls Club of Manhattan or right here!

"The Messy Manger"

Proverbs 14:4

May 2, 2021

Ben Deaver

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WEB: <https://tallgrass.church>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/tallgrasschurch/>

YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0drX4wrsE5n9yLza8HSNIQ>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/tallgrasschurch>

*Because God first loved you, you exist to love God and love your neighbors!*

Welcome!

Mingle question:

## Perfect Church

- Close your eyes and imagine our church but with no kids. There's just calm and quiet...all the time. We can meet for as long as we'd like to and talk to one another as adults with none of the demands of having kids.
- Now imagine our church has no people who are struggling in their marriage or as a single person who is deeply disappointed that they're not married.
- No one has confusion about their identity.
- No one has porn addictions or drug addictions or anything like that. No one abuses alcohol.
- No one is overworked or too busy.
- No one is majorly doubting their faith or struggling in their faith.
- Everyone believes Jesus is who He says He is and they don't question that.
- No one has trauma from their past that's impacting how they relate today.
- No one has disruptive family of origin issues that impacts their relationships now.
- Everyone smiles and looks great!

How does that feel? Are you still a part of our church? Is anyone left in our church? Does anyone who's left even need Jesus?

## Seemingly Perfect Church

- Now close your eyes and imagine our church with all the kids and adults...but the kids are seen and not heard. The kids are all just sitting by their parents' side, perfectly quiet.
- No one brings up their marriage problems or deep disappointment in singleness.
- No one shares about their confusion with their identity.
- No one dares broach the subject of porn or drug addiction or alcohol abuse.
- Everyone greets one another with a smile and asks, "How are you doing?" and the response is something like, "Great!" or "Better than I deserve."
- There are no expressed concerns about the claims of Jesus. Doubts about faith are reserved for the privacy of one's own home.
- The trauma experienced in the past is moved on from quickly because in Jesus we have victory, right?
- Everyone appears to have come from really good homes and those that came from broken homes appear to be all put together just fine.
- Everyone smiles and looks great!

How does that feel? Does that feel like church as it should be? Are people bringing their mess to Jesus?

## Healthy Church

- Now close your eyes and imagine our church with all the kids and adults...but the kids aren't that quiet.
- People feel the freedom to bring up their marriage problems or deep disappointment in singleness.
- People share about their confusion with their identity.
- It's commonplace for men AND WOMEN to talk about their battle with porn addiction.
- Drug addiction and alcohol abuse is an issue for some....maybe many...and people know about it.
- Many greet one another and ask, "How are you doing?" and the response is something like, "I'm surviving" or "I'm doing ok but this has been a tough season" or "I know many are struggling right now but I'm actually doing great". Lots of follow-up conversations are setup and people are bringing intentionality to sending text messages or Messenger messages or Marco Polo messages.
- People express their concerns about the claims of Jesus. Doubts about faith are welcomed...and then we together seek answers.
- The trauma experienced in the past is acknowledged and we together try to chart a course towards healing and growth.
- There's an understanding that the home we grew up in impacts each of us both positively AND negatively and that's ok. We can work together to honor our fathers and mothers and work through family of origin issues.
- Not everyone smiles all the time but we look for the smiles and trust that they are genuine or that we're at least working towards genuine smiles. And everyone still looks great but not necessarily great like we would make it into a magazine but great because we understand that each one of us is made in the Image of God...and that is beautiful!

How does that feel? Does that feel like church as it should be?

A church moving towards healthy growth will be messy! What you see is not always what you get.

Becoming a church that produces healthy fruit takes a full stable of oxen yoked to Christ. The manger is gonna get messy though!

**Proverbs 14:4** Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.

- Abundant crops come by the MESS of the ox.

**PRAY!**

## Jesus' Manger Was Messy

- Strong's Greek: 5336. φάτνη (phatné)—Luke 2:7, 12, 16; 13:15
- Jesus was laid in a manger once. He was well acquainted with oxen and other livestock. He created it all.
- Jesus' method of ministry was messy.
  - He chose a rough group of guys to mentor for three years.
  - He had guys jockeying for position.
  - He elevated women in His ministry. And not just any women, women who had faced a lot of trauma and had not walked in the way of purity.
  - He made a mess in places of worship, like the Temple...
- Jesus' ministry looked like it took a turn for the worse. Jesus' ministry actually got smaller as it went on. And yet He said that He had finished the work He was sent to do.
  - **John 17:4** I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.
- Everyone that Jesus trained up in His ministry left Him at or before the scene of the cross.
- Many who He ministered to actually called for His crucifixion.
- Jesus' life and ministry was a mess! But nonetheless...that's how the church began!

## *The Neighboring Church* by Rick Rusaw and Brian Mavis

"The church began as a fellowship of men and women centered on Jesus Christ. It went to Greece and became a philosophy. It went to Rome and became an institution. It went to Europe and became a culture. It came to America and became an enterprise." p. xviii

- And the Head Pastor is the CEO!
- This is NOT what Jesus had in mind when He sent out the Apostles or what Paul had in mind when he wrote half of the New Testament.
- This is what the Western church has come to be in many cases.

Institutional Paradigm of Church—Bigger and Seemingly Beautiful is Better!  
God

Clergy

Laity

*Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation*

- For most of us, it is an absolute value — bigger is always better. We want bigger bank accounts, bigger influence, bigger social media platforms, bigger homes, bigger budgets, bigger profits, bigger staffs, bigger churches.
  - Bigger chickens! Chickens being groomed to have as much meat on them as possible. That's not healthy...for the chicken...or the human eating the chicken...or really anyone except big business.
    - 905g = 2lbs; 1808g = 4lbs; 4202g = 9.25lbs
  - Bigger muscles! Romario dos Santos Alves became addicted to injections to make his muscle look bigger. See 2015 New York Post article.
    - Bodybuilders injecting oil into their muscles to give them the appearance of strength.
    - In fact, synthol has been used for years by professional bodybuilders that want to enhance the appearance of lagging muscles before competitions. They would inject this concoction of oil into the appropriate area, and voila, instant muscle growth.
    - Romario's is an extreme case but this is still a thing.
    - There are other forms of body augmentation in our society to try to make things look bigger and seemingly more beautiful than they are...
- Can you imagine a business, government agency, or nonprofit that doesn't try to grow and increase its reach? The logic is simple: If you aren't getting bigger, you are failing and potentially on your way to extinction. –p. 20
  - Bigger following on social media
  - Bigger houses
  - Etc.
- Here's how I would answer that question: Success, according to Scripture, is becoming the person God calls you to become, and doing what God calls you to do – in his way, and according to his timetable.
- What this means is that it is possible for a ministry or organization to be growing numerically and yet actually failing. And that your ministry and numbers may be declining and yet actually be succeeding! –p. 21
- All numerical markers — increased attendance, bigger and better programs, a larger budget — must take a backseat to listening to Jesus. Jesus calls us to abide and abound in him (John 15:1–8). What this abiding and abounding looks like will differ depending on our unique leadership callings. –p. 21
- **Matthew 23:27** <sup>26</sup>You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. <sup>27</sup>“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup>So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
- Bigger is better and seemingly beautiful is better was an issue back then and there and it is certainly an issue here and now.

## Bigger and Seemingly More Beautiful Is Not Always Better:

When someone brings you that plastic bag full of homegrown garden vegetables...

- Little tomatoes with the stitches on the side.
- Cucumbers with dirt still on them.
- Funky looking squash and zucchini.
- But you know it's gonna be amazing...not much to look at...but way better than the grocery store produce...that is big and beautiful.

## The New Testament Model—Organic Paradigm—Messy Manger Model

Christ (The Head)

Everybody (Ministers)

- This paradigm comes when the Spirit of God fills all believers in Christ. Read about that in Acts 2.
- The body of Christ consists of everyone who believes in Jesus.
- To you out there who don't yet know Jesus Christ. What are you living for? You can live with great purpose and meaning? You can be a part of something so much bigger than yourself!
- The New Testament also teaches that "every member is a minister."
- Priesthood of All Believers
- **Ephesians 1:13** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit...
- Hear the Gospel, Believe in Christ, Sealed with the Holy Spirit!
- From that point on you are "in Christ." You are united to Christ vitally. You are connected to Him as the true source of life, eternal life, the life that is abundant even here and now, the life that lasts forever.
- Respond to the grace of God in your life even this morning! Ask God to help you understand. What have you got to lose? Nothing!
- **1 Peter 2:5, 9** <sup>5</sup>...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a **holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- From my Kansas Leadership Center coaching with Mildred Edwards: "We are all responsible for growing this flock. We are all gardeners. We all have good works to walk in. Everyone is an essential worker."

Leaders (Elders, Etc.)

- Leaders lead AMONG the people. Leaders aren't put into certain roles and then expected to lead. Saints lead and then their leadership is recognized by the body.
- Fleshed out at Tallgrass Church:
  - This is why we have a team approach to preaching.
  - This is why the burden for "one anothering" is on all y'all...including me and Dave.

## Stories of Messy Growth

- LIFE Group stories—Bursting at the seams; Messiness; Mental health issues; Marriage issues; Infertility issues
  - People leave and we don't see the growth and sometimes we're able to hear about it later. E.g. Aaron Momber, AJ, etc.
- Me sticking my foot in my mouth....over and over again
  - The "one anothers" of forgiving one another and bearing one another's burdens and loving one another have to come into play repeatedly because healthy community is messy.

## The Messy Manger and Abundant Crops

**Proverbs 14:4** Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.

- An ox is a mature bovine with an education, a Beast of Burden who's been disciplined to pull a heavy load slowly over time and distance.
- (From Wikipedia) Oxen are usually yoked in pairs. Light work can be handled by a single ox but heavier work requires pairs or more. A team used for a heavy load over difficult ground might exceed nine or ten pairs.
- A yoke is a wooden frame by which two animals, such as oxen, are coupled at the neck for the purpose of pulling a heavy load.
- Two animals work side by side in order to carry a load that one can't do alone. If the load is not heavy, a yoke is not needed.
- A yoke makes independence impossible. You can't go your own way.
- Typically a young, untrained ox is yoked with an older, trained ox. The younger learns from the older.
- If a trained ox can pull 5,000 pounds and an untrained ox can pull 2,000 pounds, together they can pull 10,000 pounds—much more than the sum of the two.
- Over time, the untrained ox becomes trained and the two begin to walk in-step with each other. Then they can pull 15,000 pounds.

## The Yoke of Jesus & Rest for Your Soul

- Jesus bore the yoke of the cross and invites us to carry our cross daily as well. But He has done the heavy lifting already.
- You can lift more when yoked to Christ than you can alone.
  - **John 15:4-5** <sup>4</sup>Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
- Jesus gives us a word picture where He represents the trained ox, who leads the other ox, and does the heavy lifting—with no weight limitation.

- **Matthew 11:28-30** <sup>28</sup>“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
- Burnout doesn't come from working too hard for God. It comes from working ALONE for God. Working side-by-side with Jesus gives us rest IN our work, not rest FROM our work.
- We want a full stable of oxen and are willing to embrace the mess to get there.

## Imaginative Prayer / Listening Prayer

Close your eyes and listen to Jesus' words to you. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

- What burden do you carry that Jesus is asking to place on His shoulders?
- Ask Jesus, “What burden do I need to lay on your shoulders or set aside altogether?”
- What mess in your life is Jesus telling you to not worry about cleaning up right now?
- How does it feel when Jesus says to you, “I will give you rest.”? Do you believe Him?
- What does Jesus' face look like when He's talking to you?

Continue to listen to Jesus speak these words to you, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- I'd invite you to stand up if you can stay connected to Jesus and stand with your eyes closed.
- What does it feel like for Jesus to place His yoke on your shoulders?
- Jesus says, “Learn from me.” What does Jesus want you to learn from Him today? How does Jesus want to disciple you this morning?
- What is the look on Jesus' face when He says to you, “I am gently and I am lowly in heart.”?
- Jesus says, “You will find rest for your souls.” What does Jesus mean when He invites you to find rest not just for your body but for your soul?
- Can you feel the easy yoke of Jesus on your shoulders now?
- Can you feel the lightness of the burden He is asking you to carry?
- Continue to spend these moments with Jesus, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light...

Pray



# The Chopping Block:

## Notes:

- Story: I ate at this Korean barbeque place while I was overseas back in 2005. I had to use the bathroom and almost slipped and broke my neck. That place was so dirty...and yet the food was so amazing!
- Some of the best food I've eaten was served in a relatively dirty place. They had invested in the quality of the product, not the marketing and showmanship.
- Where is growth happening? Where is life happening? It's often not in the highly polished, most beautiful program or building but the one that focuses on the people.
- If beauty lies in the eye of the beholder than many of us need our eyes fixed.
- "Lord, give us the eyes of Christ to see beauty as He sees it."
- **Genesis 3:6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.
  - She saw that it looked good. It was a delight to the eyes. It was desirable. But...eating it would bring death. God wants to give life, and He has given us life. But we often choose death.
  - The grocery store is full of fruit that looks oh so good. But does it bring life?!
  - The garden in Eden was brimming with life. The world is brimming with life.
- Chickens
  - <https://www.humanesociety.org/news/super-size-problem-broiler-chickens>
  - <https://jameskennedymonash.wordpress.com/2014/07/14/artificial-vs-natural-watermelon-sweetcorn/>
- Body augmentation
- Topsoil depletion—From Wikipedia: Topsoil depletion occurs when the nutrient-rich organic topsoil, which takes hundreds to thousands of years to build up under natural conditions, is eroded or depleted of its original organic material. Historically, many past civilizations' collapses can be attributed to the depletion of the topsoil. Since the beginning of agricultural production in the Great Plains of North America in the 1880s, about one-half of its topsoil has disappeared.
- Depletion may occur through a variety of other effects, including overtillage (which damages soil structure), underuse of nutrient inputs which leads to mining of the soil nutrient bank, and salinization of soil.
- Grocery store layout
  - <https://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/shopping-storing/more-shopping-storing/grocery-store-layout>
- Hospitality vs. Entertaining
- Evangelical Industrial Complex— <https://julieroys.com/gospel-meets-evangelical-industrial-complex/>

1. Be Before You Do—Slows down our lives to cultivate a deep, personal relationship with Jesus amidst the hurry and distractions that routinely overload us.
2. Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized Jesus—Offers guidelines to determine how much the values and goals of Western culture have compromised, or even negated, the radical call of Jesus to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.
3. Embrace God’s Gift of Limits—Makes provision for surrendering to, rather than fighting against, the gift of God’s limits in our lives.
4. Discover the Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss—Integrates sadness and loss into our following of Jesus. As a result we no longer miss out on the treasures God has buried within them.
5. Make Love the Measure of Maturity—Provides clear criteria to measure spiritual maturity by how we are growing in our ability to love others.
6. Break the Power of the Past—Connects how our family of origin and personal history influence our discipleship in the present. We no longer treat deep patterns and traumas from the past with a quick fix.
7. Lead Out of Weakness and Vulnerability—Embraces weakness and vulnerability as core to accessing God’s power and offering his love to the world.

## Planting between now and fall

- Develop a plan for LIFE Groups in the fall
- Develop a plan for a Fall Launch as we move out of the pandemic, including more advertising and intentional neighboring and inviting
- Have a Welcome to Tallgrass Church Zoom Meeting with an opportunity to hear more about Tallgrass Church, ask questions, and have an opportunity to consider becoming a Member of Tallgrass Church
- Leadership training with *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* on Tuesday evenings

Patient planting WILL produce a harvest!

Interview Taylor Hillegeist

1. How have you sown into your relationship with God? What are you reaping?
2. How have you sown into your soul? What are you reaping?
3. How have you sown into your neighboring? What are you reaping?

God, the Gardener:

- <https://fiveforfruit.wordpress.com/2017/06/14/who-shall-care-for-our-souls-pastoral-care-for-pastors-part-2-of-4/>

Passages:

- <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/august/finding-right-church-planting-model-part-5-organic-house-ch.html>

- **1 Corinthians 3:5-9** <sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.
- **1 Corinthians 4:1-5** This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. <sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.
- **Galatians 6:7-10 MSG** <sup>7-8</sup> Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life. <sup>9-10</sup> So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.
- **Galatians 6:7-10 NLT** <sup>7</sup> Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. <sup>8</sup> Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup> So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.
- **Galatians 6:7-10** <sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. <sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- **Isaiah 61:11** For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.
- **Isaiah 61:11 MSG** For as the earth bursts with spring wildflowers, and as a garden cascades with blossoms, So the Master, GOD, brings righteousness into full bloom and puts praise on display before the nations.
- **Hebrews 10:36-39** <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. <sup>37</sup> For,  
"Yet a little while,

and the coming one will come and will not delay;

<sup>38</sup> but my righteous one shall live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back,

my soul has no pleasure in him.”

<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

- Satan reaps what he sows. See Ezekiel 28.
  - **Ezekiel 28:18** By the multitude of your iniquities,  
in the unrighteousness of your trade  
you profaned your sanctuaries;  
so I brought fire out from your midst;  
it consumed you,  
and I turned you to ashes on the earth  
in the sight of all who saw you.
- We reap what we sow.
  - My story: Gym, Soul Care, therapy