

CODA: THE RADICAL DISCIPLE

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So What? Radical Jesus has been a time to explore our differences and commit to unity in Jesus.

Feel What? Encouraged

Now What? Get to know your neighbors.

VISION CASTING

Welcome to Tallgrass at The Well. We exist to create community together by inviting everyone into the Way of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Today, as we've mentioned, we're wrapping up our Radical Jesus series with a recap and a reflection on where we go from here. Every week, we've begun with reciting Isaiah 40:8, so let's do that one last time.

Isaiah 40:8 (ESV): The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

The idea for this message series came up in a conversation Ben and I were having where we knew we wanted to tackle some of the more difficult issues we're facing right now as followers of Jesus. We also thought that we could stake out a place as a new church community between polarized factions and speak to what can unite us as Christians. But we agreed: A series like this would either go over really well and bring clarity to our purpose, or it would blow things apart.

But the more we talked with our teaching team, the more excited we got. What if we could be the kind of church that says hard things about hard things? What if our purpose wasn't just to be nice and politely never talk about controversy? What if God's vision for this church was bigger than maintaining a status quo or to develop an echo chamber where all nod together at the same things?

And, so, here we are. We think the hard work of research, deliberation, and presentation has been worth it. We think the conversations we've had along the way have been enriching. And there have been conversations--our teaching team has pushed back on each other, giving feedback about not just what to say, but how to say it. And we haven't always agreed with the outcome. And we've received emails and videos through Marco Polo about some of these topics. We've shared coffee and meals, smiles and even head shakes, all for the greater prize of seeking first God's Kingdom and praying that it would be manifested in our midst.

Because here's the thing: Jesus never promised that we'd be comfortable in church community. Comfort, mostly defined as being in agreement or happy about everything that goes on in community, isn't found in Scripture. Yes, we should expect to be safe--we should find church relationships to be a place where we're accepted no matter our past, a place where we can heal from our wounds. But also, a place that is safe to ask hard questions no one is asking. And a place where we can come out of our hiding. A place where we can doubt and even deconstruct and be embraced again and again.

This idea that things should be comfortable--where did we even get that idea? It sounds more like Middle American consumerism that is always promising bigger and better, just for your and your liking, than it does the Kingdom of God. And it cuts against Jesus' invitation for life abundant.

Mark 8:34-36 (NIV): He [Jesus] called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

Jesus invited all of us: Follow me. Set aside your momentary comfort and receive eternally-lasting joy.

Story about Bonhoeffer

- Bonhoeffer was a promising academic who was encouraged to pursue his career
- He became increasingly alarmed at the rise of Hitler and the capitulation of the German church
- He started an isolated community called Finkenwalde intent on training the next generation of pastors
- They needed fortitude to withstand the lie that Hitler was in charge of the state and the church
- He takes his friend in a boat and rows to the other side of the lake
- On the other side is a Hitler Youth Camp training thousands

. "This must be stronger than that." [Finkenwalde must be stronger than the Hitler Youth Camp]

SOLUTION

Romans 12:1-21 (NIV): Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The great need of the hour is a people who can think rightly. Who possess discernment and the wisdom to know how to act.

Yet, the only means by which we access this is starting from the point where we assume we don't have it on our own. To flow in God's wisdom only happens when we surrender ourselves and ascribe to him all worship. When we place him first in our lives, then we have access to his perspective—what is good and true and beautiful.

This sacrifice is in worship to God and in services of others, particularly in the church.

3-8: For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has

one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Here, Paul highlights the differences in Christian as God has given different gifts throughout the church. The goal isn't uniformity, it's diversity as we bring our gifts together to serve and heal our broken world. Everyone has been given gifts to use in love for the sake of others, and this also includes a diversity of perspectives on how best to use these gifts. If everyone had the same gift and perspective, our effectiveness would be significantly limited.

9-16: Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be

willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Again, Paul continues not with crushing commands, but the promise of a better life in deep connection with God's people through God's Spirit.

17-21: Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

To follow in the Way of Jesus means addressing evil just as he did. When we're confronted, our weapons are love and sacrifice, not vengeance and power.

Transition: So what is the path forward for us? How do we live into this kind of community that withstands division and is permeated by the gospel? Where do we start today?

APPLICATION

We are living in a liminal space--a transition point in our culture where what we're used to hasn't fully subsided and what next and new hasn't fully arrives. We're living in this tension of what some have called the new normal, but without being able to describe what, exactly that will be

like. Yet, I believe, God is inviting us to radical discipleship and the radical disciple of tomorrow will be equipped to step into controversial and tense situations and bring the hope and shalom of God to bear. There are three necessary postures to embrace that will move us towards this end:

First, having a **Radical Perspective** of God and his Kingdom. Jesus is coming soon to set up his kingdom on earth, and living in light of that reality puts so many things in order. There's a saying that I'm trying to teach my kids, especially in the age of social media, and that's, You don't have to show up to every argument you're invited to. We would do well to remember that. Knowing what fights to fight and what causes to support in what specific season you're in in life helps withstand burnout and keeps you locked into God's mission for the long haul. One potential elephant in the room for the Radical Jesus series is what we didn't cover, namely relationships and sexuality. We decided it was too big of a topics to give one week to, so we'd like to come back in the future and devote an extended time to those issues.

The second way we do this is through **Radical Maturity**. As we pursue growth and transformation as apprentices of Jesus, we must recognize that God's Spirit has been given to us not just to release gifts into the Body of Christ, but also as God's empowering presence to bring us to maturity. Every occasion, then, becomes an opportunity for us to be more like Jesus: more loving, kind, and patient. What this also means is that's in our best interest to be in situation where there are people who don't

think like us, act like us, vote like us, and so on. They are your greatest gifts as the Holy Spirit probes your underlying trust structure and you undergo self-examination as to why you react poorly in the way that you do. It's not their fault you're proud and reactive--that is your old self hanging on and waiting to be transformed.

And third is **Radical Hospitality**, which is the simple and practical posture of welcoming people unlike yourself into your space. This isn't necessarily an elaborate spread of gourmet foods. It more often shows up in the in between times in our day where we think to check to see if our neighbor's dog has come back home or if the college students we know have somewhere to spend

Thanksgiving, or even putting your phone away in a long checkout line and looking at the cashier in the eyes. What makes this radical is adopting it as a lifestyle where we're present for God and with others.

INSPIRATION

To carry this further, **Tish Harrison Warren**, in her article ["How Americans Can Learn to Live Together Again"](#) writes, **"To learn how to love our neighbors we need cultural habits that allow us to share in our common humanity. We need quiet, daily practices that rebuild social trust. And we need seemingly pointless conversation with those around us. The great urban activist Jane Jacobs wrote about the social function of casual conversations and interactions: greeting your grocer, passing a pleasantry with a neighbor, playing peekaboo with a toddler at the crosswalk. ...**

We are more than the sum of our political and religious beliefs. We each have complex relationships with the people we love. We each have bodies that get sick, that enjoy good tacos or the turning of fall. We like certain movies or music. We laugh at how babies sound when they sneeze. We hurt when we skin a knee. The way we form humanizing, nonthreatening interactions around these things taps into something real about us. We are three-dimensional people who are textured, interesting, ordinary and lovely. ... Of course, to heal the deep divisions in our society we need profound political and systemic change. But though we need more than just small talk, we certainly do not need less than that. As a culture, our conversations can run so quickly to what divides us, and this is all the more true online. We cannot build a culture of peace and justice if we can't talk with our neighbors. It's in these many small conversations where we begin to recognize the familiar humanity in one another. These are the baby steps of learning to live together across differences."

And it's for this reason, the simple reason of chatting with those around us, that we do things like brunch on a Sunday morning, and we invite friends from around town.

And I realize as soon as we do this, how much I do not naturally like it. I'm an introvert, which means I like to hang at the corners of the room and keep to myself. So I have to realize that in order for our world to be healed, we have to come out of our cultural introversion and engage with people unlike and unknown to us. I have to make eye

contact with strangers and ask, How are you? How's your day going?

Never underestimate how simple acts of kindness just like this, like we're even doing today, can be used by God to bring about a better future for all of us.

CONCLUSION

Transition to Ben