

“Jesus with Unbelievers” | Rev. Greg Grooms | September 20, 2020

Job 38:1-7

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 2 “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3 Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Ephesians 4:7, 11-16

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift... 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Luke 10:25-47

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your

Loving the Lost

How do we get close enough to another person to ask what he or she believes and why? And how complicated this becomes when the other person does not believe in Jesus! Yet almost everyone to whom Jesus stopped to talk on the streets was an unbeliever or a skeptic. When a lawyer asked Jesus “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus did not at once launch into a gospel presentation, but rather (1) asked two questions, (2) told a story, (3) asked another question, (4) gave him homework, and (5) sent him on his way.

Good Questions

Greg reminded us that asking questions and asking them well is often a better way to get people to look at themselves and consider their relationship with God than preaching. The lawyer’s question to Jesus indicated that he believed there was a way to eternal life, but that it was a method, a series of bars to jump over or a list of rules to keep. Thus the replies to Jesus’s second question, the meaning of the law, is so obvious it is almost insulting. Yet when Jesus commands the lawyer to “go and do likewise,” the lawyer must realize that he needs to reassess his entire approach to life. He should be identifying with the Samaritan, not with the self-righteous priest or the Levite. In stead of trying to persuade this man of the validity of the gospel, Jesus is trying to make him rethink his entire world of beliefs and look at himself and Jesus differently.

Calvin’s *Institutes* maintains that two themes in Scripture—know God and know yourself—exist simultaneously and interactively. To do one, man must do the other, an exercise a friend of Greg’s called “a psychological and theological feedback loop.” The lawyer must rethink who he is and who God is, so that he can “Go and do likewise.” How do you come to the realization that you can do as the Samaritan did, and how long does it take you to do it? And if he did as Jesus commanded, what would the lawyer ask Jesus the next time he saw him?

“Who touched me?”

Luke 8:35 The woman who had suffered from a flow of blood would have heard in Jesus’s question, “Who contaminated me?” Yet Jesus says to her, “Your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” This woman must believe that the grace and mercy of Jesus can redeem her and make her clean. How does she simply accept his gift? Our own sins lead us to deny the bad news (We’re all sinners) and discredit the good news (We are loved and valued).

Jesus often says “If you have ears, use them.” We need to hear Him and believe Him so that we can “grow up” into the people He intends us to be. Only by growing up and seeing ourselves in right relationship to Jesus can we begin to ask, “What would Jesus ask?”

heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” 28 And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” 37 He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Socrates, known as the asker of questions, endeavored to make himself look good, but we need to invest the time and love to ask questions that make a difference in other people. The only way we can see the heart and needs of those with whom we come in contact is to (1) invest ourselves in the people we are talking to and (2) trust the Holy Spirit to guide us to the right questions for each person. Cookie cutter evangelism asks the same questions of everyone, rather than see the needs of each person individually. We need to be willing to ask questions to which we do not know the smart answer, questions that may take us in unexpected directions; and we need to be willing to trust the Holy Spirit to meet us there. We need to remember that Jesus seldom asks the same question of any two people.

Then we need to (3) know when questions are no longer necessary. Cf. Luke Chapter 15. The father did not ask the prodigal son questions when he returned. He knew it was not the time for questions. It was time to party. Yet the story ends with a question mark. Does the elder brother join in the party?

God questions Job with rapid fire, unanswerable questions that would make us feel uncomfortable. Yet these questions point out the inescapable truth that I am not the center of everything. They put the “me” in perspective.

A few questions to ponder

If Jesus’s questions make us uncomfortable, remember that they should.

“Where are you?”

“Where is your brother?”

“What do you want?”

“Have you not read the Scriptures?”

“What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”

“What does a man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?”

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

“But what about you? Who do you say I am?”

Application:

Consider these questions of Jesus.

Do you know anyone for whom you are willing to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in asking them questions? If not, how do you get to know someone specific better? How do you work up the courage to let the Holy Spirit guide the questions? What do you say when you don’t know the answers? How do you feel when pondering God’s questions to Job? How can you take steps towards knowing God better? Knowing yourself better?

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