

Lions, Wolves & Sheep, Oh My!

Part 2: The Great Gospel Reset

(preached 5/1/22)

Sermon #1: “Thy Rod & Staff Comfort Me”

- What the 21st century American charismatic church is doing isn't working.
- Numbers of converts aren't increasing, fewer seeking holy sanctification, less endurance through hard times, more self-focused vs. God focused, & revivals not happening.
- The culture is not being reformed toward Christ, but getting worse.
- The church has conformed itself to modern culture vs. remaining set apart and molding itself after God's Kingdom.
- All of the following have increased: people leaving the church, not reading Bible, not seeing Bible as God's inerrant Word, falling into sinful lifestyles, falling away from the faith.
- Woke ideology such as CRT and Deconstruction theology have been embraced by some in the church, deceiving Christians into falsehood.
- We're in a time of spiritual war and not peace!
- Now is the time for the ministry of the Rod & Staff which comfort the sheep, because they know their shepherd is equipped and willing to defend them from wolves and lions.
- Evil is rising in the world, and the ministry of Rod & Staff inspires us to “fear no evil.”
- When sheep eat bad grass and drink poisoned water, they get sick and are open to predators.
- Bad grass and poisoned water are the false teachings such as Deconstruction Theology and Wokeness.
- **Allow your shepherd to defend you:** if we're warning you that you're eating bad food and drinking poisoned water, and we're quoting Scriptures to back up what we're saying, ***you need to listen.***
- You need to pray about doctrinal or moral correction we give you and search the Scriptures yourself as an additional witness that said correction is either true or false.
- Personal experience is not the Word of God. Our feelings are not the Word of God. Our thoughts and logic are not the Word of God.
- The Bible is the Word of God.

TODAY: have we gone beyond “watering down” the Gospel and changed the ingredients into something else entirely?

- Is it possible that the result of sharing this altered good news is producing false converts?
- FC's who don't pursue holy sanctification, but are living the same lifestyle they did before they were “Saved”?
- FC's who remain very self-focused and self-centered, acting as though God is their servant and not the other way around?
- FC's who cannot endure persecution or adversity and begin questioning God's character and even existence whenever something goes wrong?

- FC's who fall away completely vs. confessing and repenting, then asking for forgiveness?

WE NEED A GOSPEL RESET AND TODAY WE'RE GETTING ONE.

It's time to stop being afraid and ashamed of God's Kingdom plan for Salvation.

We must share the entire thing and not just the parts that sound good (dilution).

We must share it as is and not attempt to add any other ingredients to make it "taste better."

MY TESTIMONY. I left the Catholic Church as a teenager and had a great hunger for all things supernatural—I wanted to see and live it! I didn't care if it was good or evil, I wanted to live a life of manifestations and miraculous experiences. My pursuit of this resulted in a deep dive into New Age teachings and I joined a cult called the Modern Humans based out of CA. The leader of the cult claimed to be Melchizedek from the Bible...the mysterious man that Abraham met and gave 10% of everything he owned to in the first hour. A man without parents or ancestry, the Scripture says.

FREEMASONS. I stuck with this group for years and went beyond them, joining a lodge of the Freemasons who defined themselves as "esoteric" and were assigned by Grand Lodge to delve into the more mystical and spiritual aspects of masonry. I advanced all the way to 32nd degree and embraced their teachings.

HATED CHURCH. I hated the church and the bible and both spoke and wrote against it from my college years all the way up to June 27th, 1997, when everything changed.

DREAM. It started out as a dream. I was at a picnic and lots of people were gathered around this one picnic table laughing loudly at a man who was pretending to be Jesus. The man looked the part: long brown hair & long white robes. Everyone was mocking & verbally jabbing him, cracking condescending jokes at his expense then laughing about it. I decided it was my turn to join the fun. I approached the picnic table and came up on his left side. As I got near, one of the people at the table said, sarcastically: "why don't you show us a miracle?"

MOCKED HIM. Before he had a chance to answer, I said "yeah! If you're the Son of God, that shouldn't be a problem for you!" The Jesus imposter wasn't rattled or triggered in any way, but looked up at me and replied "no, it shouldn't."

SURGE OF LOVE. I laughed at him, clapping him on the shoulder, and walked away. Yet...something happened when my hand connected with his body—virtue came into me. Like the woman who pressed through the crown and touched the hem of Jesus' robe, KJV says

“virtue” or “power” came out of Jesus into her and healed her. That happened when I touched this man’s shoulder—a surge of overwhelming warmth and love suddenly jolted into me.

FOLLOWED ME. As I walked away I tried to process why that happened and I came upon a road with a pickup truck parked on it. I climbed into the back of the truck and sat there, thinking about everything, when all of the sudden the Jesus impersonator followed me. He actually climbed into the back of the truck and sat next to me.

DRIVING IN CONVERTIBLE. Suddenly we were driving down the road in a red convertible! The Jesus guy was driving and I was in the passenger’s side. How did I get here? I was mildly shocked and confused. We were driving about 30 mph and heading right toward a closed metallic gate with a STOP sign on it. Someone had written graffiti on the STOP sign that said “this gate is for Jesus only!” and we were heading right toward it!

SPACE! I was in a car with a nutjob who was going to cause us to crash into this metal gate! I braced for impact...and it never came. We passed through the gate like we were ghosts and things got really interesting. We were suddenly in space, hovering.

JUMP TO LIGHT SPEED. Shock and fear cascaded throughout me as I looked all around our car and saw the blackness of space, stars and planets in the distance! How did we get here?! What was going on?!? Then the car surged forward and I saw the stars fly by us, like in the Star Wars movie when they made the jump to light speed. We were whizzing through space and I saw stars flying by us!

CLINT EASTWOOD STARE. Then something happened that I couldn’t stop—I slowly turned my head to the left to see the driver, who I THOUGHT was a fake Jesus. When I finally saw Him, He was staring right at me and I had my first of several revelations: it was really Him. He wasn’t an imposter, He wasn’t crazy, it was really Jesus. Please understand something: I was no longer dreaming so therefore this wasn’t taking place within the theater of my mind. The Being seated next to me wasn’t a projected image from my mind like we see in dreams.

HE WAS REAL. Like John when he had and wrote the book of Revelation, I was in the Spirit which outside of myself and seeing what’s really there. Dreams take place within, but being caught up by God in the Spirit is when the Lord brings us to His realm. What I’m saying to you was that the Jesus sitting next to me was Jesus in His resurrected form and He was actually there...and so was I.

TERROR! Terror entered into me on a level I’d never experienced before in my life, and I thought I had known what real fear was. A few years previous I slid on the ice toward a steep bank and had a few seconds to contemplate what was happening before the crash. I remember thinking I was going to die and both fear and panic seemed to overwhelm me.

2 MESSIAH TYPES. That was nothing compared to this. The look on His face scared me so badly I couldn’t breathe, think, react, or anything...I was paralyzed. There was no smile and His

eyes were squinted like Clint Eastwood facing down a bad guy in a western. Biblical scholars, both Jewish and Christian, realizes 2 different aspects of the Messiah.

JOSPEH. The first was Messiah ben Joseph, the Isaiah 53 suffering Messiah who's rejected and betrayed by His own people and gives up His life for the sins of His people.

DAVID. The second is Messiah ben David, the conquering King ready to lay the smackdown on His enemies and secure His Kingdom.

THE LOOK ON JESUS' FACE WAS MESSIAH BEN DAVID.

KNELT AND BOWED. Suddenly the scene shifts again and the two of us are standing in an Arizona-style desert, staring into each other's eyes, our faces only 12 inches apart—Jesus still had the uncompromising conquering King look on His face. Then something happens I never thought would: I fell to my knees, bowed my forehead all the way to the ground between His feet, and cried out “Lord!”

“DON'T KNEEL!” I was a cult group for almost a decade and one thing our leader taught us was the Christian priests had lied to us...that God never called upon people to kneel, bow, or call Him authoritarian names like “Lord.” “God doesn't want slaves,” he used to tell us, “and the priests created bowing and kneeling as a form of submission so they could dominate the masses.” I'd grown up in the Catholic church and the cliché for a Mass was “stand, sit, kneel, repeat.” This seemed liberating to me when I believed God didn't want that and I embraced that teaching with both arms.

Yet here I was before Jesus and guess what I found myself doing? ***Falling to my knees and bowing my head to the ground, calling Him His rightful title of Lord!***

SAW MY SINS. Then a horrifying thing happened. I was suddenly pulled inward and sat down in what I can only call a movie theater. On the giant screen in front of me every single sin I had ever committed, since I was a baby, played out before me on fast forward. Not just the sinful words and actions themselves, but the CONSEQUENCES my sin had upon the people in the world. All the pain, anger, shame, frustration, guilt, belittling, my sin had caused others was also displayed. I couldn't stop this process and I couldn't shut my eyes to it—I experienced every agonizing moment.

MIDDLE OF OCEAN. Then I suddenly found myself treading water in the middle of an ocean. I turned around looking for land, a boat, a raft...anything I could swim to for safety and there was nothing. I realized I couldn't tread water for long, was already getting tired, and would soon go under and drown. The absolute hopelessness of my situation weighed my down and caused me to scream at the top of my lungs. As I desperately paddled, trying to stay afloat, I realize the ocean represented the amount of sin I had committed...and I was about to die in it.

GOOD PERSON? Let me pause in this retelling to say that, up until this visitation, I had thought of myself as a morally upstanding person. I didn't get in trouble with the law, had never been arrested, didn't get drunk, never did drugs, didn't steal, didn't fornicate, and had even done things to help others and my community. For my whole life others told me what a good person I was. As a kid and teen, my friend's parents always allowed their sons to spend time with me and some of them outright told me so. "When my son is with you, Scott, he stays out of trouble!"

DECEIVED. I was so deceived not only by my own hubris, but by others telling me what a great guy I was. ***All of it had been a lie!*** The truth now surrounded me on all sides like a vast ocean and I was quickly slipping under the surface.

JUDGMENT. I was pulled out of this "theater" and back to kneeling before Jesus. His holy and righteous presence literally loomed over me and then a whole new level of fear entered into me. I realized I was at Judgment. Christians had tried preaching the Gospel to me over the years and a couple of them had even pointed out that, one day, we would all stand before God and be judged. I was there and not only had Jesus known everything about me, but now He'd shown it to me.

- A verdict was about to be passed: GUILTY.
- Sentencing & condemnation was about to take place—my eternal destiny was Hell, I knew it, and realized completely that I deserved it. All of it.

NO COMPARISONS. There were no foolish comparisons to Adolf Hitler or anything like that...I was a sinner of Biblical proportions and had hurt hundreds of people!

SCREAMING FOR MERCY. There was only one thing to do. I started screaming at the top of my lungs, a sobbing terror mixed with profound sorrow. I lifted my head a little and clutched the sides of Jesus' knees, "I had no idea! I had no idea!" It was a plea for mercy and tears were flowing down my face and dripping on His sandaled feet. I couldn't stop from repeating this over and over, my grief and fear went all the way to my core, and all I could do was throw myself at His mercy.

HIS HAIR COVERED ME. Then the most beautiful thing that's ever happened to me, before or since, took place: Jesus bent down and put His hand on either sides of my shoulders. He touched His forehead to the top of my head and His hair covered mine completely...some of it flowed down to brush my face.

The instant He did that, all my shame, guilt, and condemnation disappeared. Just like that.

CHRIST IS HEAD OF MEN. Paul tells the Corinthians in that first book, the 11th chapter, that men should have bald or short hair because the head—He meant hair—of every man is Christ. When Jesus' hair covered my head, He took all my sin and transgressions away, and became my Savior and God. The most peaceful feeling I've ever experienced, before or since, came over me and I wish I could have stayed there forever in that moment. I can still feel His hair over mine when I think on it.

LION/RESURRECTION. Then He whispered into my ear: "the rumors that you've heard are true: I've come out of My shell and am now the Lion" and He was speaking of His resurrection. When Peter looked in the tomb, all he saw were the burial clothes of Jesus and the fact that they were empty...no body. Those clothes were the "shell" Jesus was talking about. Yet He was also referring to His first mortal body—He came out of that shell and was now in an eternal, resurrected body that death no longer has dominion over! He is now the Lion, the conquering King, Messiah ben David!

STRONG! And I'm telling you He's a man's man now. His hands were still on the sides of my shoulders and after He whispered to me, He picked me up with no effort and set me on my feet! I've been manhandled before by guys who were bigger and stronger than me, but not like that...Jesus is no longer the bloody Messiah pierced through for our transgressions, but as Revelation 19 states, the only blood on Him now is that of His enemies!

ORDER/ Now let's look at the order of how Jesus dealt with me and apply it to the Gospel.

ONE: ***He loved me and decided to pursue me before I even knew Who He was.***

1 John 4:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 John 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

DIDN'T KNOW HIM. When I first met Jesus in my dream, I didn't know Who He was. I didn't recognize that it was actually Him, but I thought He was a looney guy. Despite me joining in with the world to mock and ridicule Him, He still offered His love to me and gave me some of it while I was still a sinner (when I touched His shoulder). When I went off to be by myself, He followed me and met me right where I was at.

Jesus' motivation for me, you, and the rest of humanity is His love for us.

TWO. *He needed to show me how much I desperately needed Him...needed Saving.* How would He accomplish that?

By demolishing my image of myself as a good person who'd gotten that way by his own efforts, choices, and restraint.

SINNER & ENEMY. **HE NEEDED TO SHOW ME THAT I WAS A SINNER AND HIS ENEMY.** I say again the moment it was given to me that this was really Him, I saw the look in His eyes at me: Clint Eastwood staring down an opponent in a gun fight.

The only way that I—and you—know that we need a Savior is when we realize we need saving.

NO HUMAN RESCUER. When there is nothing we or another human being can do to rescue us. I was swimming in the middle of an ocean of my own sin and there was no respite anywhere.

John 16:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

CONVICTS OF SIN—LET'S BEAR WITNESS. The Holy Spirit came into the world to convict unbelievers of their sins, their total lack of righteousness, and the coming judgment. As sharers of the Gospel, you and I need to bare witness to this truth rather than telling people that everything is awesome.

I repeat: *the 2020's gospel is that God's love affirms us, wants us to be happy, and is here to realize all of OUR plans, hopes, and dreams.*

DROWNING. The truth is that every unbeliever is treading water in an ocean of their own sins and are drowning. The 2020's "everything is awesome" Gospel is like throwing an anvil to a drowning person and convincing them it will save them.

Romans 5:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

ENEMIES. Unbelievers are enemies of God. I'm not being "holier than thou" right now--you and I once were too! Before we received His Spirit into ourselves, we were dead in our sins and trespasses. We were cut off from the Lord, unable to follow Him or do His will because His Spirit wasn't inside of us. All our efforts to "be a good person" were nothing more than filthy rags:

Isaiah 64:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?

⁶ We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment [filthy rags]. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

CLOTHING = STANDING WITH GOD. Remember that in the Bible, clothing represents our standing with God. Being naked means all our sins are open and exposed to the Lord...so like Adam and Eve we attempt to cover ourselves. Filthy rags are covering, but only show the stain of our sins upon us for God to still see and judge accordingly. It's only when our "clothes" are washed clean by the ultimate detergent—the Blood of Jesus—that we are dressed in fine, white, shining linen that reflects the glory of God. It's only then that God doesn't judge us according to our sins, but according to Jesus' righteousness.

NO SORROW = FALSE CONVERTS. False conversions take place when a person "accepts Jesus" but there is no sorrow that leads them to repent of the sins and beg God for mercy. The result is a self or others-proclaimed "Christian" in whom there is no change after Salvation—they still believe all the same things and live the same way they did before being "Saved."

Real conversions occur when someone has gazed into the yawning darkness of their sin and cries out to the Lord Jesus for mercy and forgiveness.

Luke 18:9-14 (ESV)

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:

¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

DRIVE OTHERS AWAY? Why are we leaving this out? Are we afraid of offending someone and “driving them away from Jesus or the church?”

ALREADY SEPARATED. Newsflash: *unbelievers are already separated from both Jesus and the Church.* They’re as far away as they can get right now because the destiny of everyone who doesn’t yet know His Saving Grace is Hell. This isn’t some excuse for Christians to be jerks when they share the good news and we should certainly do so with both truth and grace.

That being said, if our fear over someone’s response inspires us to either water down the message or change it entirely, then that person is certainly driven further away from Salvation!

NEED TO KNOW THEY’RE DROWNING. If someone is drowning we need to throw them a lifeline that will actually keep them afloat until they can be pulled to safety, should they decide to grab it.

Yet if they don’t believe they’re drowning in the first place, and then we “affirm” them with the “everything is awesome” gospel, they’ll never believe they need Saving.

IT’S ONLY WHEN AN UNBELIEVER EXPERIENCES A TRUE SORROW FOR THEIR TRESPASSES THAT REPENTANCE TAKES PLACE:

2 Corinthians 7:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.

¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!* In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

REAL CHANGE. A Godly sorrow leads to a true repentance, which leads to real change as we see in verse 11. When an unbeliever doesn’t experience this sorrow there is no repentance and therefore no change in them after being Saved. It’s a false conversion.

THREE. [Back to my testimony]: After my own sorrow that led to repentance, grace and mercy were given to me in great abundance:

Romans 5:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

RECONCILED. The word “reconciled” is wonderful, beautiful, and glorious and also translates to “atonement, restoration, and divine grace.” When I was in the spirit before Jesus, this “process” was instant...can you imagine? A moment ago I was sinking in an ocean of my own sins! Yet in one moment of repentance, Jesus washed it all away! He lifted me up out of my drowning and set my feet upon solid rock!

Psalms 40:2 (ESV)

² He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

Isaiah 43:25 (ESV)

²⁵ “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

PEACE! Because of His awesome work on the Cross, you and I are no longer enemies of God but we have peace with Him!

Colossians 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

FAMILY! Not only are we peace with God, we’re part of His family which means He’s our Father and lets us know what His plans are!

Ephesians 1:3-10 (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,
⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight
⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ
¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

ENTIRE GOSPEL. We must share the entire Gospel with unbelievers! They need to hear the whole story without us changing anything or watering it down! Let's be a second witness to the Holy Spirit, Who starts off convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Let's usher in the grace and love of God for someone experiencing great sorrow, showing them that God's desire is to save and not condemn them.

COMMUNION