

Live Bolder – Living Captivated

8.13.23

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Sunday AM

Did you hear about the group of tourists visiting a crocodile farm where the owner offered a bold dare – “Whoever dares to jump in and swim across the croc pool and survive, I’ll give them \$1 mil.” For about 30 sec. no one dared to move when suddenly a man jumped into the water and desperately swam to the other side all while being chased by the crocs – and w/ enormous luck – he survived! Later, after collecting his prize, the man returned to the hotel w/ his relieved wife. Upon arrival, b/c news travels fast, the manager of the hotel congratulated the man and asked what would ever inspire him to do something so bold as to jump in and swim across a croc pool. To which the man said, “I didn’t jump, I was pushed.” And his wife smiled. DYK the moral of this story – ***Behind every successful man, there’s a woman who pushes him.***

Truth is – while boldness is a quality we all could benefit from having – oftentimes, we don’t know how brave we can be until someone gives us a little push. Whether it’s a word of encouragement at an opportune time or an actual push, boldness often needs a partner.

I’m reminded of a friend who went bungee jumping while we were in seminary. When he exited the lift cage, staring him in the face was a sign that read – Shut Up and Jump! And the guy at the top said, “*So you know... You have 30 secs. Before I give you a push!*”

I think God knew we’d need a push when He called His followers into the G.C., and that’s why He gave us **His Word, His church**, and most importantly, **His H.S.** to give us a gentle push to help us to live w/ courageous intentionality for Him in this broken world.

Last Sunday we launched into yr-3 of our ***Aim Higher Dream Bigger*** missional initiative. After seeking to ***Shine Brighter*** and ***Think Smaller*** in years 1-2, this year we’re focusing on ***Living Bolder***.

As I shared last week – To **Live Bolder** is about consciously living daily on mission for God w/ courageous intentionality where we *live, work, and play* to influence/introduce others to the God who loves them with an unconditional, eternal love.

It’s living (as Paul shared in Romans) *unashamed of the Gospel b/c it is the power of God for salvation to anyone/everyone who believes...* Romans 1:16

In 2 Cor. 5:14-21, we find the basis of this calling as Paul calls all believers to ***live bolder*** as ambassadors of Christ entrusted w/ the ministry of reconciliation.

Christ’s love compels us, b/c we’re convinced one died for all, and therefore all died. He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view, although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come – the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself thru Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ by not counting people’s sins against them. And now, He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal thru us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. He made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

As I mull over this passage, I'm convinced that if we're ever going to *live boldly* for God it'll require (3) realities. (1) We have to be convinced that Jesus was who He said He was and did what He said He'd do. (2) We have to walk w/ God on a daily basis *abiding* in Him under the influence of the H.S. And (3) we have to know why we believe what we believe so we have the confidence to live out/speak up our faith to others.

This brings us to last week. We started our series focusing on the last verse (21) b/c it contains the key truth on which the previous (7) verse finds their basis.

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

In this sentence, we learned the profound truth that *when we could not help ourselves, when we were dead in our trespasses/sins, God in His great love did for us what we could not do for ourselves* – He took our sin upon Himself to become our sacrificial lamb laying down His life to give us life – and in doing so, He made it possible for anyone who'd believe in Him to be rescued or saved into a right relationship w/ Him.

WTM – today, let's turn our attention to vs. 14-15 to appreciate what it means to be *captivated* by His grace.

Christ's love compels us, b/c we're convinced one died for all, and therefore all died. He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

Christ's love compels – that is, b/c God first loved us so much that He entered time/space to offer His life as a substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf that we should be so captivated, apprehended, and motivated by His love that it moves and holds us in custody in our relationship w/ Him and in our activity for Him.

Sunecho means to be hemmed in on both sides. It was used of a traveler in such a narrow passage/gorge that he's unable to turn aside and only able to move straight on. Paul was saying that we all should be so *captivated* and held together by God's love that we could only move in one direction – forward w/ Him and for Him.

Notice though – the reason we're compelled (or captivated) is b/c we're **CONVINCED**.

convinced (*krino*) to distinguish, sift, or discriminate truth/untruth, good/evil, and right/wrong. It's a word picture of sifting out and analyzing the evidence to pass a concise decision or judgment.

IOW – Paul is **begging** us to weigh the evidence of Jesus' love expressed in His life and sacrifice.

Notice – I didn't ask if you weighed your *sincerity* or the *opinions* of others, but have you weighed the facts?

It doesn't matter how sincere you are if you're wrong.

People of the ***Flat Earth Society*** can believe the earth is flat but that doesn't change that the earth is round.

I can sincerely believe my ***Maxima*** is a ***Porsche***, yet I doubt I'll awake tomorrow to a ***Porsche*** in my garage!

You can paint wings on a pig, call it a bird, toss it off a cliff – but it won't fly. Why? **B/c pigs don't fly!**

And then there are the opinions of others. DYK what an opinion is? ***It's a strongly held belief that can't be substantiated and has no basis of credibility.***

Opinion is the medium b/w knowledge/ignorance. Plato

That's why – *if you fuel your journey on the opinions of others you're going to run out of gas. Mariboli*

So, just b/c the masses pool their ignorance w/ no basis or fact, but on the unreliable opinions/popular vote – it doesn't make it true – and ultimately – it is worthless.

ASK – Do you really want to base your eternity on someone's sincere opinion or on substantiated fact?

The fact is – history testifies that Jesus was a real person – and this has never been in doubt. Secular and Jewish history, along w/ the Bible, overwhelmingly validate His life/sacrifice.

WTM let's begin w/ the words of Jesus in John 14 – *I am the only way, the only truth, and the only life. No one can come to the Father except thru me.* John 14:6

In this statement, Jesus was saying that He and He alone is the one/only access point to God – there is NO other way. Now, this is either the greatest expression of hate/arrogance in human history if it isn't true – or it is the greatest expression of love/truth if it is true.

No founder of any religion has dared to claim for himself one fraction of the assertions made by Jesus about himself – nor has any religion claimed for its founder what Christianity has claimed for Jesus. *Heydt*

The simple truth is that if Jesus was who He said He was and did what He said He did, then He is God's lone solution to the problem of sin and the only way to God – thus, all other paths are a cul-de-sac/dead end.

Of course, this truth/reality is predicated on the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead – *which is the crowning proof of Christianity.* **If the resurrection didn't take place, then Christianity is a false religion. But if it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth.**

DYK the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus has been examined more carefully than any other event in history. The greatest of scholars have endeavored to both uphold/disprove it. Personally, I don't know one person who's ever honestly taken the time to examine the evidence to not come away convinced Jesus did in fact arise from the grave.

Some of the evidence is basic. For example, the fact there's an Easter Sunday to remember the resurrection tracing its roots back to a Passover event in Palestine 2000 yrs. ago speaks volumes. Christian art/music over the centuries offers proof of His life/ministry.

The existence of the Church helps to substantiate the Christian faith. **DYK** the church is the largest institution to ever exist in human history? It is 5x larger than the Roman Empire at its greatest extent w/ more than 1.3 bil. people worshipping Jesus today.

One scholar remarked – The Grand Canyon wasn't formed by an Indian dragging a big stick. *Unknown*

Neither was the Christian faith formed by the hearsay of a few men. There's indisputable evidence to affirm the facts of history that Christianity finds its beginning in Jerusalem around AD 30 after the resurrection.

DYK Jesus fulfilled over 400 Messianic prophecies – here are a few He fulfilled in the last 24 hrs. of his life:

Description	Prophecy	Fulfillment
Betrayed by a Friend	Ps.41:9	Mt. 10:4
30 Silver Pieces	Zech. 11:12	Mt. 26:15
Hands/feet Pierced	Ps. 22:16	Luke 23:33
Crucified w/ Thieves	Is. 53:12	Mt. 27:38
Lots Cast for Garment	Ps. 22:18	John 19:23f
Bones not Broken	Ps. 34:20	John 19:33

His Side Pierced
Rich Man's Tomb

Zech. 12:10
Isaiah 53:9

John 19:34
Mt. 27:57f

A study out of Westmont College in CA (verified by the American Scientific Affiliation) determined that the **probability** for Jesus to fulfill (8) of the prophecies was 10^{17} . To fulfill (48) of them is 1 in 10^{157} – or 1 followed by 157 zeros. That'd be the equivalent of covering TX 2-ft deep in silver dollars, painting 1-coin red, and then sending a blindfolded person across the state to pick up that one coin on the first try.

Begging – what will it take for you to believe in Jesus?

But there's (1) more truth to note – and that is, what should occur to a person who's become convinced and captured by God's love/grace – it should *push, prod, and provoke* them into convicted bold, selfless action.

He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again...

Note the exchange – B/c I've become so **convinced** that Jesus was who He said He was and did what He said He'd do – I can no longer live for myself and my own ambitions, I have to live to honor/share about the One who died for me.

Whether from the joy of a transformed life or out of sincere gratitude/appreciation for His grace/mercy – a soul truly rescued will seek to live for a higher purpose beheld by new priorities/passions as the H.S. takes up residence w/in us. You could say that a person who's received Christ is now **under new management**.

If I asked you, "What is your purpose for living?" How would you answer? Is it for an earthly/eternal reason, or like the masses – you get up to go to a job you don't like to make money you can't save to buy things you can't afford to impress people you don't even like.

DYK that in the transaction of salvation, God has called you to something greater – that He has a calling on you that is greater than you can imagine.

He has come into your life to give you a heavenly purpose for living – so that you'll no longer live for yourself, but live for Him, who died for you.

Point – *Christ died our death for us so that we might live His life for Him.* Unknown

As many of you are aware, several yrs ago, I stepped away from the role of pastor to enter the marketplace – and I so loved it! B/c nearly every day I was given the joy of encountering lostness as an ambassador of Christ. Instead of getting up each day to equip the saints as a pastor, I was living on the frontline of the mission field as a missionary in corporate America. What dawned on me in this season is that each of us has a Divine calling to no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us. Our objective in life isn't to live for a paycheck but for Him – b/c once we've accepted Christ as Savior – God has called us to something greater... He's called us to seek first His kingdom and righteousness to influence others to come into a relationship w/ God.

So... you don't have to be a pastor/staff member to be in the ministry, nor do you have to travel overseas to be a missionary. All you have to do is live w/ **courageous intentionality** for Him where you live, work, and play – consciously aware that you've been entrusted w/ the Gospel to go live it and speak it. Truth is... you are a missionary... now go and live as one!