

Hanging Out With Jesus: The Only Approach That Really Draws Men To Christ

John 12:20-36

Good morning! It's good to be back. I had a couple book deadlines I needed to finish up, so thank you for allowing me to step away. So here we are in the series *Hanging Out With Jesus* and I want to begin today with a shout out. This one goes to the Maumee United Methodist Men's Group in Maumee, OH. The leader is Brian Hinde, and they're 5-18 men meeting on Sunday evenings from 7-8:30pm using the Video Bible Study. We'd like to welcome you men, so I'd wonder if you would join me in a big round of applause. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us.

So as I said the series is *Hanging Out With Jesus*, and I don't know if you heard about this but there were a couple of guys in Chicago who on Sunday night walked into the Clifton Grill. They were there to rob the place, and the owner said I'm sorry we're too busy. Can you come back in an hour? And so they did. When they came back, the owner said, well let me go get my wife's checkbook and I'll write you a check. Will you take a check? They said okay, and so he went in the back room, called the police and they were arrested. You might want to think about these guys as the two most stupid robbers that ever lived, but another way of thinking about it is if you're going to be a robber you may want to use a different approach. It's the same way in talking to people about Jesus. Sometimes you might need a better approach. Sometimes the approach that we use actually looks as stupid as those two robbers, and so what I want to talk about this morning is the only approach that really draws men to Christ.

Before we get into that, we have a guest that I would like to welcome, it's the son of Dan Fay, Brian, who has been part of the Bible Study before. Brian served a tour in Iraq in '08 and '09 as a sniper, and a tour in Afghanistan as a medic. When in Afghanistan he was blown 30 feet in the air in an explosion and has been suffering post traumatic stress disorder. So Brian, I wonder if you would stand and let's join together and thank Brian for his service to our country. Thank you!

So in the last four messages in this Bible Study series, *Hanging Out With Jesus*, we looked at the anointing of Jesus by Mary and the title of that talk was *Small Beautiful Things That You Can Do*, the Big Idea was: **Since no encounter is ever random, no good deed is ever wasted.** Then the next time we looked at the triumphal entry of Jesus. The title was *Jesus Gets Flash Mobbed* and the Big Idea was that: **I'm part of a carefully choreographed mission to bring Jesus to the people over whom He weeps.** Then we looked at the second temple cleansing, *What You Do To Help Men Act Like Men* was the title and **the best way to help men act like men is to help the church act like the church** was the Big Idea. And then we looked at the withered tree, *Jesus Explains How Prayer Works* was the title and the Big Idea was **let God "edit" your prayer to something you can really believe.**

Today we're going to be looking at a story from the book of John. There's so many things that are going to happen in these last few hours in terms of Jesus speaking into the lives of those disciples and to us as well. So our story today is going to begin at John 12:20. The purpose for us today is to look at God's mission and talk about how we can be a part of it today.

The Mission Then And Now

Let's take a look at the mission then and now. All around us there are men who are caught up in the rat race. These are men involved in self destructive behaviors, filled with anguish, amorphous pain, or maybe they don't understand why their life is going off the rails and they are aching. You should understand that right now, *right now*, Jesus is drawing all men to himself. Jesus is drawing all people to himself. Jesus was lifted up on the cross, and in the text we're going to read it says when I am lifted up I will draw many men to myself? No, it doesn't say that. It says I will draw *all men* to myself. So these men that are out there may not be looking for Jesus, but Jesus is looking for them. They might not be thinking about Jesus, but Jesus is thinking about them, and I was that man and you were that man.

Honestly, we think that these people should respond when we give them this clear exposition of all the arguments and the compelling reasons why they should be a Christian, but if you think back to when you and I were not believers, I knew I was doing some things wrong but I didn't think I deserved to be punished for it. I didn't really think there was anything wrong with my behavior, I wasn't looking for Christ, I didn't understand the Gospel. I had been to church and grown up in the church, but nobody ever actually explained that Jesus was more than simply a good example to follow. Nobody ever explained to me the problem I had with my sin nature, and that I needed a savior. I was a pretty happy pagan, and most of the men that you know, and most of the men that don't know Jesus, they're happy about it. That's because that even though Jesus is looking for them, they are not looking for Jesus, and something is going to have to happen in their lives, probably tragic, probably some loss, probably some suffering. They're going to have to eat pig food before they will become interested in Jesus, or they're going to have to scrape boils off their body. But that's okay, because those are ways that Jesus in the operation of this thing we call grace, that he gets people's attention, ways he draws them to himself. Let's read the text. The mission is making disciples:

Now there were some Greeks and Gentiles among those we went up to worship at the feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to understand your views on abortion, same sex marriage, and immigration."

You know isn't it interesting that much of Christianity, a lot of what people do today, a lot of what we do, is we're focused on winning the argument, clarifying the issues. This is what you need to understand, right back at that table right there a dozen years ago, I committed one of the gravest mistakes I've ever done. I was witnessing, I was sharing Christ, the Gospel, the four spiritual laws booklet with a young lesbian who used to work here. She set up the chairs, some of you may remember her, and I wouldn't let her receive Christ because she would not make a commitment to abandon her sin. I have to live with that. You see it's not my job to be the Holy Spirit, it's my job to present the Gospel. I'm quite sure that if she would receive Jesus that he has enough power to help change her mind about that. Why did I have to do that? Why did I have to lean in on that issue, to clarify that issue?

"Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to Andrew; Andrew in turn told Jesus.

So men here's the Big Idea for the day: **It is the story of Jesus - His life, death, and resurrection - that always has and always will draw men to salvation.** There will never be a new Gospel. There will never be a new way. You will not win men to Christ by winning the argument. You will not win someone to Jesus by clarifying the issue. It is always, and has always been, the simple story of Jesus, his birth, life, death, and resurrection, that has drawn men to salvation. Let's look at what Jesus says in verse 23:

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

I've always been fascinated with gardening since I was a young kid. I used to sell plants I raised when I was in High School. The most fascinating part of gardening to me is the code for many lives that's in the life of that one seed, and Jesus uses this fantastic analogy with it. He says but if it dies it produces many seeds! Drop down to verse 27:

Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit."

There is always a voice speaking from heaven to people for the benefit of them. They may not be looking for him but he is always looking for them. They may not be thinking about him but he is always thinking about them. He is always speaking to them, even though they may not be listening to him. Verse 31:

It's for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world.

What Jesus Did

Okay, so this is a historical moment. This is what Jesus did. This is real, this is not a drill. This happened in history and it was a turning point of all human history. When Christ came to the hour of his death, it was the time for judgment on the world. That means the wicked world, the evil world. The world is now under judgment. That's why nobody can break out and succeed against the Lord. Look what else it says, it says now the prince of this world will be driven out, he's not been driven out but will be driven out. The contract has already been signed, the closing hasn't occurred yet, it's in escrow, but Satan will be driven out. Then what I think is one of the most precious texts in the whole Bible. It was the text that Mission Mississippi, the racial reconciliation ministry that I was involved in helping start 20 years ago, used for the movement:

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

You know when I travel and I meet a stranger and they learn that I work with men, they frequently say that must really be hard. They'll knit their brow, kind of wince, but I'll say you've got the wrong guy. I have the best job in the world. We are constantly seeing men come to Christ and change their lives. God is on the move in men's lives. That said, let's do a reality check. Men today are under severe attack. The culture is shifting away from Judeo-Christian values. Christianity has always been a minority, even though it's less of a minority than it has ever been. In the 1800's only 1/15 American's were Christians, even with the great revival of the time. In 1860 only 1/7 when the businessmen's revival occurred. Today it's 1/3. So we're a minority, but we're a bigger minority than we've ever been before, so what has changed? What's changed in the last few decades is that even though Christianity has always been a minority, we have set the agenda for the values of the culture. We used to live under Judeo-Christian

values, but in 1989, and I like to look at 1989 as a watershed year. Not only was it the year the Berlin wall came down, but that same year the broadcast networks abolished their censorship departments. Now I can't watch cable television series because there's this gratuitous sex that goes on, and by the way if you're watching that stuff... I've watched *Sleeper Cell*, several episodes, and let me tell you if you're watching these kinds of shows, everything's permissible for you but not everything is beneficial. These things start to get screwed into your brains! I had to stop! I just can't watch any cable series anymore, except maybe *Justified*, I like *Justified*. See what I'm saying here? It has to be between you and the Lord. I can't handle it, I can't handle sitting there watching those things. I try to fast forward through all these incredible sex scenes and a lot of violent scenes too. What's happened is that the Judeo-Christian values that used to be the consensus have now been replaced by a set of values that are very worldly. Men are very susceptible to this and the result is we have a crisis going on, especially among younger men with no memory of this time based on Judeo-Christian values. Young men today are under such a severe assault. A report just released shows that 59% of kids that grow up in the church will leave the church when they grow up. You've got somebody like this in your life maybe, and you love them, you care so much about them.

I wrote a Facebook post this morning, let me read a little bit of it. What do you do when somebody you are sharing your faith with does not want any part of it? If you're talking and sharing your faith with someone you don't know and they're not interested, you just move on. But when it's someone you really care about, someone you really love, maybe more than yourself, you can't just move on. So what do you do? Well, Christ has been lifted up. He is drawing that person to himself. Reading from my post: even when they are not looking for him, he is most certainly looking for them. Even when they are not thinking about Him, He is most certainly thinking about them. It would be a mistake to think that we care more than Jesus cares.

Although that's usually what I end up thinking! He is not surprised at their reluctance. The plain truth of the matter is that there are people we love and care about so much that we just don't know how to approach them anymore. So that's why we're talking today about the only approach that wins men to Christ, and the Big Idea is this: **It is the story of Jesus - His life, death, and resurrection - that always has and always will draw men to salvation.**

What You Can Do

So what can you do? How can you be part of the mission? How can you be part of what God is doing in the world? Look at verse 25 with me. Remember I skipped over this? Jesus says:

The man who loves his life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

So what does it mean to hate my life in this world? What does that look like? What does it mean to hate my life in this world? Jesus says I will die for you, but you must live for me. That's what it means! I will die for you, I will be lifted up, I will draw you to myself, but now you have to live for me, and that's what it means to hate your life in this world. It means you have given Christ first place in your life. If I am really your savior, wouldn't you want me to be your Lord? Why would you want to keep rebelling against me? Why would you want to keep trying all of these TV shows? Why would you want to argue with people about me? Why wouldn't just want to do it my way? Why wouldn't you just want to be my servant? That's what it means.

Let me give you a few things you can do to participate in the only approach that draws men to Christ. Number one, be a disciple. Look at the text again, whoever serves me must follow me. What is a disciple? A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, loves Christ, is growing in their faith, serving him.

The second thing that you can do is to be a servant. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. A servant is someone who after considering the gravity of his times commits himself to spend his life in a worthy cause. It's a life of sacrifice and discipline. How many of you have prayed the *Marriage Prayer*? How many of you pray for your wives? Don't raise your hands, but how many of you don't pray for your wives? Why wouldn't you do that? Are you crazy? Or your kids? Well, that's just not how I'm wired. Oh poor baby! Get yourself rewired! You're not using the approach that will actually make a difference in the world! Well, I just don't have the drive to do it. Well guess what? You can substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest, they call it obedience! Oh, I'm sorry I didn't mean to offend anyone, I didn't mean to hurt anybody's feelings... Poor baby.

So first be a disciple, second a servant, and we've talked about it here before. A servant doesn't ask what do I want, but what does the master need? Thirdly, be a witness. Back to the text, down in verse 32 again, but I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. So we are going to be where he is. Where is he again? He's at the point of his story, the point of his death. They're not thinking about him but he's thinking about them. They're not looking for him, but he's looking for them. So the third way we can be a part of this mission is to be a witness. Jesus is drawing them.

This is so painful when it's that person you just can let go and move on from, but what you can and must do is continue in unconditional love. You must stop badgering them with the Gospel. You must be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within you with patience and gentleness. It's not a bad idea to weep, to mourn, to fast, and to pray for these people. Live out your life before these people in a way that recommends your message. Integrity is a one to one correlation between my Bible, my belief, and my behavior, that there would be integrity in the way I live, that my life would recommend my message. So this is how men hear the voice of heaven today. It says the voice was for your benefit, not mine. Jesus is speaking today. What he did then he's doing now. What he did then he is now doing through you and me. We are the voice from heaven. The Holy Spirit is the voice from heaven and he animates us to recommend this message, this simple story that is the Big Idea today, the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. It's the way that men have always been drawn to salvation, and always will be.

So who is that you have in your life that's breaking your heart? What you can do is you can continue to be a disciple. You follow Jesus, you be responsible for your life. You be a servant. A servant is someone who is humble, not proud, who is putting others first. Looking out not only for their own interests but for the interests of others. You can be a witness. You can be a witness by keeping your mouth shut, but being always ready to give an answer. By loving that unlovable person, that person for whom Christ has been lifted up, that person whom Christ is drawing. You have to think about it in Bible times, they may be resisting and that's okay, but he's drawing them through you, through your demonstration. So then he was the kernel that fell to the ground and died, but today Jesus is asking you to be that seed, that kernel that's willing to die to yourself so that many other seeds might live. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, our Holy Spirit and Heavenly Father. We come humbly to you. There is more mystery in this Gospel than anything else ever conceived or thought of, and yet it is so simple Lord, the story of your

life. Lord, for those of us who have been trying to win arguments and clarify the issue, Lord let us relax, lighten up and let you do the drawing and let our lives recommend the message, this simple story of your life, death, and resurrection. Father, I also pray for every person here or that ever sees this message. Lord, we know from your scripture that you are drawing those people to yourself, but for most of those people it certainly doesn't look like it. God, help us to put our faith in your word, to believe that you will do in their lives what we long to see done, the thing that we're praying for. We pray that we would live to see it come to pass, in Jesus' name amen!