

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT MAN

INTRODUCTION:

Brilliant young minister delivering the sermon in a State Mental Hospital.

He used a good deal of meaningless generalities.

One of the patients stood up and said:

"That's all very pretty, Reverend.

But just what did you have in mind?"

Jesus avoids generalizations and deals with the specific needs of men.

Jesus knew exactly what he had in mind about

man's purpose,

man's predicament,

and man's reconciliation.

I. THE PURPOSE OF MAN'S LIFE is to accept and live under the Kingly Rule, of God.

A. Gaining the Kingdom is the most important thing in life.

B. Until a man turns to God & accepts his rule, life is filled with frustration, anxiety, & despair.

C. A great German mystic has said about man's search for peace of mind,

"The longer they look, the less they find what they are looking for.

They go along like someone who has missed the road; the farther they go, the more they go astray."

II. MAN'S PREDICAMENT is that he has failed to fulfill God's purpose for his life.

A. Instead of living under the rule of God, man is ruled by selfishness, pride, greed, insincerity, hatred, & lust.

B. To speak plainly, man is a sinner.

1. Modern man's easygoing attitude toward sin is in direct opposition to the attitude of the Bible.

2. Biblical writers are realistic about the nature and universality of sin.

C. One of the major contributions of the modern Neo-Orthodox theologians has been their emphasis on the tragic reality & universality of sin.

D. What Jesus taught about this.

1. "adulterous & sinful generation"
2. "faithless & perverse generation"
3. "We are unworthy servants" (Lk. 17:10)
4. "No one is good but God alone" (Mk. 10:18)
5. He used many parables involving the experience of being lost or separated from the right place or right way - (see Lk 15)
6. In the model prayer he taught men to pray,
"Forgive us."
7. He called upon men to repent & exhorted them to change their way of living, telling them that He had come to seek and to save the lost.

III. Jesus taught that RECONCILIATION is the Basic Experience to overcome man's separation from God Caused by his Sin.

A. Reconciliation is the primary experience of the Christian religion; for by it man becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

1. Modern Christianity is weak wherever we have watered down the interpretation and presentation of this teaching.
2. There are countless people who have grown up in the church who haven't the slightest comprehension of the meaning of reconciliation or the New Birth, but any careful reading of the N.T. makes it perfectly clear that this is what the Christian religion is all about.

B. Mark's report of Jesus' first sermon, 1:1-15.

- "The time is fulfilled,
and the Kingdom of God is at hand,
1. Repent, (turn away, change of mind)
2. and believe in the gospel." (faith, trust)

C. Illustration of Rufus Jones' brother who got his hands caught in the blades of a moving machine and got two fingers cut off.

The night after the accident the small boy kept the whole family awake by crying out again & again:
"I wish I hadn't done it! I wish I hadn't done it!"

In Christ's mind man isn't a puppet,
and he surely isn't a worm, for a worm
is not made in the image of God.
Man is not a tool, a machine,
a serial number, an animal, or an ~~adjective~~
adjective.

Jesus taught that man was made to be a
child of God on a higher level than
a physical birth---

a son on the spiritual, moral, and
intellectual level of free choice.

No worm can claim that position.

It is the privilege of choice that
makes a man a son of God above the
level of physical creation.

Christ knew what was in man.

He knew about our predicament or plight,
and about our inability to manage life
aright in our own strength.

But He held a high conception of man.
He believed that each one of us has
enormous possibilities.

He had a high regard for the individual.
This is a crucial distinction between
the Christian view of man and the
Communist or totalitarian view.
Hitler wrote:

"To the Christian doctrine of the
infinite significance of the individual
human soul, I oppose with icy clarity
the saving doctrine of the insignificance
of the individual human being, and of
his continued existence in the visible
immortality of the nation."

Again in Mein Kampf he wrote:

"The dogma according to which the indi-
vidual personality has a right to its
freedom and dignity can bring nothing
but destruction.... There will be no
license, no free space in which the
individual belongs to himself."

D. But repentance alone is not enough.

1. We need to know that we are accepted, loved, and forgiven in spite of our condition.
2. Story of little boy at orphanage -- who said, "I want someone to love me.!"

E. Different names for this basic experience.

1. Reconciliation - overcoming separation
2. The New Birth - from above, spiritual
3. Justification - Paul, Luther - man reckoned righteous through grace of God.
4. Regeneration - New Birth
5. Salvation - being saved from sin to God
6. Redemption - being set free from bonds of sin.
7. Conversion - turning away from sin to God.

F. Question of how Reconciliation comes

1. A sudden, dramatic experience, or
2. Gradual, "like the unfolding of a flower?"
3. Jesus does not waste time speculating about the ways in which this basic experience comes.
(He told Nicodemus it was like the wind -- we do not know whence it comes or where it goes.
4. It comes to different people in different ways.
5. But whether it comes gradually or suddenly, it should leave us with a feeling of holy surprise, unspeakable joy, contagious enthusiasm, and a consuming love for God & our fellows.

G. The modern church desperately needs a new emphasis and interpretation of this basic experience.

1. Countless church members think of Christian commitment in terms of obedience to rules or laws laid down in the Bible or by the church.
2. Countless others have been brought into the church in "membership drives" or for unworthy motives, never receiving any true insight into the nature of this basic Christian experience.
3. There are persons attending church every Sunday without feeling any joy or enthusiasm at all.
4. The "old-time religion" often overemotionalized the experience of reconciliation or the new birth, whereas the "new-time religion" has all too often ignored it completely.

5. There might be a need for re-interpretation in terms of modern man's environment, but the basic experience remains the same.
6. Any study of the teachings of Jesus will reveal that it is central in Christianity, and apart from it the ethical teaching of Jesus is impossible and incomprehensible.

1 Dec. '63 - Cent. Ch. Augsburg
Sep. 28, '80 - Gateway Bap. ch. St. Pete.