

October 18, 2020 - David Baumgartner

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Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Use that as a way to launch off about the spiritual water that we have.

In fact, Jesus talks about it. He calls it living water. And that's a way to describe the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells within the believer. Here's the last one.

Kindness is everything. Now this is one of the statements. It's last here because it's actually the statement that eventually became the driving force to the we believe signs.

And this was, if I read my research right, it was by these three moms in Madison, Wisconsin. And they said that verse was intended or that statement was intended to promote tolerance, inclusion, and diversity.

And so they teamed up and they started mass producing these signs. And so that's why they're so popular. I want to ask you again, though. Who is against kindness?

[1:10] Anybody here? Let me see a show of hands. Who's against kindness? Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. You know, not I. You know, although I'm going to say we may wonder, is human kindness the solution to all forms of human depravity?

I want to ask you maybe what's included in everything when you say that. But again, Christianity promotes kindness. I'd hate to say that that might be news to some people, but it does.

In fact, it's one of mankind's most basic desires and needs. The Bible teaches, if you look with me in Paul's letter to Ephesus, be kind to one another, he says.

Tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. What a motive there to be like Jesus. In fact, if we're looking for an all-encompassing statement, let me suggest adding one word to that.

God's kindness is everything. Would you agree with that? Yeah. And that's because his kindness is transformative. It means it transforms us.

[2:26] Look at what Paul said in his letter to the Romans about the Bible. It teaches about kindness. Kindness, God's kindness, leads to repentance.

Look with me. Romans 2, 4. Do you think lightly of the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Or how about this one? The Bible teaches that God's kindness saves. Paul wrote to Titus, Yeah. Yeah. What a statement about kindness here.

Well, there you have it. Seven of the popular slogans. You can turn that off now, Anna. Thank you. Regardless of how you and I may feel about these statements, I'd like to say this.

[3:41] We should not dismiss their importance. And I'd like to give you two reasons. And I hinted about it earlier. One, they represent real issues that matter to people.

And friends, people matter to God. They do. But secondly, for purposes of this morning, mostly these statements represent avenues from which you and I can build bridges for further discussion with people.

And this is because all of these statements, as I've highlighted here, in some way they intersect with biblical truth. Even when a statement is based on faulty assumptions, friends, there's still enough there from which we can build a bridge.

And so if you want to look on your handout here, how do we build a bridge? There's three things that I want to say. In fact, I would say, how do you build a bridge toward any argument?

The first one is this. Identify what aspects of the position, maybe the statement, what aspects of the statement here can be affirmed as true?

[4:58] What aspects of the position that can be affirmed as true? I'm beginning here because when you think about it, all human beings share in common needs, common wants, common desires.

And many of these things, these are legitimate longings that people have. It's just reflecting the way God made us. We all want community.

We all want to belong. We all love water and so on. And all people want kindness. Black lives do matter.

God and water is good. So what we need to be able to do is to connect these things to God's word. In other words, what does God's word say about the value of life?

What does God's word say about how you and I should treat other people? What does it say? And so we affirm what is true. We affirm what is good because all truth is God's truth.

[6:10] We don't take a vote on what's true. No. It's, you know, truth is objective. It's self-evident. Truth exists on its own.

Whether we agree with it or not, it's true. And friends, this is not a new strategy. If you turn with me to chapter 17 of the book of Acts.

I'll give you a minute here. Paul is in, he's in Athens, Greece at this time. He had just come from Thessalonica. He had spent some time in Berea.

And now we see, beginning in verse 16 of chapter 17, that Paul is now in Athens. And he reaches, though, he's there.

And the people of Athens, they're steeped in these ideas that are rooted in Greek philosophy. Paul comes to them and he notices that they had made this altar to the unknown God.

[7:14] You might want to look with me in verse 23 there in chapter 17.

And I want you to notice Paul affirms three things about them. Verse 23.

First, they knew that there was a God out there somewhere. They knew that. Secondly, they knew that this God wanted to be worshipped.

Yeah, so they made an altar to him. That's what it says. And then thirdly, Paul acknowledged that to them, this God was unknown.

That's true. Those three things are true. There is a God. And he's looking for worshippers. And they didn't know him. Just like many people around us.

And so Paul, he affirms the truthfulness of their positions. Their statements, if you will, on their lawns. But then he proceeds to the next step.

[8:14] Notice he says at the end of verse 23. Therefore, what you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. And if you would go on from verses 24 to 32, Paul describes this God to them.

Because he knows him. And he identifies, you know, what can be affirmed here. And that's what you and I should do. Secondly, after identifying what can be affirmed, we identify and acknowledge the sinfulness that's present.

In all forms and circumstances that's surrounding these issues. Let me say that again. We identify and we acknowledge the sinfulness that's present.

In all forms. In all circumstances around this issue. You see, these statements, they represent struggles that people have.

And friends, we know why. It's because sin has deeply affected humanity. You think about what's in play with all of these things.

[9:29] Selfishness. Grief. Pride. Racism. And friends, this might be a difficult step. Because it may also mean contradicting and confronting the distorted views that people may have.

Maybe even owning up to some of the distorted views that you and I may have. But the truth is, friends, we are sinners. We fall short of the glory of God, as Paul says in Romans 3.

Sin is an enemy. And it's the root of all of man's inhumanity to man. But we can contrast the way things are with the way things ought to be.

Amen. Yeah. Because right now, things are not as they ought to be. And here's the key.

If you're a believer, you know why. The Bible teaches who man is. How we got here. Why things are the way they are.

[10:42] And the believer knows that only the Bible, on what is taught in it, offers a reasonable explanation for sin. And from where it came.

And the believer also knows what the remedy is. Which leads to the third point. Show them how the gospel of Jesus Christ resolves humanity's problems.

Now you might want to put in there both now and later. This is where you and I can engage with grace and love.

This is where you and I can point people to the source and to the standard of love. Justice.

Belonging. Truth. All of those things that we see.

Our hope is built on nothing less than what we find in the grace of Jesus Christ. Only in Him, the Savior, do we cross over from death what we see around us into life.

[11:49] Where there is forgiveness of sin. Where there is power over sin. And where there is a promise of having our minds washed and renewed by God's word.

The gospel fulfills every legitimate longing and need that we have. If not now, eventually it will.

When you think about this, all human beings are religious.

You ever thought of that? People seek after transcendence. People seek after, they need to believe in something that's beyond themselves. That's why people go to the Grand Canyon.

That's why people stare up at the stars. We love transcendence. And so we can use that. Because people look for transcendence.

To the believer, these yard signs don't have to be symbols of provocation. Although sometimes I think maybe they're intended to be. But we can rather see them as invitations for evangelistic discussion.

[12:58] Yeah. If I could ask the musicians to come back up here. These signs are begging for believers to engage in conversation here. I want to ask you this question.

Can the good news of Jesus Christ actually be simple enough to understand and integrate into a person's life? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Friends, there is a rich vocabulary from which you and I can pull from the scripture. Let me just mention a few here. The Bible uses these different word pictures to show the breadth and the depth of the gospel.

For those who are motivated and desire to see justice, the Bible uses language of justice. Law, transgression, justification, our legal status.

For those who seek transcendence. The Bible uses the imagery of heaven as being God's throne room. Where there's a glorious, all-powerful God.

[14:01] And there's smoke and fire. And there's lightning and thunder.

For those who seek to belong and want community. The Bible speaks of God's offer of adoption.

Sonship. Belonging to God's forever family. For those who desire a champion. A leader. Jesus Christ is he.

Because he conquered sin and death. He fought against the real adversary. The devil. And he won.

For those who wonder what they're supposed to do in this life.

Will tell them that God has a plan for their life. And that he will empower them with his spiritual gifts to live that out. For those who are hurting.

Orphaned. Marginalized. Through those who have been wronged. Jesus can relate to that too.

Because he himself experienced firsthand what it was like to be marginalized.

[15:05] What it was like to be treated unfairly. What it was like to be treated without kindness. But he willingly did that, friends. To pay the price for our sins.

And to redeem us. Why so many word pictures? It's because life is full of so many dimensions. That can never be fully captured with just one little word.

And recognizing this can help us build bridges. Between that emptiness. That is so evident out there. To the riches and depth of the glorious gospel of Jesus.

This last verse with me. What Paul says in his second letter to Corinth. For though we walk in the flesh. We are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.

But have divine power to destroy strongholds. And we destroy arguments. And every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.

[16:07] And we take captive thought to obey Christ. Heavenly Father. It's good to be reminded, Lord, that we are different.

That we are, through the mercy and grace of Jesus, we are being transformed more and more each day into his image. Lord, help us this day to, just to see things as you see them, Lord.

Give us spiritual eyes that we would see the hurt and the pain. That we would see the cross. And not only see it, but be able to communicate. All of the glorious riches.

Help us to be able to give an answer. With great humility and respect to those who ask for the reason. For the hope that is in us. Oh, Lord, let us live lives that are pleasing to you.

And we thank you for this. In the name of Jesus. We thank you for this. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[17:13] Thank you. Thank you.