

Serm.Series: "Life-skills for Every Age"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/27/2001

Title: "Radical Living in an Absolute-confused world"

Text: Matthew 5: 17-20

Introduction: **Illus.: Fickle Polls–Fickle Values**

Theme: Christians, today, are caught in a world which is clueless of what God desired and designed for our lives. Yet, if we ground our life values squarely on Jesus' life-giving purpose, we will be given a reliable compass with which to navigate the stormy seas of the culture around us.

### *A contrast of extremes which we want to avoid*

- **Absolute-less thinking which throws out all the rules in hopes of getting rid of God**
  1. An old-new Postmodern way of thinking has been given center stage in our world philosophical value system
    - a. "All that matters is that you are happy."
    - b. "The end good justifies the way that you got to it."
    - c. "Since all paths lead to the same journey's end, what's important is the journey not the destination."
    - d. "Life is not about what is doing right but about doing what works."
  2. Jesus condemns such thinking
    - a. As anti-Christian (**Print and read vss. 17-18**)
    - b. As anti-life (**Print and read vs. 19a**)
    - c. A real danger of diminishing if not all together losing the gift of eternal life Jesus has given by faith -- **Read and print 1 Corinthians 3: 11-15**
- **Legalism which replaces God's live-giving word with man's live-robbing rules**
  1. Law driven Christianity wants "righteousness" but on its own terms
    - a. Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day kept the shell of God's law but changed its intent
    - b. Much of today's evangelical Christian church's has substituted 1-2-3 Christianity for the real good news in Jesus
    - c. **Print and read vs. 20**
  2. Distinguishing between the real and the counterfeit "holiness"
    - a. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin. Rom8:1-3*
- **Keeping it between the white lines of God's righteousness**
  1. **ILLUS.: JUST KEEP IT BETWEEN THE WHITE LINES**
  2. Remembering that goodness from God's viewpoint begins in Jesus Christ (*Everyone who believes has God's approval through faith in Jesus Christ. There is no difference between people. Romans 3:22*)
  3. God is not interested in the bare minimum Christianity but in radically transforming our lives to reflect him (*Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth .Eph 4:24*)

### *Developing a Christ-centered purpose for our transformed lives*

- **Christ came to live purposefully and to give us back purposeful lives**
  1. **ILLUS.: EVERYTHING HAS A PURPOSE**
  2. Christ had a purpose to do the will of the Father perfectly and to instill that in us (**Print and read VS. 17**)
    - a. *God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philip. 2:13*
  3. Christ had a purpose to seek and to save the lost and to have his disciples have the same passion
    - a. *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10*
  4. Christ had a purpose to destroy the works of the devil and to arm his believers to do the same
    - a. *The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8*
- **Christ calls us to live purposefully but practicing and modeling his purpose-filled living to others**
  1. Transformed living is passionate about modeling the life of one who did it perfectly
  2. Transformed living is concerned with the footprints of faith it leaves behind (**Print and read VS. 19**)
    - a. *"And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12:3*
  3. **ILLUS.: PURPOSED FOR GREATER THINGS**

### **Views on Absolutes**

In response to the statement "There are clear guidelines about what's good or evil that apply to everyone regardless of their situation," the percentage who said they

Completely agree: 37

Mostly agree: 46

Mostly disagree: 12

Completely disagree: 4

Have no opinion: 1 *Citation: Gallup survey Nov. 20-22, 1998*

### **Absolutely No Absolutes**

Seventy percent of Americans think it important to obey God or the Bible when choosing right from wrong, but far fewer believe in moral absolutes. A Gallup poll, conducted for Americans United for Life, found nearly 70 percent agree with the statement: "There are few moral absolutes; what is right or wrong usually varies from situation to situation." Only 27 percent disagreed. Moreover, while 50 percent were troubled about the influence of religious fundamentalism, only 36 percent expressed concern about secular humanism's influence.

*Citation: Reported in National & International Religion Report, 4/6/92*

### **The Purpose of Coffee Hour**

Coffee was always served at our church after the sermon. One Sunday our minister asked one of the smaller members of the congregation if he knew why we had coffee hour. Without hesitating, the youngster replied, "To wake people up before they have to drive home."

### **Purposed for Greater Things**

In *Run with the Horses*, Eugene Peterson tells how he saw a family of birds teaching their young to fly. Three young swallows were perched on a dead branch that stretched out over a lake. "One adult swallow got alongside the chicks and started shoving them out toward the end of the branch--pushing, pushing, pushing. The end one fell off. Somewhere between the branch and the water four feet below, the wings started working, and the fledgling was off on his own. Then the second one. "The third was not to be bullied. At the last possible moment his grip on the branch loosened just enough so that he swung downward, then tightened again, bulldog tenacious. The parent was without sentiment. He pecked at the desperately clinging talons until it was more painful for the poor chick to hang on than risk the insecurities of flying. The grip was released, and the inexperienced wings began pumping. The mature swallow knew what the chick did not--that it would fly--that there was no danger in making it do what it was perfectly designed to do. "Birds have feet and can walk. Birds have talons and can grasp a branch securely. They can walk; they can cling. But flying is their characteristic action, and not until they fly are they living at their best, gracefully and beautifully.

### **1 Cor. 3:11-15**

<sup>11</sup> For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup> If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

### **Matthew 5:17-20**

[17] "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. [18] "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. [19] "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20] "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. [NASB]