

## Read the Red

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013

*The Words of Jesus No One Wants to Hear*

### ***Introduction Part I***

In 1899, Louis Klopsch, editor of *The Christian Herald* was reading Luke 2:22, and was struck by the words of Jesus... “*This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*” Because of the symbolism of the blood, Dr. Klopsch wondered if the words of the Jesus might effectively be printed in red: “*Why not a red-letter Bible with the red words to be those of our Lord?*” He sought advice from his pastor, T. DeWitt Talmage, of Brooklyn Temple. Talmage encouraged him and the first red-letter New Testament translations were printed in 1901. Today I would like to begin to tell you a true story from the red letters of Jesus. It is the story about the those

words of Jesus, printed in red ink within the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I am calling this story... ***“Read the Red.”*** The story of the words of Jesus is of course a story that has been told a million times before, in hundreds upon hundreds of different ways, and it is important for you to know that regardless of whether I have enough courage or wisdom to tell it myself, others will tell it for me, and it will be told a million times over. *Every time the words of Jesus are told, or read, they have a power to them that cannot be denied. Some will “hear the red” or “read the red” and it will become their salvation – others will hear or read the same, and it will become their judgment. Some will hear or “read the red” and will find peace and love - and yet others will “hear the red” or “read the red” and be filled with anger and hate. To some “reading the red” brings life – to some death. To some it is hope and to others it is hell.*

*And to some “hearing or reading the red” is the truth that they seek – and to others it becomes the truth they reject as a lie. Nonetheless, we are going to begin together to “**read the red.**” I will tell the story of the words of Jesus, and then in one way or the other the power of those words will change our lives forever.*

***The Context: Jerusalem Two Thousand Years Ago***

Besides the exclusive “claim to fame” of possessing a covenant with God naming themselves as His chosen people, one of the most significant and visible methods of preserving Judaism (*the religion of Israel*) around the world two thousand years ago was though the centralization and localization of its unique worship in one place only - ***Jerusalem***. In contrast to other people groups, wherever a Roman, a Greek, or an Asian might travel during this time, they

could take their gods with them, or find similar rites and rituals in foreign lands that could be easily be associated to their own. It was not that way for the Jew. There were literally millions of Jews scattered around the known world. In fact, five hundred years earlier (*even when allowed*) there were over one and a half million Jews who did not return to Jerusalem from 70 years of *Babylonian Captivity*. With the help of the Persians, the returning Jews rebuilt the original Temple only to have the “*Holy City*” once again overtaken, occupied and controlled. This time by the Roman Empire in 64 B.C. Regardless of circumstances, to the Jews, they had only one Temple - and it was located in “*the holy city*” Jerusalem. They had only one God - ***Yaweh***, who had once sat on the throne of “*the holy city*” between the *Cherubim* within the temple on *Mt. Zion* (the southeastern portion of the city) overlooking the

valleys *Hinnom and Kidron* to the east and west, and joining together to the south. During the period (37 B.C. to 4 B.C.) *Herod the Great* was appointed King by Rome. A paranoid, He strategically appoints family members as regional rulers to form a very tightly controlled and complex power structure throughout Palestine. Then in a self-serving act of good will to the Jews, he immediately begins a 40-year remodel project of the Temple and his palace – turning them into a world-class religious spectacle. And finally, Herod brilliantly handpicks a High Priest (*his man*) from among the Jewish priesthood, and then allows the *Sanhedrin* to oversee and govern the religious and civil matters of the Jews who lived in Jerusalem and Palestine. After building this intimidating and forceful bureaucracy of henchmen and snitches Herod the Great now suffering from tormenting mental illness and debilitating physical

disease dies not long after Jesus is born so that by the time Jesus begins his ministry at thirty years old, the structure of power and authority in and around Palestine looks something like this: (*See Chart*)

Although always under the watchful eye of the Roman Empire, the Temple was still the only place the Jews bring offerings and where the priesthood could then offer acceptable sacrifices for forgiveness of sin, or for fellowship with God. There behind the veil of the Holy of Holy's within the walls of this great temple, and the impenetrable gloom of the innermost sanctuary, the High-Priest (*at the time, Caiaphas*) would enter once a year to offer up the most solemn penance (burnt offering - blood sacrifice), while standing there on the Shekinah footstool before the Mercy Seat of the Altar and the Ark of the Covenant. The High Priest stood as representative of all Jews everywhere, and as the

spiritual leader and focal point of “God’s chosen people.” From that golden altar rose the cloud of incense, a symbol of Israel's accepted prayers; that seven-branched candlestick shed its everlasting light, revealing the brightness of God's Covenant Presence. On the great blood-sprinkled altar of sacrifice smoked the daily and festive burnt offerings, brought to the Temple by all of Israel - and for all of Israel. The millions of Jews worldwide would send (*during the time of the Passover*) to Jerusalem a Temple representative to present an acceptable offering on their behalf. During Passover each year the massive courtyards of the Temple were not only filled with native Palestinians, but were also filled with Jews from every nation on earth. Each day they gathered in and around the Temple, to experience firsthand the sacred memories of past glory, atonement, and forgiveness. They gathered to hear the *Rabbis* teach

the same rich and powerful oral traditions once spoken by their own ancestors. They also gathered to experience and give witness to the unbending influences of the great fathers and keepers of the everlasting covenant of faith passed on from generation to generation. They called it the ***“Halakha.”***

***The Halakha*** – the collective *Mosaic/Torah Law*, *Talmudic Law*, and *Rabbinic Law*.

Yet in the time of Jesus, in spite of living under the tyranny of Roman occupancy, and the corruption and hypocrisy of the Jewish Priesthood, there were many sincere and uncorrupted Jews still holding on to the words of the ancient fathers, and holding out for the promised Messiah. They held fast to the words of those great Jewish prophets and watchmen (*Ro’eh*;



*one who perceives that which does not lie*), ***Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel***. Their foresights and wisdom still brought hopes of salvation, future freedom, and a collective return of a Jewish nation to its promised land. So it is clear to see that the destiny and the future hope for the prosperity of Israel were like fabric, interwoven within the religious practices and beliefs of their ancient past. This was not just “the old covenant”, it literally was an “*old covenant*.” It was an old and ancient covenant between themselves and God that had in reality been broken and re-broken over and over again for centuries. But yet it was so strong and rooted so deeply within these people, ***it could be said that without their religion - they had no history, and without their history – they had no religion***. For the Jewish people of two thousand years ago, Judaism, and its practices was their history, their patriotism, their religion, their

identity and hope. And it all pointed to ***Jerusalem*** and the ***Temple***. It was not just a symbol, but rather the centerpiece of Israel's unity and restoration.

It was within that religious and political context and civil climate that ***Jesus Christ of Nazareth*** brought both His divine mission and message of hope and promise to the Mega-center of Judaism - ***Jerusalem***.

We need to understand who these people were in order to understand why the words of Jesus gave some hope and some hell.

1. *What did it mean to them when He said... “And now I give you a new commandment”? Or, “I am the way, the truth and the life... no one comes to the Father except through me”?*
2. *Why did these words of Jesus make so many people in His day so angry, hateful and aggressive?*

3. *And why still today... when we “read the red” does it make people around us feel and behave the same way as the Jews of Jesus day?*
4. *Why are the red letters of Jesus still the words that no one wants to hear?*
5. *And finally, how do we who seek truth when we “read the red” reclaim the words that we desperately need to hear?*

## **Read the Red**

**April 14<sup>th</sup> 2013**

*The Words of Jesus No One Wants to Hear*

*(Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 11:1-2, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3)*

## ***Introduction (Part II)***

We are going to continue to build a foundation for ***“Read the Red”*** by making a case for not only the relevance of the *red letters* of Jesus, but for the absolutely (and I mean that literally) indispensable need in our lives for the truth contained in every *red letter*. Here are a few points of *red-letter* relevance for us wrap our minds around today.

- 1. The biographies of Jesus (Gospels) are the first hand recollections of the ministry and mission of Jesus of Nazareth from His closest friends and followers. The Gospels reveal the Kingdom of God through the incarnate person of Jesus.*

1. *What we now call the **red letters**, are the spoken words of Jesus as He openly and straightforwardly laid out new and specific principles on how to live with others, and with God. The **red-letter words** of Jesus directly explain (on their own by the way) the cause, the cost, and the expectations of following Him as a disciple in God's Kingdom.*
2. *The **red-letter words** of Jesus clearly distinguished for those who gathered around Him the very distinct differences between believing in Him – as Messiah, and following Him - as Master.*
3. *The **red-letter words** of Jesus were not*

*spoken for the exclusive purpose of establishing a doctrinal belief – but rather, how to live as a follower. His **red-letter** words were a bidding to become part of a community that would revolutionize the world with the message and mission of God. They would do this by teaching His **red-letter words**, and authentically and sincerely sharing the goodness and love of God to the watching world.*

### ***The Red Letter Words of Jesus Were...***

*revolutionary – truthful – liberating – hopeful –  
loving – enlightening – penetrating – prophetic –  
historical – relevant – offensive – haunting –  
frightening – challenging – conflicting – paradoxical  
polarizing – threatening – revealing – incriminating*

– *powerful – piercing – probing – profound – healing*  
– *genuine – convicting - life*

### ***Who Was Jesus Speaking His Red Letter Words To?***

- 1. To Roman Rulers and Authorities*
- 2. To Leaders of Religion and Politics*
- 3. To the Disowned and Disenfranchised*
- 4. To the Sinner*
- 5. To His Family and Fellow Jews*
- 6. To the Gentiles*
- 7. To God the Father*

### ***The Three Responses to The Red Letter Words of Jesus***

- 1. Acceptance*
- 2. Rejection*
- 3. Indecision*

## ***Red Letter Words of Jesus – A Sample Size***

**One** - *"The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"* Jesus went into the synagogue again and noticed a man with a deformed hand. Since it was the Sabbath, Jesus' enemies watched him closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man, *"Come and stand in front of everyone."* Then he turned to his critics and asked, *"Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?"* But they wouldn't answer him. (Mark 2:27-3:4)

**Two** - *"You have heard the law that says the*



*punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.*

*(Matthew 5:38-42)*

**Three** - *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."* He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. *"The Scripture you've*

*just heard has been fulfilled this very day!" (Luke 4:18-21)*

**Four** - *"Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. 'I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!' (Matthew 10:34-36)*

## Read the Red

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013

*Love... the Only Way to Read the Read*

### *Introduction (Part III)*

Love is the only way to read the red – there is no other way. It can't be read as “more religious law” – we all know how that turns out. Yet, it can't be read as the words of a “lawless rebellion” – that would be missing the point all together. It certainly can't be read figuratively – Jesus meant what He said, and He said what He meant. It can't be read as irrelevant, impartial, or neutral – the *red-letter words* of Jesus are just too powerful and penetrating to be irrelevant, too uncomfortably absolute to be

impartial, and too awkwardly transparent and unapologetically polarizing to be neutral. No, to **read the red** in the way we need to read it, there is as Jesus said... only one way. That way is love.

Admittedly it is harder to read the *red-letter words* through the eyes and love of the one who spoke them – but that is why Jesus said, “*the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*” And as hard as that is to hear, we need to know with full confidence and beyond any shadow of doubt that He has made a very precise but inclusive invitation for all who will believe and follow to enter His kingdom and to live a new way. Here is what He said about the new commandment...

*“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love*

*each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*

*I have loved you even as the Father has loved me.*

*Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.*

*This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you."*

Those **red-letter words** are difficult and specific but they are clear instructions on how followers of Jesus are to live. Unfortunately in the **red letters** of Jesus there is no middle ground, wiggle room, or an option for what's behind door number two. There is no need for re-interpretation, re-stating or for a more logical and reasonable explanation than the one Jesus Himself gave. That is why He asked his followers right after telling them something almost equally as

difficult...

*"Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But some of you do not believe me."*

No, it is for certain that we cannot read the red ***“our way.”*** Love would be the only way.

*So then, (in love) how does one rightfully read and obey the **red-letter words** of Jesus?*

*Aren't the **red letter words** just a repetition of the old law said in a different way?*

Well, the answer to that is – no. It is not just a repetition of the old law spoken in a different way.

The **red-letter words** of Jesus represented not only

the fulfillment and completion of the old law – but they were the final and formal introduction to the new law. **For example:** Every time in the *red letters* when Jesus said... “*You have heard it said*” followed by “*but I say to you*” He was introducing *the* new law of the kingdom of God. So now, in the Kingdom of God...

**the fulfillment of *God’s old law* was love**

**the way to live in *God’s new law* was love,**

**the only way to love and keep *any of God’s law* was in *Christ*.**

**No other way.**

Everyday for three years the *red-letter words* that poured from the heart and were spoken from the lips of Jesus all pointed to His kingdom, and to the new kind of love He had for us His people, and that the

Father had for Him. And He never moved from that position: *love is the only way to rightfully follow and fulfill the law.*

**No other way.**

So my friends over the next few months as we *read the red* together, and then find ourselves saying to one another... “*there is just no way*”, we have to remind ourselves that Jesus said, “*I am the way – there is no other way*”, and that the way of Jesus is love, and the only way to *read the red* is in the love of Jesus.

### ***RED LETTER LOVE***

***LOVE GOD - LOVE EACH OTHER - LOVE YOUR  
NEIGHBOR - LOVE YOURSELF - LOVE YOUR ENEMY –  
LOVE SINNERS - LOVE WHAT IS GOOD - LOVE TRUTH -  
LOVE JUSTICE - LOVE MERCY***



***Read the Red: Turning Red – The 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon of  
Jesus April 28<sup>th</sup>***

***(Matthew 5:1-12)***

*One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.*

*“God **blesses** those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

*God **blesses** those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*God **blesses** those who are humble,  
for they will inherit the whole earth.*

*God **blesses** those who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they will be satisfied.*

*God **blesses** those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*God **blesses** those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.*

*God **blesses** those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.*

*God **blesses** those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

*God **blesses** you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.*

*Be happy about it! Be very glad! **For a great reward awaits you in heaven.** And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.  
(NLT)*

*Seeing the crowds, Yeshua walked up the hill. After he sat down, his talmudim came to him, and he began to speak. This is what he taught them: “How blessed are the poor in spirit for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. How blessed are those who mourn*

*for they will be comforted. How blessed are the meek for they will inherit the Land! How blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled. How blessed are those who show mercy for they will be shown mercy. How blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. How blessed are those who make peace for they will be called sons of God. How blessed are those who are persecuted because they pursue righteousness, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. How blessed you are when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of vicious lies about you because you follow me! Rejoice, be glad, because your reward in heaven is great - they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way.” (CJB)*

## ***Introduction***

These words are the words spoken by Jesus to a crowd of over five thousand who had gathered to hear Him. Jesus sat on the side of the hill just above shoreline of the Sea of Galilee about twelve miles outside the city of Capernaum to share what would historically be recognized as His first public sermon. More than likely He spoke to the people that day in the language of the region – *Aramaic*. But there is more than enough evidence to support that Jesus was multi-lingual and able to read speak and write in *Hebrew*, *Aramaic*, and probably *Koine Greek*. I say this because of the biblical references the language skills of Jesus. He clearly spoke the language of the common people (*the region of Galilee*) – *Aramaic*, he frequently spoke and read *Hebrew* (*from the scrolls in the temple*) – and He obviously spoke *Koine Greek* and probably *Latin* (conversations with Herod and Pilate). The language Jesus spoke is important for

several reasons. **One**, knowing the language he used helps provide a more accurate context for what He is saying. And **two**, the meanings of certain key words that Jesus spoke can greatly vary depending on the language that Jesus was using. I am confident that on this day He spoke to the Galilean crowd in the Semitic language known as – *Aramaic*. The example I want to use for this is the word “***blessed***.” On this day, and to this crowd, Jesus will use the word “***blessed***” nine times in succession as He begins to teach the large crowd.

***Blessed (Greek) makarismos*** (mak-ar-is-mos'); *the recipient of good fortune*

***Blessed (Latin) beatus***; *divine joy and perfect happiness*

***Blessed (Aramaic) barak***; *to bestow a gift or present to another*

The word “*blessed*” here in Matthew’s gospel is an orthodox (pure) *Hebrew* word (origin) spoken by Jesus in *Aramaic*. In the *Hebrew tradition*, to be *blessed* or to receive a *blessing* would mean; *to have been given approval or the favor of the family patriarch*. In the *Hebrew* context in which Jesus uses it, “*blessed*” the crowd would have understood what Jesus the *Rabbi-teacher* said as this:

*God approves* of those who find they have nothing without Him...

*God approves* of those who mourn and suffer for knowledge of Him...

*God approves* of those who are humble and selfless...

*God approves* of those who seek and desire what is good and righteous...

*God approves* of those who show mercy to others...

*God approves* of those whose motives and intentions are pure...

*God approves of those who are not divisive or contentious...*

*God approves of those who are mistreated and abused because they represent what is good and right...*

*God approves of those who are slandered and marginalized because they choose to obey Me...*

**May 5<sup>th</sup> 2013**

**Read the Red: Turning Red – The 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon of**

# Jesus

## *Introduction*

The first sermon of Jesus would become the core, or what we would call “*the essential Jesus.*” This teaching would show up in one way or another in all of the *red-letter words* of Jesus that would follow, and would remain forever a pure reflection of the *attitude* and *character* of Jesus. To believe in Jesus would certainly be something (a good thing), but to follow Jesus would be everything (the best thing). To follow Him as a disciple would mean embracing the attitude and character of Jesus, as purely reflected in His words and life. Ten years later, Paul an apostle of Jesus would write... “*follow me as I follow Jesus.*” He would also say... “*You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*” (*Philippians 2:1-5*) Peter, the emotive disciple and apostle of Jesus would say years later in his letters regarding the difficulty



that comes with being a follower of Jesus... “*you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too.*” (1 Peter 4:1)

If it is true then that “*attitude is everything*” then it is even truer that having the

***“attitude of Jesus”***

is absolutely the only thing that God will bless with His approval and favor. At this point we need to realize three things very important in our search for having, or understanding the attitude of Jesus.

***Having His Attitude is Hard!***

But we need to know that Jesus didn’t just suffer because His attitude was hard – *we are always worried that something is going to be too hard*; Jesus also suffered because...

***Having His Attitude is Better!***

Jesus knew then what we need to know now... *if*

*we want something better, there is always a price to pay, or sacrifice to made for it.* But those weren't the only reasons for the suffering that was linked to the attitude and character of Jesus. The biggest reason was because He said it was the only right way. So he suffered for having the right attitude. It is correct then in saying...

***Having His Attitude is Right!***

*(Proverbs 14:12, 16:25)* So Jesus opens His mouth that day and begins to teach those that were gathered by the Sea of Galilee not only a hard and a better way, but He taught that it was *“the only way.”*

***(Matthew 5:3-12)***

1. *“God blesses those who are poor and*

*realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Lets be clear about these red-letter words... When He says “poor” Jesus is not talking about the shame or low self-worth that often comes with not having money and possessions. Jesus is saying... Regardless of your financial status if you live life with your number one ambition and priority being the approval and favor of God, the Kingdom of Heaven will be yours. And, then what you need will come. Bottom line on this one is - without the favor and approval of God, we are all helpless and destitute.*

2. *God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.* The natural response

*to being poor is to want what we do not have. The spiritual response is to ache and to burn with desire in our need for God. When we have fully recognized that without God's approval we are empty and our life is without meaning, He will comfort our hearts and minds with His presence, and His purpose for our life. Our soul longs and mourns for Him - it can do nothing else; that kind of longing and mourning can only be comforted by the favor and gift of God.*

3. *God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.* If as a follower of Jesus personal notoriety, position, or recognition are your ambition, then there will be a large understanding of the heart of Jesus and His *red-letter words*, that will you. This is even truer for followers

who serve in ministry leadership. Humility says ***no*** to the personal agenda, and the celebrity delusion. No disciple of Jesus is too holy to serve, and the only way to lead is to serve others before we serve ourselves. *Pride is the evil archenemy of humility.*

And if we are uncertain about what humility is, that is probably a good thing – we all know what pride is, and that is a bad thing. As long as there is pride in our hearts we can be certain that there is no humility.

***The teaching of Jesus on this Galilean day was to re-set the understanding of both humility and pride, and to assure that the humble heart would always find comfort in knowing that God has already made a place for them.***

**May 12<sup>th</sup> 2013**

**Read the Red: Turning Red – The 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon of Jesus (1<sup>st</sup> Conclusion)**

4. *God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.* Justice is the “goodness of God” expressed within the “day to day” living of our world. To hunger and thirst for the “goodness of God” to be expressed in our life (in this context) would not look like what we think it should or would look like. Jesus was not describing and act or instance of justice wanted by someone needing a wrong to be made right – he was revealing Himself. For example: “I got treated badly, that is not fair. God is going vindicate me and make it right.” The justice of God is not about making sure everyone is treated fairly (that is my justice). The justice of God is not

*about God doing something for me – He already did that... Jesus (that is God's justice). No, what Jesus is revealing for here is much more fluid and alive. God approves of me and favors me when I Honor Him with my desire for Him, my worship of Him, my service to Him, and my faith in Him. So when I finally discover that my spiritual thirst and hunger can only be satisfied in Him I find justice through Him. In a natural way to live I must have food and water. In a spiritual way to live I must justice... that is, the goodness of God expressed each day of my life. "In kindness He takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change." (Romans 2) Stay thirsty my*

*friends...*

5. *God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. The contextual definition of mercy is – “grace in spite of sin.” That pretty much sums up our life in Christ Jesus. Here on this day sitting beside the sea with a crowd of five thousand plus Jesus has finished telling them all to “hunger and thirst after justice.” We know from this teaching that from now on, God’s justice is all about mercy – that is why He sent Jesus. We also know from our own personal experience that most of the time our justice is all about judgment. And unfortunately many have experienced that judgment from within the*



*community of Christ. I had heard it said many times in the past, that “too many Christians eat their own”, or that “we Christians shoot our wounded.” I never wanted to believe that kind of stuff until the day I stumbled and failed. I was humiliated and devastated while trying to survive as some of my very own brothers and sisters within the body of Christ barbecued, quartered, and plated me. In those times my eyes were fully opened to the repulsive and ungodly behavior that I myself had used to devastate and humiliate others through my harsh words, hurtful judgments, and my self-righteous arrogance and spiritual pride. You see, it does not matter what it is, or who it*

*is, or even what has been done or not done. Theology disagreements, weakness of flesh, flawed character, a moments temptation gone bad – it does not matter. The point is that have all sinned... and we just do not have the mandate or the approval of God to put a rope around anyone's neck, or to bury or burn anyone alive in the name of righteousness. Especially since we full well know that Jesus died for us even while we were still in the act of sinning. As Christians most often we have just one opportunity to show the world the one thing He asked us to show... the love and mercy of God. We need to start with our own brothers, sisters, friends, family, and the*

*community of Jesus Christ. Yes, God is a God of judgment – but yet, God is not judgmental; and more importantly God is a God of Mercy, and yet, God is merciful. There is no other way to explain the **red-letter words** of Jesus regarding mercy. He said it – He meant it – He lived it... “**God approves those who show mercy, for they will be shown mercy.**”*

6. ***God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.** Pure hearts are hearts that are fully void of hatred, hostility, envy, jealousy, greed and manipulation. The attitude and mind of Jesus on this one is clear – literally. If you want to see God – then clear your heart of all things that do not reflect the*

*character and essentials of Jesus. Do you remember the Jesus Manifesto? Love openly, forgive quickly, give freely, speak truthfully, and pray faithfully! Within that manifesto is the key to pure heart. A selfish heart cannot live the manifesto - but a heart full of the Holy Spirit can. The Holy Spirit reminds us, warns us, corrects us, convicts us, humbles us, empowers us, and leads us to a pure heart. That whole process is a daily venture of believing, trusting, obeying, and living by faith. The only way to keep that process from becoming completely static is through daily repentance. I know that most “cheap grace’ers” are not buying in at this point, but I ask you*

*to please hear Jesus on this one. It is impossible to have a pure heart if we are not repenting every day.*

*Repentance is first the acknowledgement that we are nothing without Jesus – are you with me?*

*Secondly, repentance is crying out to Him for what we need – we need Jesus.*

*Daily repentance clears our hearts of ourselves, of our sin, and of everything but Him.*

*Understand, we are not repenting because we doubt His grace, or do not trust His forgiveness – but we are repenting daily to purify our hearts and to find His.*

*Are you still there? Is this not true? Of course it is. When we offer our hearts completely to Him everyday, He fills and refills us with His Spirit, and*

*with His heart. And with His Spirit and with His heart each day our hearts become pure. And finally, with a pure heart (the heart of Jesus), we can see without the obstruction of sin and shame. We can see God. God approves those whose hearts are pure... What's in your heart?*

**May 19<sup>th</sup> 2013**

## Read the Red: Turning Red – The 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon of Jesus (2nd Conclusion)

7. *God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.* We all know someone (or we are that someone) who is just not happy unless there is some kind of contention, competition, or conflict going on all the time. I probably would fit into the category of – enjoys a consistent low-grade level of antagonism, and competitive dialogue. Nobody ever puts that kind of stuff in his or her Christian Mingle or E-Harmony bio. There are also those people who have developed various levels of hostility in their character, and it has become necessary

*and natural for them to “pick a fight” or “stir up trouble.” But we all know that at the end of the day that this type behavior is still a choice, and is not a healthy or godly one. And more importantly, it is just not pleasing or acceptable to God. He has provided a different attitude and character for us to embrace and to live within. As Jesus speaks to the crowd He is revealing God’s new plan for living as part of the Kingdom of Heaven. He says... **God approves those who seek for, strive towards and make sacrifice for peace.** So when all is said and done for us to find the approval and favor of God, we must (for our part) pursue peace. Just like the rest of the “Blessed are you’s”*



*the chances of doing any of them outside of Christ are not good. In fact, it is impossible. With Christ – peace is possible, without Him – impossible. So, with that in mind, there are three very important things we must know to make the peace of Jesus Christ possible in our life. One: Jesus Promised Us Peace "I am leaving you with a gift -peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give." (John 14:27) Two: Jesus Prayed for Our Peace "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace." (Luke 19:42) "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all*

*be one (peace), just as you and I are one - as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.” (John 17:20-21) Three: Jesus is Our Peace “For He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-17) “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will*

*have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)*

8. *God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

*God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way. (NLT) It is more than little interesting to hear Jesus tell us that we can have the approval, the favor and the kingdom of God by how we live, and what kind of heart and attitude we have while we*

*are doing it - only to have Him say... this attitude and lifestyle will bring us persecution. Are we supposed to then play the victim? No... that is not what He was saying at all. The point of these particular **red-letter words** from Jesus is so that we not only know the truth, but so that we can have the strength and courage to live by the truth. Jesus is being completely honest. Following Him the way He wants us to follow Him will not be easy. Regardless of whether you and I are following Jesus we can still bounce a check if we don't put money in our bank account, our car will still break down if we don't maintain it properly and put gasoline in it, and our wife could still leave us and our dog can still hate us if we don't treat them the way we know we should treat them. Coming to God, and following Jesus does not always guarantee our best life now. In fact, what Jesus is truly saying is*

*this, “sometimes when we follow Him the way we should follow Him all hell can break loose.” People can hate and hurt you, people can lie about you, people can betray you, people can do evil things to you, they can even crucify you.*

*"If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master. Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the One who sent me. John 15:18-22*

*If we truly follow Jesus we can expect it – that is just part of the journey. The advice from Jesus is simple... “be happy about it, yeah, in fact, be glad about it – God approves of you, and will give you His Kingdom.” But in May of 2013 we don’t want to read the red that way. We would rather read it as... blessings, promises, and prosperity.*

*Unfortunately that interpretation is not in the red – it is in pencil (easily erased). Another important perspective meant to help us embrace what Jesus says here is found in the form of His words of comfort. He said, “There have been a lot of good men and women who were treated the same way and even worse – there is a worthy reward waiting for you in heaven.” We are in good company, and all of those who have already gone through what we are going through, are now a witness to what we face before us. How do we do it?*

## ***RED LETTER LOVE***

***LOVE GOD - LOVE EACH OTHER - LOVE YOUR  
NEIGHBOR - LOVE YOURSELF - LOVE YOUR ENEMY –  
LOVE SINNERS - LOVE WHAT IS GOOD - LOVE TRUTH -  
LOVE JUSTICE - LOVE MERCY***

***May 26th – What a Difference the Red Makes  
(Matthew 5:13-16) "You are the salt of the earth. But  
what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you  
make it salty again? It will be thrown out and  
trampled underfoot as worthless. "You are the light  
of the world - like a city on a hilltop that cannot be  
hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a  
basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it  
gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way,  
let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that  
everyone will praise your heavenly Father.***

## *Introduction*

I think we have quickly discovered that *Reading the Red* is going to be quite a journey for all of us.

Getting our minds and hearts wrapped around the expectations of Jesus regarding our attitude and behavior is going to take some adjustment, but I think we can all agree that it is time for that kind of change in our lives. Moving forward into Matthew's biography of Jesus (chapter 5)... We will start to see the first responses to His three-year *red-letter tour* with type instruction and expectation. For the people gathered around Jesus there is a mountain of hostility, corruption, greed, brokenness, and hopelessness for Him to speak to. With His polarizing and revealing way of teaching God's timeless truth His gatherings were intense and as explosive as dynamite. Every time He spoke to the people, to His disciples, or to His critics the mountain of unrighteous religion and



human rebellion had another hole blown right through it. In verses *13-16*, He continues His theme of the possibilities for each one to reestablish a new identity, and to embrace a new moral and ethical responsibility by redefining each ones self-worth, and re-directing questionable character through the love and forgiveness of God, faith in Him as defined by the Kingdom of Heaven and not by the kingdom of this world. His teaching features even today a new way of worship, and highlights a new way of living with and for one another instead of living against and in spite of each another. He starts this distinctive process by de-centralizing the self-centric purpose and mission of each and every person. As we have been saying since we started *Read the Red*, “it was hard to hear then, and even harder to hear now.” It was like a mission impossible. I really like the odds and the sound of that so I came up with a *Mission*

**Impossible** version of the red-letter words from verses 13-16. It goes something like this... *“Good morning Mr. Isaac, your mission Steve, should you choose to accept it... you are to be the **salt of the earth**, and the **light of the world**. Your identity is that you are to become the complete **expression of Me**, each day of the mission. You will be under constant surveillance, so this identity will become your permanent cover. You are to **be distinct and intentional**, and your responsibility is to **make a difference** by reaching other operatives (which I will provide) with the news of what I have done in you. You are not alone in this mission, but your contact with the KOG, can only be through Me. If you are to successfully complete this mission your ego, like this message will self- -destruct in five seconds.”*

But we all know that in Christ all things are possible... including this mission to become salt and

light to our world. Lets start with a breakdown of what He expects from us.

***Common Uses for Salt:*** *There are 14,000 documented uses for salt. Most notably salt is used to... add flavor and to preserve food, clean stains or purify water, antiseptic or mouthwash against bacteria, repellant to insects and ants, melt ice or make ice cream, skin treatment, put out grease fires, eliminate odor, cure meat, relieving tired muscles, treating poison ivy, bee stings and mosquito bites.*

***Most Common Context For Salt in the Bible:***

***Witness – Testimony – Example – Holiness – Consecration - Profession – Proclamation – Purification*** *To purify or flavor – to sanctify, to make holy, to heal and to be give witness to the hope and salvation of the Kingdom of God.*

***God’s Use and Man’s Need for Light:*** *The human*

*needs for light are endless. To stimulate and stabilize the solar system, to provide vision, visibility, navigation and illumination, to create our human biological rhythms and to naturally bring about the earth's change of seasons, to generate the bodies natural vitamins, to balance and maintain the earth's eco--system and to generate and regenerate food sources within plant life, to treat disease and illness.*

***Most Common Context For Light in the Bible:***

***Truth – Revelation – Hope – Understanding – Salvation - Pathway*** To illuminate or expose the darkness, to signal new life and a new mercy found within the love of God, to bring understanding and revelation of the truth and the hope of glory through Jesus Christ. To show and bring the glory of the Almighty God to this earth and to give light and hope to it's fallen and sinful creatures.

*“Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each*

*other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:18-20)*

*Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. (Isaiah 9:1)*

*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. (Isaiah 9:2)*

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of*

*the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!*  
(Isaiah 9:6-7)

### ***Read the Red***

#### ***June 2nd – What a Difference the Red Makes***

***(Matthew 5:13-16)*** "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. "You are the light of the world - like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

#### ***Mission Impossible***

Last week I used the idea of a “Mission Impossible” when considering the expectations and mission that

Jesus revealed in what we now refer to as His ***“red-letter teaching.”*** That is why when many people ***“read the red-letter words of Jesus”*** even today there is hesitation, or a *roll of the eyes*, as if to say...

*“yeah, that would be nice if we all could live like that - but in the real world, there is just no way anyone can.”* Relying simply on our own capabilities, or on what we can do ourselves I would tend to agree. But the whole idea of a ***mission impossible*** is that in reality the mission ***is possible*** if it is done in ***the only way that is possible.***

***“You are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.”***

For everyone who has ever read, heard, or considered those words of Jesus spoken that day must remember, that He also said ***“Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”***

*(Matthew 19:26) We must remember that He also*

asked and said, "**What do you mean, if I can?**

**Anything is possible if a person believes.**" (Mark

9:23) And so it is with that kind of understanding and faith in Christ that we move forward to fully embrace His mission – our mission. ***The mission called impossible.***

### ***To Be Salt and Light We Must***

#### ***1. Become the Complete Expression of Jesus***

*Do not get lost or overwhelmed in trying to do the same things that Jesus did, but rather we commit to having and being of the same heart and mind as Jesus does. We value what He values.*

#### ***2. Become Distinct and Intentional About our Faith and How We Live***

Intentionally and purposefully infuse into our *day-to-day* life the same thoughts and the same



feelings that Jesus has. His thoughts are for His people, to be and to do the will of the Father.

His feelings are compassionate, to offer forgiveness, hope, and life to all who will receive it. He does this in us by *Red Letter*

*Love... LOVE GOD - LOVE EACH OTHER - LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR - LOVE YOURSELF - LOVE YOUR ENEMY – LOVE SINNERS - LOVE WHAT IS GOOD - LOVE TRUTH - LOVE JUSTICE - LOVE MERCY*

*1. Embrace Our Role as A Difference Maker*

Here is the reality of it all... *His mission is our mission.* We can run from this mission, we can hide from this mission, we can even say to ourselves “this is not my mission, this is not my mission, this is not my mission” – but it will always be our mission – and we know it. So, if we accept, embrace, and live our life in and for

this mission we will always be a difference maker – our life will always make a difference. We will always be salt, and we will always be light.

Five hundred years before Jesus came to earth Isaiah the prophet spoke these words about what a difference the red makes...

*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. (Isaiah 9:2) For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. (Isaiah 9:6-7)*

**Read The Red - June 9<sup>th</sup> 2013**

***THERE IS NO GRAY **IN THE RED** (Matthew 5: 21-48)***

*Torah says... **But I Say***

Jesus continues to teach us how to live in a real world as a people of the kingdom of God. This IS NOT merely ancient law enhanced or reworded. This is also not specific to all of the Galilean Jews who showed up to hear Jesus speak that day.

***This is How He Wants You and I to Think and Live  
as His Followers.***

In His “Sermon on the Mount” teaching, Jesus will use *six relevant and high profile laws of Torah* to reveal how the people can righteously fulfill each one of those laws before God in their day-to-day living. They were as follows...

***Murder***

***Adultery***

***Divorce***

***Vows***

***Revenge***

***Love for Neighbor***

He starts His teaching by saying as He often did —

*“Torah says, **but I say.**”* What we need to remember is that by saying this, Jesus is indeed giving a new law - and so we need to fully embrace then, that He is ***not throwing out the old one.*** What Jesus does is use the written (*logos*) word to affirm the spoken (*rhema*) word of God. Jesus had the authority to do this, because of course He is *“the Word”*, the living (*incarnate*) Word. Let me explain. As a rabbi, Jesus will use the Law of Torah as the *hyesod* (foundation) from which He will build a new covenant with His people, and to give a new commandment as to how to ***think, speak, and live*** while rightfully obeying the law of God.

***In Christ, it is revealed that God is indeed - the Law.  
But, in Christ, never again could the Law - be God.***

In doing this, Jesus keeps the law alive and relevant (*because the law can now only fulfilled in Him*), all the while clearing the way for a New Covenant with His people, and giving free access and hope for all mankind to not only find God, but to be welcomed by God – as a legitimate and beloved part of His Kingdom.

### *Torah Says Murder - Jesus Says Anger*

*"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone*

70

*has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.*

I have recently read that six out of every ten deaths in Chicago last year was a murder, and that most of those murders were "*crimes of anger*" caused by hostility among friends or those living within close community. Interesting that Jesus did not say that anger leads to murder, He said something even more profound - He said "anger is murder." We know from Paul the apostle, that there is a righteous anger against sin (*Ephesians 4:26*). But clearly here in this context Jesus is talking about a hostile and hateful anger of the heart against our neighbor and brother, and not an outrage against injustice and mercilessness. The context for the word *anger* here means "*a deep seeded hostility and malice that is fed*

*inwardly.*" In His teaching Jesus is describing a sinful experience that involves several levels of unhealthy emotion powered by unchecked, unchallenged, and renegade thinking. First there is a *causeless contained anger* that then explodes into words: "*Raca - you are an empty-headed person!*" Words such as these always add fuel to the fire, so that the words that follow are not contained, and the person speaking them burns on to the next level of personal attack and sinful anger to say, "*You are a fool – and you are an ignorant rebel*" An attack from that level of anger usually means – game on! And you know what? In almost every context we can think of - ***aggressive attacking anger*** is a foolish thing. It makes us into destroyers instead of builders. It steals from us our freedom, and makes us prisoners. Jesus says... "*To hurt and hate with hostility and malicious anger is to commit murder in*



*our hearts." (1 John 3:15)* This does not mean that we should go ahead and feel justified to murder someone we hate or are angry with, since we have already sinned against them inwardly. Obviously, our sinful feelings are not excuses for our sinful actions. Today you and I need to fully accept the law in Christ, and obey the new commandments of Jesus. *Sinful anger* damages our relationship with God as well as with our brothers, but it does not put us into jail as murderers. However, our prisons are full of people who have become murderers because they failed to control *sinful anger*. *Sinful anger* should be faced openly and honestly and should be confessed to God as sin in our life. We must go to our brother or sister and get the offense or issue settled - and we need to do it quickly! We cannot just keep worshipping as if it does not exist, or will somehow just go away. The longer we wait, the

more toxic it becomes and unmanageable the stronghold of anger! Emotionally we put ourselves into a torturous prison, when filled with hurt and anger fueled by pride and stubbornness we refuse to repent and to be reconciled (*made right with God*).  
(*Matthew 18:15-20*)

### *Torah Says Adultery – Jesus Says Desire (June 16<sup>th</sup>)*

*"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your*  
*)*  
*eye (even your good eye causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your hand (even your*

)  
*stronger hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*

The Torah said that if you were sexually promiscuous and unfaithful that you could actually be put to death for it. How is that for mercy? How much do you love the law now? Jesus turns up the intensity on the topic of adultery. He makes a powerful statement regarding what has always been a highly unpopular subject. He says, *“You can’t use legal cover to hide a moral failure.”* Meaning, *“Hey bro... sin is sin - you can’t hide behind the law.”* In manipulating and misusing the Torah, the Jews like all of us, had become very proficient at finding and living in the gray areas of the law and

then hiding in them. Jesus exposes one such gray area by pointing out *in the red* that in reality, even looking at someone with lust (wrongful desire) in our heart is actually the same as committing adultery with that person. As most of us know, our hearts can be corrupted easier than our bodies. According *the red-letters* it is not the “*doing the deed*” that is in question anymore – now it is “*the wrongful desire to do the deed*” with “*the wrong person*” that we are accountable for. What does that mean? *Allowing for, and indulging in, the temptation that will always be right there in front of us, creates wrongful desire.* There is a sure remedy for wrongful desire, and it will protect the heart and mind from this kind of sin. If he or she is not your husband or your wife then... ***Look away – Turn Away – Walk Away – Run Away!*** I highly recommend this choice above the *Red-Letter one*

*that Jesus suggested.* Lets see... gouge out and throw away your only good eye, or cut off your strong hand and throw it in the dumpster. The desire and intent of our heart is now at the core of what God's law and expectations are of His people. Remember, there is no gray area here. We can't just go have sex with somebody just because we have already wrongfully desired it in our heart. There is no provisional mulligan here.

***THERE IS NO GRAY – IN THE RED.***

***Torah Says Divorce – Jesus Says Faithfulness***

*"You have heard the law that says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.' But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful,*

*causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.*

*Torah law is very specific about divorce. But like with every law, there eventually becomes interpretive loopholes of which those who look for such things then use those loopholes to break that law - all the while maintaining that they are actually keeping the law. According to Torah law, a man is permitted to divorce his wife at will, and to send to her away from his home. The second aspect of Torah law highlights a Jewish women's vulnerability in divorce: the economic, physical, and psychological uprooting that is faced by the woman who has displeased her husband sufficiently enough to cause him to divorce her. However, the woman that day had no leverage to prevent or to refuse the divorce. Neither were there any written*

*provisions for her to divorce her husband. If she had a good reason for a divorce she could appeal to her husband to grant her a divorce, and if he agreed, then he would acquire “the get” and then give her a lawful written bill of divorce.*

*"When a man takes a wife and marries her, if she finds no favor in his eyes because of ervat davar (some fault or indecency) and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house--and she marries another man, and the latter... writes her a bill of divorce... or dies--then her former husband cannot marry her again because she has been defiled... " (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).*

*In the Torah, everything concerning divorce evolves around the term “ervat davar” which means; some form of indecency. The ancient sages of the Torah identified two schools of thought*

*regarding lawful divorce and the interpretation of “ervat davar.” The historical debate between the “House of Hillel” and the “House of Shammai” shows just how polarized even the interpretations of the Torah were. Hillel judged that a husband could divorce his wife under any act of indecency he believed took place. A burnt meal for instance. Shammai judged that the act of indecency could only be related directly to sexual conduct or misconduct. To us present day Gentiles this whole process is not only very messy interpretively, but was grossly unfair, ridiculously gender friendly (for the male), and easily manipulated by a corrupt and unfaithful heart. But once again, we are not Jews, living under Torah Law. We are new covenant disciples - obeying and fulfilling God’s law under the command and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In his invaluable historical works “Antiquities of the*



*Jews”, the great first century historian Josephus, who himself was a Jew from Jerusalem, wrote, that during the time of Jesus, divorce had become somewhat of a religious crisis – an uncontrolled nuisance (divorce gone wild). Josephus cited that the religious courts responsible for granting lawful divorces were granting divorces for many illegal reasons, of which included “under the altar pay-offs.” Consequently divorce among the Jews then became a critical social crisis because of the increasingly large numbers of scorned women and children within the city without any visible resources for food, housing, and traditional care. The Jewish Sanhedrin would request funding from Rome to support the crisis but as that funding trickled down through the powers that be very little got to the women and children in need – many of whom Jesus Himself was ministering to. It is*

*estimated that the divorce rate among the 70,000 Jews living in the metro Jerusalem area (30 sq. miles) during the time of Christ was an alarming 70%. This did not include the promiscuous transplanted Romans and Greeks. So it is against this backdrop, that Jesus delivers his “you have heard it said – but I say” instruction regarding divorce. Jesus was not happy with what He saw, and He was plainly letting the people know that this was not God’s plan for marriage. Jesus initial response in regards to Torah Law was as always – to emphasize the heart of God in the Torah itself. To see that, we need to look quickly at a dialogue Jesus has with the Pharisees regarding marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:7-9. The Pharisees are testing Jesus to see if His halachah (interpretation) matches that of the Sages and Rabbi’s. So they ask Jesus, “Can a man divorce his wife for any*

*reason”? It is the “ervat davar” question. Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and embrace his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” The Pharisees argue that Moses permitted divorce. Jesus responds with, “True that, Moses did, but only because of the unfaithfulness and hardness of men’s hearts. But that was not God’s original plan.” MEMO: Jesus is publicly resetting God’s intentions and expectation for a people who have completely lost sight of God’s heart for marriage, which is...*

*Divorce was not a God plan – it was a man plan.*

So what about us today? Of course we know that God hates divorce (God hates all sin) - but God does not hate us sinners. God hates divorce because of the hurt, confusion, and damage it causes within the lives of everyone involved – *husbands, wives, children, friendships – as well as our work and*

*faith-based communities.* As much as divorce is the **tearing up** of a legal agreement and spiritual covenant, it is even more so a **tearing apart** of the very emotional, spiritual, and family fiber of all peoples involved. In His *red-letters* Jesus takes the concepts and practice of the “Jerusalem style” divorce to task with a much deeper level of obligation than just “*the get*” (the legal and public record of a lawful divorce). *Torah says divorce – Jesus says faithfulness.* In Christ, any interpretation of the law on divorce would now have to reveal one’s faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God - and to the sacred marriage vow and covenant. Which by the way was acknowledged, blessed, and honored by God.

Remember what we said weeks ago... *Red letter Jesus is tough – but it is still the truth.* You and I can live with that – here is why. The essence and

very purpose of the divorce in ancient times was to make it legal and honorable for the woman to remarry if her husband divorced her – which happened frequently. Lets be clear today. Biblically defined divorce is not now, nor has it ever been, rightfully or righteously interpreted as an unpardonable or unforgivable sin. *“If we confess our sin, God in his mercy and love will forgive us, and will clean us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9) But we cannot with good conscience say... *“Well, I will get married, and if it doesn’t work out I will just get divorced.”* That is not faithfulness – that is being unfaithful from the very beginning. In the gospel of John chapter 4, there is a dialogue and connection made between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. In their interaction we can get a glimpse at the heart of God regarding divorce and just how Jesus responded in this instance to His own red-letter words. (Read

John 4:1-30) Although Jesus reads this woman's mail, He does not kick down her mail box and burn her at the stake. He tells her the truth about who she is (which is painful), and then He makes invitation for her find a new identity and new life in Him. Amazing!

*What **Red-letter Jesus** Wants Us to Know...*

*In marital vows and covenants the truest intent our heart is to be honorable in our marriage - sincerely desiring to practice faithfulness with God, and with our spouses. If this is indeed our heart, then we must know that God will approve us, and He will be faithful to us in those times and circumstances that we ourselves find that we have failed and been unfaithful – even in something as important and as valued to Him as our marriage.*

## *There is No Gray **In the Red** (Continued) June 23<sup>rd</sup>*

### *Torah Says Vows – **Jesus Says Honor***

*"You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.' But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.*

*Lets be clear about the context of Jesus command here. The context is about our word as people of God. Are we a truth-teller or a storyteller, are we full of truth or are we full of ourselves! Is our*

*reputation one of honesty or is it dishonesty – honor or dishonor. The Torah was of course was set in stone on this... Moses came down from His Mt. Sinai epiphany with the tablets in his backpack engraved by the finger of God. God was definitely against dishonesty, breaking vows, and telling lies. Levitical law continued to address the issue for the people.*

- 1. That a man should fulfill whatever (words of intention) he has spoken (Deuteronomy 23:24).*
- 2. Do not swear (promise) needlessly (Exodus 20:7).*
- 3. Do not violate the terms of an oath or swear (promise) falsely (Leviticus 19:12).*
- 4. Only dissolve vows, according to the rules set forth in the Torah (Numbers*



30:2-17).

5. *Do not break a vow (oath) (Numbers 30:3).*

1. *To swear by His name truly  
(Deuteronomy 10:20) (affirmative).*

1. *Be prompt in fulfilling vows or pledged offerings (Deuteronomy 23:22).*

*Over the years, the people and their religious leaders had found many ways to live in the gray areas of all of those laws – but Jesus came to say that there is no gray **in the red**. The people and religious leaders had become so dishonest that they felt as if they needed to “swear, promise and make an oath” to affirm that the words they were saying were actually the truth. For example: “In the name of everything that is holy, I swear on my mothers*

*grave, by God, I promise I'm telling the truth."*

*Crazy huh? So Jesus said, "Stop the craziness – just say No." "Torah law says – do not lie. But I say – don't say, what you don't mean."*

*From now on its gonna' go like this:*

1. Say **No** to exaggerated speeches, overblown sermons, hyper-spiritualized vocabularies and pious lectionaries.
2. Say **No** to condescending admonitions and spiritual deceptions.
3. Say **No** to misleading stories of *"God moments, and psuedo-miracles"* just to misuse and manipulate the faith of the masses.
4. Say **No** to saying... *"I'll be praying for you"* and then never praying for them!
5. Finally, just say **No** to saying... *"I love you brother", "See you Sunday" and "God bless you"* if we really don't mean any of it.

*Somehow like the Jewish people during Jesus-time, we stopped thinking and believing that these type things matter to God, or that we would be accountable for them. Grace has been our out for many things that frankly don't fit with the expectations and teachings of Christ. However, **Red-letter Jesus** reminds us once again that all of these matter, and are viewed by God as dishonest and dishonorable in His kingdom. Jesus upheld all of that when He said... **Hey, just let your yes be yes, and your no be no – leave it at that.**”*

### ***Torah Says Revenge – Jesus Says Forgiveness (June 30<sup>th</sup>)***

*"You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek,*

*offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.*

Torah law said that a person should get an “*eye for an eye*” and a “*tooth for a tooth*”, and even in today’s skewed sense of relevant justice that still seems (in a PC kind of way) fair. But red letter Jesus says, “*that will not work anymore in the God’s Kingdom.*” Outrageously Jesus said, “*Don’t retaliate at all, (and FYI) don’t forget to live generously and forgive others the same way He has forgiven you.*” My immediate emotional response to allowing a physical attack or aggression against my person is – “there is no way, no how, am I going to stand here and take this from you.” But knowing

all we think we know as twenty-first century responders to this seemingly ridiculous two thousand year old notion, we can determine rather quickly that these words of Jesus were not quite literal, and even if they were He did not intend for Christians to render themselves helpless as a physical doormat or punching bag for anyone (Christian or not). In theory, all that thinking is fairly accurate - but it is where we usually go to next in our personal theology or personal religion that most likely will cause us to either miss or reject the point and context of *Jesus red-letter words*. Here is what I mean by that... In our evangelical Christian theological upbringing it is acceptable to conclude that as “child of God” and as “kingdom royalty” He (God) does not expect us be weak, or to act as second-class citizens in this world. Our personal religion has us believing that...

1. The people of God should never back down to the darkness of this world.
2. Never be at the mercy of the enemies of God.
3. Because we are Christians we are justified in Christ, to vindicate our self, or our just cause.
4. We should fear no one, but God Himself.

Yes, these principles are theoretically true, but they are in the wrong context for the *red-letter words of Jesus* here in Matthew 5. Now, if *John Wayne as Rooster Cogburn, Bruce Willis as John McLain, or Robert Downey Jr. as Ironman* were God (and many believe they are) then that all this might be true. But this is why *red-letter Jesus* is so unique and polarizing. In fact, it is for *red-letter truths* such as this that Jesus was and still is hated. Our gray response is always...

*What Jesus asks of His followers is not fair, and is*

*unreasonable in real life!*

But before we shut our heart down to the Holy Spirit and completely lose our faith and trust in God and the *red-letter words of Jesus*, we have to remember that all of these laws (over 613) are filtered and fulfilled through only two... and that God will actually use those two laws to both redeem and vindicate not only Himself but all those who love and trust Him.

### ***LOVE GOD - AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER.***

*When we have been hurt or attacked personally by an enemy or someone we thought was a friend, our biggest struggle will be to trust God about them.*

- 1. We wrestle with, how does forgiving and loving an enemy end up being fair for me?**
- 2. If I trust God with this “slap in the face” or “stab in the back” and leave it in His hands,**

**will He really vindicate me?**

**3. Trust... Do I trust that God's vindication is better than my own??**

For us, oftentimes the only motivation for seeking revenge or retaliation against our offender is just because in our pride or hurt we don't think it is right for someone to get away with the wrong that we believe they have done to us, or someone else. But what we need to remember is that *in this world, no one is ever really free of the consequences of their sin. We also need to remember that in Christ, anyone (I do mean anyone) can escape the deserved eternal judgment for his or her sin – and of course, this would include both you and I.*

*Now ask yourself why that is? Here is your answer. It is because Jesus chose not to take revenge or retaliation on us for our sin and rebellion - even though it would have been (according to Torah law)*



*the fair thing for Him to do. Now, aren't you glad that even though Torah says retaliation and revenge that Jesus said... forgiveness and mercy?*

Jesus did not retaliate. What Jesus did was *forgive us* - allowing Himself to be arrested, crucified and murdered all so He could take the blame for our sin.

I think we've said enough here. *Torah Says Revenge – Jesus Says Forgiveness*

*Torah Says Love Your Neighbor – Jesus Says Love Your Enemy*

*“You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both*

*the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

This Torah Law is the last of the six that Jesus reset and redirected into the new Kingdom of God version on this day at Galilee. Again it is important to understand that this like the others Torah laws He addressed is a good law. But like the other laws the people and the religious leaders of Jesus day they had found a gray area with which to interpret this law to better facilitate their personal religion or personal theology. In the red-letter reset Jesus goes back in and starts with His usual reset/redirect process (*“You have heard it said – but I say”...*).

Again, Jesus does not remove or resend the law – He is (under God’s authority) resetting and redirecting the law. This process was so very offensive to the Pharisees, because it felt to them like Jesus was attacking and discrediting Moses and the Prophets of the old covenant – this was blasphemy! In reality Jesus was fulfilling an old law with a new covenant. Jesus was returning the law to its intended place – the heart! To do this, He had to remove all gray with the red... because ***WE KNOW THAT THERE IS NO GRAY IN THE RED!***

Lets look at the law itself. First we know that this law...

### ***LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR***

is of course, Mosaic law - which means (*ancient of days - right off the mountain - onto the tablet - direct from the finger of God*).

*Read the Red (July 14<sup>th</sup>)*

*The 413 - The Greatness of Giving our Best*

*(Matthew 6:1-4), (Mark 12:38-40)*

*"Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding. When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure – play actors I*

*call them – treating a prayer meeting and a street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it - quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.*

***(THE MESSAGE)***

*“Be careful not to parade your acts of tzedakah in front of people in order to be seen by them! If you do, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you do tzedakah, don’t announce it with trumpets to win people’s praise, like the hypocrites in the synagogues and on the streets. Yes! I tell you, they have their reward already! But you, when you do tzedakah, don’t even let your left*

*hand know what your right hand is doing. Then your tzedakah will be in secret; and your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.”*  
(*Complete Jewish Bible*)

### *Getting the 413 from the Red-Letters*

Jesus taught the radical and revolutionary Galileans alongside the Sea of Galilee about about how the old law would finally be made complete through a new covenant with God. Jesus speaks to a people who are ready for a new message of a new kingdom - they got it. That of course was two thousand years ago. Today, Jesus speaks directly to us in these *four verses*, and in these *four verses* there is *one point*, and in this *one point* there are *three eternal truths*, *this is "the 413.) The question is – do we get it?*

## **4 Verses**

*"Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do - blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."*

**(NLT)**

## **1 Point**

**Always Do What We Do for God:**

### **1. Do it for Love**

**2. *Do it Freely***

**3. *Do it for Real***

**4. *Do it Then Keep it a Secret***

### **3 Truths**

1. *As part of the kingdom of God, whatever we give (whether it is time, talent, or treasure), we must give with a sincere heart, so that it may be pleasing to God, and a blessing to men. Then and only then can our giving be a good (righteous) gift.*

2. *As part of the kingdom of God, whatever we give (whether it is time, talent, or treasure), we must have the right motive in our heart, so that it may be pleasing to God, and a blessing to*



*men. Then and only then can our giving be an honorable (righteous) gift.*

3. *As part of the kingdom of God, whatever we give (whether it is time, talent, or treasure), we must give it from our heart as worship to God - to be seen only by God, so that it may be pleasing to Him, and a blessing to men. Then and only then can our giving be a faithful (righteous) gift.*

## ***Conclusion***

### ***pastor steve's - Red-Letter Jamz***

1. *Give and do good to show how great God is - not to be told how great you are.*
2. *Give and serve from a humble heart -*

*not from a heart that craves  
recognition and reward.*

3. *Don't just act good – find the heart of Jesus, and be good.*
4. *Don't claw, scratch, plot and scheme for notoriety and greatness – love, serve, give and forgive in faithfulness and humility.*
5. *It is never the right thing - to use the goodness of a God thing - to build the fame, fortune, and greatness of a man thing.*
6. *Find a new place and a new way to share the goodness of God with all that is in your heart - under the radar, off the grid, lower-profile, behind the scenes, backstage and behind closed doors, without the pride and without*

*the ego, clean heart, clear mind, free-form and pure-flow.*

7. *The reward for giving to God and to others of our time-talent-treasure is the life, love, and mercy of Jesus. Is there anything richer? Is there anything better? Is there anything more alive than living the 413 - living the red-letters?*

***Read the Red (July 21st)***

***Praying the Red***

***(Matthew 6:5-13, 7:7-11)***

*When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.*

*But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."*

*Praying Red - Praying How and What Jesus Said*

- *(Verse 6) - We Should Pray Apart From*

## *Everyone Else Before We Pray in Public.*

*It is not wrong to pray in public gatherings (1 Timothy 2:1), to pray over our food (John 6:11), or to seek God's help in desperation or difficulty (John 11:41-42; Acts 27:35). But at the heart of what Jesus was teaching was to understand that it is not right to pray in public places or gatherings if we are not in the habit of praying individually (on your own) or privately. People who hear and see us praying in front of everyone are being given the wrong impression (intentional or not) and are led to believe and assume that we practice a faithful and consistent prayer life, when in reality we are not... this is deceiving and fraudulent. The word "closet" translated from the original Greek means; "a private chamber." It could also refer to the storage closets or rooms in a house. We*

*certainly know that Jesus prayed privately (Mark 1:35); so did the great prophets Elisha (2 Kings 4:32) and Daniel (Daniel 6:10).*

- *(Verses 7-8) - We Need to Pray in Sincerity.*

*First, lets make sure that we understand that a request or a petition for prayer that is repeated does not make it a "vain repetition." Both Jesus and Paul repeated their requests and petitions in prayer (Matthew 26:36-46; 2 Corinthians 12:7-8). A prayer becomes a "vain repetition" only if it is filled with babbling of insincere and self-edifying words that do no reflect the desire to seek and do the will of God. Sometimes the insincere reciting or repeating of memorized prayers can become vain repetition. Many unbelieving Gentiles prayed repetitious and insincere prayers in their pagan ceremonies – some out of ignorance and others out of*

*Godlessness (1 Kings 18:26). It has been said that... "All of us have one routine or frequented prayer in our system; and once we get rid of it, then we can really learn to pray!" I think there is some measure of truth to that statement. We all have weaknesses in our prayer – although that is not always a bad thing it really important to know that God knows our heart, Christ prays for us, and if we are sincere and faithful in prayer our weaknesses will be made strong. The point of Jesus teaching here is to expose praying insincere and selfish prayers.*

- *(Verse 9-13) - We Need To Pray For God's Will. This prayer is known familiarly as "The Lord's Prayer," or the "Our Father," but "The Disciples' Prayer" would be a more accurate title. Jesus did not give this prayer to us to be memorized and recited a given number of times.*

*In fact, He gave this prayer to help us from using vain repetitions. Jesus did not say, "Pray these words over and over." He said, "When you pray, pray this way"; that is, "Use this prayer as a pattern, not as a substitute." The purpose of prayer is to worship, glorify and honor God's name, and to ask for help to accomplish His will on earth.*

*This prayer begins with Gods interests and values, not our own: God's name - God's kingdom - and God's will. Someone once said, "Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done in earth." We have no right to ask God for anything that will dishonor His name, delay His kingdom, or disturb His will on earth. It is worth noting that there are no singular pronouns in this prayer; they are all plural. It*



*begins with "OUR Father." When we pray, we must remember that we are part of God's global family of believers – and that He has the “the whole globe in His hands.” We have no right to ask for ourselves anything that would harm another member of the family. If we are Praying in the will of God, the answer will be a blessing to all of God's people on many levels and always one way or another. If we put God's values and concerns first, then we can without pride or resentment bring our own needs to Him. God is concerned about our needs and knows them even before we mention them (Matthew 6:8). Some might then ask, if this is true, then why pray? Hey, we pray because Jesus said to! We pray because prayer is the way God has chosen to have our needs and concerns met (James 4:1-3). Prayer prepares us*

*for the proper expectation and right use of the answer. If we know our need, and if we voice it to God, trusting Him for His provision, then we will make better use of the answer, than if God forced it on us without our asking. Jesus made it right to pray for daily physical needs, for forgiveness, and for guidance and protection from evil. However, "Lead us not into temptation" does not mean that God tempts His believers and followers (James 1:13-17). In this prayer we are asking God to guide us so that we will not find ourselves out of His will, and getting involved in situations and circumstances of temptation (1 John 5:18). Nor do we want to pray in a way that is adversarial or meant to try and manipulate and obligate God to miraculously rescue us (Matthew 4:5-7).*

- *(Verses. 14-15). We Need to Pray For a Forgiving Heart Toward Others*

*In this "add-on" to the prayer, Jesus expanded the last phrase of Matthew 6:12, "as we forgive our debtors." He later repeated this lesson to His disciples (Mark 11:19-26). He was not teaching that believers could earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others; that would obviously be a contradiction to God's free gift of grace and mercy. However, if we have truly experienced and understand God's forgiveness, then we will have an open heart to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).*

*Jesus explained this principle in the "Parable of the Ungrateful Servant" (Matthew 18:21-35).*

*We have seen that true praying should be a "family habit and tradition" ("Our Father"). If the members of the family (no matter what form)*

*can't get along with each another, how can they claim to have a right relationship with the Father? The emphasis in 1 John 4 is that we show our love for God by loving our brothers. When we forgive each other, we are not earning the right to prayer - the right and privilege of prayer is a part of our heritage as sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:15-16). Forgiveness belongs to the matter of fellowship (right relationship): If I am not in fellowship (right relationship) with God, I cannot pray effectively as I should. But fellowship (right relationship) with my brother helps to determine my fellowship (right relationship) with God; and so, forgiveness is vitally important to prayer. Finally, since prayer involves glorifying and honoring God's name, welcoming the coming of God's kingdom (2 Peter 3:12), and*

*helping to accomplish God's will on earth, the one praying must not have sin in his heart (right heart). If God answered the prayers of a rebellious believer who had an unforgiving spirit, He would effectively dishonor His own name – and that's not going happen. How could God work through such a person to get His will done on earth? If God gave him his requests and answered his prayers, He would be encouraging sin and rebellion! The important thing about prayer is not simply getting an answer, but being the kind of person whom God can trust with an answer.*

***Valuable Stuff: According to the Red (Part I)***

***(Matthew 6:19-7:1) August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013***

*"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in*

*heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. "Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life - whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more*

*valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring it's own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.*



## ***Introduction***

Our natural tendency is to separate the spiritual world from the material world. But in the **red-letter words of Jesus** there is no separation between the two. In many of His teachings and parables, Jesus made it clear that a healthy attitude and a right heart toward material possession (our stuff), and our wealth (our money) is a sign of spiritual growth, spiritual maturity, and emotional health (*Luke 12:13; 16:1-31*). According to the red letters this has to be about making God's priorities our priorities, and God's values our values.

**Red-letter Jesus** exposed the jealous and greedy hearts of the Pharisees (*Luke 16:14*) - and when that happened the people could see the corrupt use of religion, fraudulent faith in God, and the evil power used to exhort and steal money. As Jesus spoke **red-**

*letter words* the people could see the Pharisees for who they really were.

*If we have the true heart of Christ in our lives, then we will have a right attitude and the right way of thinking towards “our stuff, and our money.”*

Nowhere in scripture did Jesus promote poverty and criticize anyone for legitimately earning or getting wealthy. Remember, God made all things, including the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and precious metals and natural resources we use. *God stood by what He creates when He acknowledged that everything thing He makes is good (Genesis 1:31).* The problem we have then is that we do not always value the same things that God values as good. God also knows that we need certain things in order to live (Matthew 6:32). In fact, Paul the apostle wrote to his intern Timothy that God has

given us "*richly all things to enjoy*" (1 Timothy 6:17). We need to understand that ...

***It is not wrong for us to possess things - but it is wrong for those things to possess us.***

I need you to hear me say something out loud.

***The things we own can and will possess us when they become more important to us than our love of God, and love for one another.***

Jesus was outspoken to His followers about living for the things of this life above our desire and destiny for the next. He spoke often to His disciples and followers about the painful consequences and long-term damage to us and to our children when consumed by greediness and materialism.

### ***Valuable Stuff***

***Treasure*** – First off, when Jesus speaks of treasure he is not speaking about "*Captain Jack and Pirates*

*of the Caribbean.*” The treasure that **red-letter Jesus** speaks of is that person or persons who build and become consumed only by gathering material and temporal wealth, power and recognition on earth. The conflict and contradiction is when we allow those things to take away our value and vision for those things that are eternal and last forever. **God** is eternal, **our soul** is eternal, **love** is eternal, **mercy** endures forever... money is not, fame is not, clothes, cars, houses, jewelry, stock and bonds etc. - are not. They are not evil - but they are not eternal - don't count on them to be.

*We can use those things to build and advance the kingdom of God, but we cannot allow those to be the kingdom that becomes our God.*

Bottom line here... temporal treasures built here in this life are destined for destruction – they will eventually decay - just like a moth destroys cloth,

like rust destroys metal, or like a thief steals and destroys what belongs to us (James 5:2-3). Where your treasure is - there your heart is. That is not an irrelevant outdated saying - it is an eternal truth. Because it is eternal truth Jesus taught that the eternal treasures are secured in heaven, and can never be compromised or destroyed by rust, decay, or theft.

***Vision*** - The Pharisees had a vision problem. They no longer saw what God saw because their spiritual eyes had become diseased (*Matthew 6:22*). With their eyes they become consumed and corrupted by money, wealth, and power. This corruption led them from the spiritual light that is God, and into the spiritual darkness that is sin. They had no sight or vision for the goodness or values of God. **They could not see or hear red-letter Jesus.** In that darkness they were slaves to the evil master of

greed, gluttony, and avarice. Their desire for money was so great they were failing in their service to God and ministry to His people. The Aramaic word for money; ***mamona, or mammon*** is accurately translated as "wealth or property." To be pre-occupied by "mammon" is to be sinfully selfish and short-sighted, resulting in a spiritual blindness that can take away all insight, wisdom and vision for what God has planned or purposed for the life and future of His followers. It is true that without vision the people perish.

***So What Do We Do?***

***Valuable Stuff: According to the Red (Part II)***

***August 11th, 2013***

***Matthew 6:25-34***

*"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday*

*life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?*

*"And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate*

*the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.*

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*Then someone called from the crowd, "Teacher,*



*please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."*

*Luke 16:10-12*

*"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?"*

According to the **red letters** earthly wealth and possession needs to be about God's priorities becoming our priorities, and God's values

becoming our values.

**Jesus said it plainly, but to so many it somehow still remains a mystery... "*stockpile and reserve your treasures in heaven.*" So how do we do that?**

***We begin by*** actively engaging our time, talent, and treasure in those things *on earth* that are valuable to God *in heaven*. Amazingly when we wholeheartedly commit to this, there is no time or desire to lament, stress, or to be overly anxious about the ordinary needs in life. Jesus did not say these needs were not important or necessary. Listen to this guarantee given by the apostle Paul.

*"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 4:19-20 ESV

***What Jesus did say... was that our need for God and His kingdom should become more important***

*and necessary to us than any of those physical and temporal needs.* In a spiritually practical way to move this value system forward in our lives we learn to start each day by trusting God, and with the sincere intention to follow Jesus. *And during each day we live and love in the ways that will best reveal the heart and character of God.* Jesus used the example of the faithless Pharisees and their obvious pursuit of material and physical things.

**Red-letter** Jesus told the Galileans (*and us for that matter*) not to worry or to allow ourselves to be become controlled or tormented by the physical needs in a material world. *As hard as it is for us to accept and understand this teaching, red-letter* *Jesus tells us simply that life is far more important than material or physical things.*

*(Matthew verse 25)*

Most people in ancient Israel had very little

material possession or wealth beyond basic necessities — food, clothing and shelter. Because their ability to acquire these basic necessities often depended (*especially in rural areas outside of Jerusalem*) on seasonal rains or (in Egypt) the flooding of the Nile. These people had plenty of cause for stress, fear, and anxiety even about food and clothing.

***As Jesus teaches the difficult but critical need for complete God trust***, He illustrates to the people by reminding about how birds of the air are fed by the heavenly Father, and how field lilies grow naturally in a way that makes their beauty and splendor even greater than King Solomon. Jesus wanted them to remember that ***God has divinely included into His Creation plan the natural means by which all things are cared for***. The birds are fed because they diligently work to maintain their lives. But they do

not store up large amounts of food, and continually work, and what they need is there for them when they need it. Similarly the lilies grow naturally through a daily process of sun, rain, and soil. Jesus then reminds His listeners that they are certainly far more valuable to God than birds and flowers!

So then the *red-letter truth* becomes this ... *any person who believes and has faith in God need not be anxious about his existence (verse 31).*

Stress, worry, and anxiety attacks over life and it's needs can never produce food, shelter, wealth, or the time we need. So Jesus said don't be like the godless pagans who were consumed with the desires of their flesh and their many physical needs; instead Jesus suggested that His disciples and those who sought for righteousness should be actively engaged in those things valued by God, His kingdom, and His goodness. The needs of a Christ

follower would then be provided for in God's timing and for God's glory.

*This is what **red-letter** daily faith looks like. No bells and whistles, no fame and fortune, no perks and special favors or permissions. Just everyday trusting God, and then believing that He loves you as much you say He does - and loving Him as much as you say you do.* Three times in this teaching Jesus says... "don't worry" (verses 25, 31, 34). He was saying... *that kind of anxiety is not only spiritually useless, but it is physically and emotionally unhealthy - so don't worry.* I don't think I need to site clinical evidence to back that up - we all know its true. *Worry and fear that leads to anxiety is a sure sign that **our faith** and **God trust** needs to grow and become the strength we need to live in peace and experience true joy.*

Jesus basic response to this kind of behavior is...

*"C'mon man/girl, where's your faith?"*

*"As a disciple of Jesus we prioritize each day for those things that God has trusted to us - such as leading those we love, and loving those we lead. If this is our daily priority then God the Father, in His love, cares for and sees to our daily needs - we are His priority."*

### *Conclusion*

We can finish this red-letter teaching with these three words. ***Faith - Father - First.***

*If we have **faith** in our **Father** and we put Him **first**, He will meet our needs.*

***Read the Red - (August 18th, 2013)***

## ***What's in Your Heart?***

***(Matthew 7:1-6), (Luke 6:37-42)***

*"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. "Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.*

*"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the*



*judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

*"Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. ESV*

### ***Introduction (Matthew 7:1-6)***

One of the final illustrations of Pharisaic hypocrisy

Jesus exposed related to their practice of judging others and not themselves. From the time that Jesus gave this particular teaching to the time of His crucifixion the Pharisees were all about judging Him, and of course finding Him to be inexcusable, inappropriate and inadequate. The message or mission of Jesus did not offer or provide the kind of political kingdom or control and power they were looking for, so they rejected, judged, and murdered Him. But Jesus could see right through their corrupt system and how shallow their "good-will" - so He didn't even blink as He abruptly challenged them and hypocritical judgement of others.

Good to remember that Jesus did not teach that judgments should never be made; as evidenced by His comments about *"removing the speck from your brother's eye."*

**So there is a very righteous context in which**

**very specific judgments can and should and could be made.**

But the very clear point of *red-letter Jesus* was that a person should not be habitually critical or condemning of a small speck of sawdust someone else's eye when he has a huge plank in his own eye. He is saying *"what's in your heart"*?

*Are you prideful? - Are you jealous?*

*Are you hateful? - Are you angry?*

*Are you greedy? - Or are you just plain mean and evil?*

These are the things that fill the heart of a judgmental person. There are people are truly filled with, and ruled by a critical spirit... they can not help but judge. They do not represent the heart of God, and the kingdom of heaven - they represent themselves, and their own struggles with sin. Jesus

knew in spite of their religious pretension, in their heart this was who the Pharisees were. He wanted the people to know that the loving heart of God the Father, was not the same as the corrupt heart of the Pharisees.

*"Indeed, the heart of God is just - but the heart of God is not judgmental."*

Jesus said to the judgmental Pharisees... *"**You hypocrites.**" This was a righteous red-letter judgment.* Though judgments are sometimes needed, when we absolutely have to make them (*krino*; judge - meaning "to distinguish" and then "to decide") we have to be completely convinced that we...

- *rightly reflect the heart of God*
- *have our own priorities are straight*
- *that our own character is in good order*

- *that our words and wisdom give life and have hope*

## *Conclusion*

*Red-letter Jesus* added that it is important to remember when we are indulging in, or sharing our personal opinions, insights, counsel or instruction with another person, we need to be careful to always do our very best to say and do only what would be...

- *most helpful*
- *openly received*
- *fully appreciated and beneficial*

Jesus went on to say that we should never entrust divine or sacred truth with critical, prideful, and unrepentant people. Jesus actually called those type persons dogs and swine (*dogs; as in predators*

*Philippians 3:2 - swine; as in filthy pigs Mark 5:12-13).* Dogs and pigs were despised in the time of Jesus, much in the way rats and pigeons are in our day. Torah law commanded the Jews not to eat animals who possessed or could display a cruel nature, so that they would not absorb those same qualities into themselves.

*And the pig, because it has a split hoof, but does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. You shall neither eat of their flesh nor touch their carcass. (Deuteronomy 14:8).*

So Jesus compares the Pharisees and people who are like them these despised, forbidden and rejected animals and illustrates why not to share what is holy and valuable to the heart of God.

***Whats in your heart?***

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
Point out anything in me that offends you,  
and lead me along the path of everlasting life."  
(Psalms 139:23-24)*

*"There is no judgment against anyone who  
believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in  
him has already been judged for not believing in  
God's one and only Son. And the judgment is based  
on this fact: God's light came into the world, but  
people loved the darkness more than the light, for  
their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the  
light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will  
be exposed. But those who do what is right come to  
the light so others can see that they are doing what  
God wants." (John 3:18-21)*

***Read the Red - (September 1st, 2013)***

***Insist and Persist in the Red***

***(Matthew 7:7-11)***

*"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*"You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your*



*heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.*

### ***Breakdown***

Why did Jesus redirect His listeners back to prayer at this point in His teaching? These verses seem to be an interruption and departure from the point He is making, but as is always the case with the red-letter words of Jesus - they are not. *The fact is that you and I in our humanity are imperfect, vulnerable, and weak; we make mistakes in our judgment - we are tempted too easily, and we give up too quickly.* The truth is, only God can judge perfectly - that is why Jesus said we are love and not to judge. That is not an easy thing for us - it is a hard thing, so Jesus ***insists*** that if we will ***persist*** in praying and asking for the wisdom and direction of God - good things will come.

*Wisdom - so that we know when to speak, what to speak, and more importantly when to be silent.*

*Direction - so we know when to move and how to move, and that we know how to love people in those circumstances that are so easy and tempting to judge and condemn.*

*James 1:5 says... "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."*

***For Example:*** As a young king, Solomon realized quickly that he lacked the wisdom he needed to lead and judge Israel, so he prayed to God; and the Lord graciously answered his prayer (*1 Kings 3:3*).

*Here is a **Red-Letter Truth** Moment...*

"For us to lead with love, to overcome condemning others, use good judgment, and to wisely use our spiritual gifts (given by God) in the best way

possible (*within the will of God*), ***Jesus insists that we persist... in asking - in seeking - in knocking.***

So if we will ***insist*** and ***persist*** in asking for the wisdom that reveals our mission, knocking at the door that leads us to the ministry that seeking first the Kingdom that best reflects the heart and will of God... ***Jesus said, "As His children, God will meet our needs"*** (*Luke 11:9-13*).

A couple hours earlier in this sermon Jesus had given the disciples and the crowd a specific model for prayer - ***"when you pray-pray this way"*** (*Matthew 6:9-13*). Now Jesus not only assures them that God welcomes their prayer, but He ***insists*** they increase their ***persistence*** in prayer. He emphasizes this by ***insisting*** that they are active and ***persisting*** with those powerful **red-letter verbs:**

***keep on asking - keep on seeking - keep on knocking***

If we are to EVER find God's kingdom, we have to abandon all claims to any rights we think we have to judge. *"Do not judge,"* Jesus said, and then He destroyed all pretension for anyone of us who would seek to elevate him or herself over any others in the kingdom of God (*verses 1-6*). *"This red is for real... insist on it, and persist in it."*

### ***Conclusion***

Why ask? Why seek? Why knock? Because our Father in heaven (verse 11) delights in giving good gifts (James 1:17) to those who persist in prayer. (Luke's gospel substitutes "the Holy Spirit" for "good gifts," 11:13.) No decent father would give his son... a stone instead of a round loaf of bread (which looked like a stone), or a snake instead of a similar-appearing fish. If an earthly father, with his sinful (evil) nature, delights to do right materially

for his children, it makes sense that the righteous, heavenly Father will much more reward His children spiritually for their persistence.

In these final verses Jesus uses a standard Jewish argument here called *qal vahomer*: *arguing from the lesser to the greater (if the lesser is true, how much more the greater)*. Fish and bread were basic staples, integral and affordable to the diet of most of Jesus' hearers; they did not have any mercy or tolerance for the excess or luxuries of the wealthy - so it was easier to judge and not love. Jesus insisted that they have a different another attitude: an attitude of humility and servanthood. *"Ask,"* Jesus said, *"God will help you - He won't give you snake if you ask for a fish and He won't give you a rock if you ask Him for bread."* *Insisting* that they take the role not of a judge, but of a seeker and petitioner. As we look at life through the lens of God's

kingdom, we move forward with a deep sense of our need for God's good gifts - and we do so with complete confidence that He love us and will give us all that we need. We can build on that with true humility. We bow before God - we also bow down to our family, friends and neighbors. We insist in ourselves that we do not judge or condemn them, but to serve them: *"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (verse 12).*

These red-letters words really do create and demand a narrow gate or more difficult point of entry. But as Jesus said, *it is the only gate that leads us to life, and the love of God's kingdom.* Everyone is invited to walk through it - but the only ones who will get through it are the ones who *insist and persist in the red.*

***Read the Red (September 8th, 2013)***

***Good Fruit - Red Fruit (Matthew 7:15-20)***

***Matthew 7:15-20***

*"Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.*

*"A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. A tree is identified by*

*its fruit. Figs never grow on thornbushes, nor grapes on bramble bushes. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart. (Luke 6:43-45)*

### ***Intro***

According to Matthew's recall of what would prove to be one of the most recognizable and most quotable *red-letter sermons*, Jesus finishes the long day with the big and important issues:

- *the harsh and deceptive realities of evil that gives the appearance of being good (Luke 6:43-45)*
- *the inevitable, irrefutable, and eternal consequences of both good and evil character -*



*(Luke 13:25-27)*

In these last few *red-letter moments* of the day, Jesus taught these Galileans the true way of access into the kingdom of God, and gave them a strong warning about false prophets and teachers. He talked clearly to them about the character and influence of those dynamic personalities and intriguing philosophies that could lead to the easy road of destruction - *"as harmless as sheep, and as ferocious as wolves"* He would say.

*"to destroy, ruin and teardown is easy - to construct, repair and build up, is hard"*

He taught how they could determine the character of false and deceptive teachers and philosophies?

Jesus said to them, *"Its all about the fruit - good can only produce good, and bad can only produce bad."* Tough but true. In Jesus' evaluation, the

Pharisees of His day were corrupt, deceptive, and

producing bad fruit; the only thing to do with a bad tree is to cut it down and destroy it. If the tree does not fulfill the purpose for its existence, then it should be removed. This was not just a metaphor for Jesus - this was a spiritual reality. *Remove the evil from our lives, or it will destroy us and those we love.*

Obviously when they heard Jesus talk about false teachers/prophets, deceptive wolves in sheep's clothing, they immediately thought of all the religious, arrogant, corrupt Pharisees and rabbis, from the temple. When sitting down and reading this once again (I did the same thing). We hear Jesus give this sermon and we think about the religious leaders, who seemed to be good men and women, teaching spiritual truths about the Messiah and His kingdom - But Jesus makes it clear they are

not good if they are destroying lives to save their own. Even if they were doing supernatural deeds - prophesying in His name, slaying dragons and exorcising demons - if they are not obedient to the Father, if they were not serving, not loving and giving to others or consistently doing His will they are a *"bad tree, producing bad fruit"* and would be denied access to the kingdom because they did not really know or love God - they only used and abused God... *no personal relationship with Jesus.*

### ***A Deeper Thought***

*When we think about "false prophets and teachers" most of us are thinking of the public personalities that are visible and frequently heard; it is probably equally important to remember that we all have within us a private personality who is the most insidious and dangerous false prophet of all - that voice is always heard.*

### ***Final Breakdown and Life Application***

The two trees Jesus speaks of show us that true and genuine faith in Christ changes and produces good fruit; not only in our life but also in the lives of everyone we love. This brings glory and honor to God. Everything in nature reproduces after its own kind - this is also true in our spiritual lives. Good thoughts, good words, good behavior comes from a good and pure heart. Bad thoughts, words, and behavior come from a bad and corrupt heart. The heart that produces evil, deception, rebellion, arrogance, pride, hate and hurt, destroys not only itself but also those who have followed in its path.

The questions that are important to ask are this.

- *If our life represents a tree that produces fruit what kind of tree am I?*

- *Have I made a clear decision about who I am going to be?*
- *If I have made a decision, has it changed my life for good or bad?*
- *Who and what has influenced who I am, and what I think, say, and do?*
- *Finally, what am I going to do about it?*

*Here is a list of "**Good Fruit-Red Fruit**" to help us answer those questions and make a good **red-letter decision...***

*1) The fruit of the Spirit, or Christian character as described in the Beatitudes and (Galatians 5:22-23)*

*2) The fruit of the lips, testimony and praise to God (Hebrews 13:15)*

*3) The fruit of living a good and holy life (Romans 6:22)*

***4) The fruit of good works (Colossians 1:10)***

***5) The fruit of rescuing and reclaiming someone we love to Christ (Romans 1:13).***

***Read the Red - September 15th, 2013***

***Red Rain*** (Matthew 7:24-27)

*"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and ignores it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."*

## ***Intro***

Historically, *rabbis* always debated whether hearing or obeying the law was more important; most of them concluded that hearing it was more important, because one could not do without first hearing. Most of them did accept (but not practice) that both were necessary, but it was only a concession. On this day, Jesus "the Rabbi" takes that debate to an irreversible and absolute resolution. As He finishes this long but miraculous day of teaching the "big picture" image is all about decision making. Not just any decision. Jesus speaks in powerful and logical words the processes of making the best possible choice to not only hear the word of truth, but to actually follow Jesus down the path of righteousness, and away from the path of destruction. The daily reality of not obeying was familiar to these people (*Ezekiel 33:32-33*), they

had been disobeying since they left Egypt. But the people who heard Jesus this day, had never heard a Jewish teacher/rabbi who claimed so much authority for his own words; until now, that kind of authority was reserved for the law itself. Some of Jesus' more biblically literate hearers may have thought of *Proverbs 24:3...*

*"A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense."*

### ***Logical Conclusions***

***The red-letter message*** of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee concluded with a simple yet powerful illustration, which focuses everyones attention on the one true path to experience and know the kingdom of God. *It is a good sense and logical conclusion.*



*Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and then puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*

Even though because of God's grace we do not start each new day in our old ways, we do however stand each new day at a "fork in the road" or moment of decision. Will we choose to live and love the way Jesus has told us to live and love?

*There are only only two ways to go - the way of Jesus, or away from Jesus.*

We too have heard the *red-letter words* of truth.

We see the pathway He set out as the one leading to the kingdom. *Choose Jesus - He chose you...*

In *Matthew 5*, we heard Jesus stop the ridiculousness - by refocusing the issue of faith and the kingdom of God on our inner lives and the condition and attitude of our hearts, and then we redirected the values by which we are called to live. In *Matthew 6 and 7*, we see how to distinguish between true and false pathways to the kingdom.

*What have we learned from the Galilean Red-letter Jesus?*

- *We have learned* that to live in Jesus' kingdom,

we must let go of our insatiable need and desire for the approval of men, and learn to reach *each day* for the approval of God.

- *We have learned* that we can find release from anxiety over necessities and material wants, and be free to concentrate our attention on righteousness.
- *And we have learned* that we are to be humble before God and our those around us: we are not to judge but to love, and to take our place alongside them - as people in need of God's mercy and grace.

*Will we find the Kingdom of Heaven if we follow this pathway?*

Of course we will. We will follow the *red-letter words of Jesus* to His specific plans and purposes

for our life and the lives of the ones that we love the most.

***The Foundation*** - the solid rock of truth on which we build our faith

*"Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:10-11)*

***The Building*** - the household of faith, the dwelling place we build, in which we grow and live out our faith

*"But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our*

*courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ." (Hebrews 3:6)*

***The Trial*** - the journey of faith by which our faith is tested and proven

*"Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith." (2 Corinthians 13:5-6)*

***The Outcome*** - the eternal reward of which has been prepared for those who have been *faithful in their faith*

*"You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of*

*your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9)*

### ***Read the Red***

#### ***"24 red" Part I (John 6:22-35)***

*The next day the crowd that had stayed on the far shore saw that the disciples had taken the only boat, and they realized Jesus had not gone with them. Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend*

*your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval. They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent." They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.' Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day." Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again.*

*Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me.*

## ***Introduction***

*For the past twelve weeks we have been reading the red from Matthews account of the Sermon on the Mount. We have been discovering or perhaps rediscovering the first public sermon of Jesus at the Sea of Galilee. In the process, we have learned that during a 24 hour period of time (according to all four biographies of Jesus) that He delivered some of the most significant teaching regarding living life as part of Kingdom of God during His entire three year ministry on earth. The followers would hear from Jesus what history now calls "**The Sermon on the Mount**" and the sermon called "**The Bread of Life.**" The first part of that 24 hour period Jesus*



spent nearly eight hours with a massive gathering of Galilean Jews: He fed them natural food for 2-3 hours, and then for another 4-5 hours He fed them spiritual food and redirected them away from the kingdoms of man with unprecedented authority by teaching them the true Kingdom of God. This was to be a 24 hours like no other. For these people this was an intriguing whirlwind of both the natural and supernatural. It was an introduction to the Son of God, and yet the son of Joseph and Mary. It was a revelation of the one who would be their King but who would not let them make Him their King. *In that first day in His grace and kindness*, Jesus fed five thousand hungry people (fish and bread) that day; *but, in His truth and mercy*, He gave them the eternal Word of God (the bread of life). The *truth and mercy* was a food and nourishment they did not know or understand. There is no doubt that Jesus

used the miraculous feeding (*fish and bread*), so He could have the opportunity to teach the truth of the kingdom of God, and in reality feed their soul and not just their belly. It was an amazing day of the ministry "*grace and truth*" (John 1:17), and yet today, as was on that day... misunderstood by most, or all. Most of the five thousand who had been there to experience and witness what had happened - just did not get it. And the remaining 24 hours would prove that. Here is why.

- *The people wanted more signs and more miracles, than they wanted Jesus... sound familiar?*
- *The people wanted more free food than they wanted nourishment (truth) for their soul...*
- *The people wanted more of a celebrity and political personality than they wanted a Shepherd and Savior...*

- *The people wanted to be told that they were right, and everyone else was wrong, more than they wanted to repent for their own wrong, so they could be made right...*

*Bottom line, the people did not want the truth.*

And, in the end, after having experienced and witnessed the most miraculous and significant happening of their lives, most of them abandoned Jesus and refused to walk with Him. Today's tweet would be: **...Top Mega-Church Pastor loses entire congregation after *bizzare and wacked* weekend sermon. #ministry team dazed and confused#...**

How did that happen? Well, its they say...

*"sometimes the truth can make cowards of us all."*

**24 Hour *Red-Letter Timeline* - According to John**

***11a - Crowds approach Jesus and His disciples as they sit along Galilee shoreline.***

***1130a - Jesus gathers fives loaves of barley bread and two fishes prays over it and then distributes enough to feed five thousand people.***

***1p - Jesus begins teaching the gathering crowds at Galilean seaside. Blessed are you's...***

***6p - Jesus finishes teaching in the late afternoon, and disappears by Himself into the crowd. While walking among the people Jesus heals a man with leprosy.***

***7-8p - With most of the crowd dispersed, the disciples wait at shoreline for Jesus to rejoin them. By sundown He apparently sends them on to board their boat and head across the small sea to Capernaum... The crowd, is still buzzing about the***

*miraculous events and teaching of the day. Most are saying that Jesus is the Great Prophet, that He could probably be the next Moses. There is talk of forcing Jesus to be their King and rebellion against Rome led by Jesus. When Jesus hears this nonsense He disappears into the shadows away from what is left of the crowd, and their misplaced expectations.*

*1-3a - Sometime in the earliest hours of the morning Jesus literally walks across the waves of the Galilee out to the disciples boat. According to John, as Jesus approaches them as a storm threatens their safety. Jesus called out to them.. **"I am here, do not be afraid."** The storm quickly subsides and they safely arrive at Capernaum.*

*6-7a - The earliest fishing boats arrive from Tiberias (Roman built - Greek cultured). The people thought Jesus was still in the area.*

*Realizing that during the night he has left, word spreads that Jesus has joined his disciples in Capernaum. A large part of the crowd either begins the twelve mile walk to Capernaum, or they catch a ride on one of the boats that had recently arrived.*

*11a - It is nearly mid-day when the crowds find Jesus and ask Him their first big profound question... "When did you get here"? Jesus replies... "Let me tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs or the teaching. You need to stop being so consumed about perishable things like food. Spend your energy and passion seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me authority and power over all things. The one thing you should be most concerned about is the*

*expectations God has of you: Believe in the one he has sent you."*

*1110a - The crowd is completely confused - they don't get it. They know what they want, but not what they need, and so they foolishly respond with... "Well then show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat. What can you do for us'"? The next response of Jesus sets the wheels in motion for one of His most difficult red-letter teachings. Jesus says to them...*

*"You want the truth? Moses didn't give you bread from heaven - My Father did. And now He offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and*

*gives life to the world." The people respond, "give us some of that bread." Jesus replies, "I am the bread of life. If you come to me you will never be hungry again. If you believe in me you will never be thirsty. But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them."*

*Time stops still...*

***READ THE RED (September 29th)***

***24RED/The Bread is Red Part 2 - (John 6:35-59)***

*"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will*



*never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."*

*Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "**I am the bread that came down from heaven.**" They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"*

*But Jesus replied, "**Stop complaining about what I said. For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. As it is written in the Scriptures,***

*'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)*

*"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh." Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.*

*So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. But anyone*

*who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever."*

*He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.*

### ***Remember 24 Hours Earlier...***

- ***The people wanted another miracle before they would believe - but Jesus offers only Himself, so they could believe?***

- *The people wanted their temporal appetite fed - but Jesus offers to fill their soul with eternal truth...*
- *The people wanted a powerful popular political personality - Jesus offers only to be their Servant Shepherd, Savior Sacrifice...*
- *The people wanted only to be told that they were right - Jesus offers Himself so that they can be made right...*

Having now remembered the message and mission of Jesus, and reconstructing the timeline of the 24 hours He spent with and around the people, we can now work towards wrapping our minds and hearts around the "*Bread of Life Teaching.*"

**Revelation: *True Bread is Red***

*"I'm am going to tell you the truth... the true bread is not the manna. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life - whoever comes to Me will never hunger, and whoever believes in Me will never thirst."*

It is painfully clear that the people are now hearing Jesus on the wrong level. Before it was just their lack of understanding His truth that separated them - now it is their pride and anger rejecting His truth. And even though Jesus even plainly refers to eternal life as heavenly bread, and not literal bread, the more The more red-letter truth speaks at this point the worse it gets. As Jesus talks they "grumble." Does anything about that sound familiar (*Israel - Us*)?

Most Jewish people believed in both human choice

and the sovereignty of God. The message and mission of Jesus for the past 24 hours was...

***For those Jews who truly knew and loved God the Father would recognize and embrace Him (Jesus-God with us); those who do not recognize Him do not know the Father either.***

***The people do not like or want their bread to be red.***

And for the first time in a public gathering Jesus has revealed Himself fully as God. His teaching and message are both staggering and shocking to the people. They are split between those who didn't get it, and those who got it, but didn't want it. But to Jesus their obtuseness (ignorance) was even more shocking. After hearing and seeing all that they had heard and seen in the last 24 hours, and yet to still be completely on a different page had to be a difficult and awkward moment for everyone. Jesus

pushes forward and responds with more *red bread*.

- *I am the bread that came from heaven*
- *No one comes to Me unless the Father calls them*
- *Whoever believes that I am the bread of life has eternal life*
- *I am the living bread*
- *The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh*

The people are now arguing with Jesus and themselves... *"This is absurd." How can this man give his flesh to eat"?*

**And just like He had kept slicing the fish and breaking the bread 24 hours earlier, Jesus keeps serving and feeding them more red bread today.**

- *Unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man you have no life in you.*

- *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood I will raise up on the last day.*
- *My flesh is true food - and my blood is true drink.*
- *Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*

*"Now Filled with **Red Bread** - The Synagogue is Silent"*

*If the words Jesus spoke that day were not temporal but eternally specific, what was He really saying?*

*The natural is real - the spiritual is reality*

*The natural is man - the spiritual is God*

*The natural gives life today - the spiritual gives life eternal*

*I am the spiritual and eternal - in the flesh (God With Us)*

*Coming to Jesus - Is Coming to God*



*There is no life without Him - There is no coming to  
God without Him*

*Eat the Red Bread*

***Read the Red (October 6th)***

***The Lady in Red (John 8:1-11)***

*Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.*

*"Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"*

*They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so He stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."*

### ***The Lady in Red***

Unable to silence or arrest Jesus, the Pharisees looked to destroy the public interest and His

influence by forcing Him into a situation in which He would either directly violate the Law, or that His teaching would demand a drastic and unpopular judgment or consequence that was rarely enforced. On this particular morning the Pharisees and teachers of the Law have brought a woman (*we will call her "the lady in red"*) caught in the act of adultery to Jesus, and through her circumstances they challenge Him. *"In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?"*

Jesus did not answer them quickly. Bending down, the text says that He began to write in the dust. It crazy how teachers and theologians for years have speculated what Jesus wrote on the ground that day. Some have suggested He was scribbling a short list of sins committed by the accusers - I kind of doubt that, but... (more on that later). The point is that Jesus did not simply react or cave in to their

intimidation - but instead He acted in behalf of all, so it really doesn't matter. The Pharisees pressed Jesus for an interpretation or judgment, and as they did He looked up and responded with the eternally famous *red-letter words*. *"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."*

*And since that time, poets, songwriters, philosophers, preachers, teachers, and pretty much sinners everywhere have been glad that He did.*

Well, it is easy to guess the outcome come of that little condemnation party. One by one the exposed leaders, confronted by their own corrupt lives and guilty conscience, disappeared into the crowd.

### ***Teachable Moment***

Left alone now with the people and the *"lady in red"* Jesus asks her, *"Do you see any of your accusers here now"?* Her response to the mercy of

Jesus is... *"No, I do not."* And then Jesus, disciples her forward into a new life by instructing her this way... *"Then I don't condemn you either. Go home and change how you are living your life, stop sinning, so that you will be free once and for all from this kind of condemnation and judgment."*

To understand the incident of *"the lady in red"*, we have to first see it from a bigger picture (*God perspective*), in order to understand the personal and intimate specifics of sin and human failure. To do that, we only need to look at the nature of the morality that comes from the grace of God's heart (liberating and forgiving) vs. the nature of morality that comes from the judgment of man's heart (legalistic and condemning). *The morality of man is...*

*Impersonal* - The Pharisees did not care about *the*

*lady in red*, and were quick to use her as leverage to strike at Jesus. They had an agenda against Him, and the truth was that the *the lady in red* had no value to them as a person, they didn't really care about her, or her sin.

Conversely, Jesus *did* care about *the lady in red*. She was guilty, but in spite of her sin, Jesus loved her and was ready to quickly forgive her. And though He could have - He refused to condemn her. Because He cared about *the lady in red* as a person, He wanted to save her, and teach her a better way to live and a better way to love.

*Selective* - How helpful that the Pharisees brought *the lady in red* (caught the night before in the act of adultery) to Jesus? *But where was the man who was with her?* History reveals that at the time of Jesus, their religious morality was both cultural and

gender driven. It had become a common paractice of the Pharisees (*in selective cases and interpretive twisting of the law*) to excuse the man, and choose only to accuse and punish the woman. (*Romans 2:11*) "*God does not show favoritism.*"

Jesus, however, raises awareness to the sin of all, and the reality of universal guilt - not selective condemnation. Jesus said, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,*" Every man and woman who was there at the temple that day was forced to admit that they too should stand alongside "*the lady in red.*"

God driven Christ-centered morality begins with the affirmation that all of us have sinned. In the grace of God the Father, He withholds condemnation in order to give and save life, and then to encourage all sinners to "*leave behind the life conscience free sin.*"

***Punishment Oriented*** - The Law was a good and holy expression of righteousness. Like with all sin, adultery is wrong - and as good people we should care about doing what is right, and not what is wrong. But the Pharisees were not concerned with encouraging right behavior among the Jews, or with cultural and religious reform for women. Their motives were not religiously righteous or socially caring, but vengeful and evil. On the other hand, everything Jesus did that day (as every other day) was righteous, and done intentionally to produce good hearts and good behavior! Of course, Jesus affirmed the Law's penalty for sin, but He called for more - He called for sinlessness (personal responsibility and accountability) from anyone who would initiate and execute judgment and condemnation against another person! Jesus *did*



judge the sin of *the lady in red* as wrong, but rather than condemn and destroy her life, He withheld the penalty, so that she could go forward from that moment of truth and begin a new life without the destruction of intentional and habitual sin in her life!

### **The Lady in Red** (Part 2)

(John 8:12-20) - *October 13th, 2013*

*Temple Layout at the time of Jesus - 33.5 acres*

### ***Interesting Contextual Points***

- *The law of Torah Moshe, demanded the execution*

*of this woman, but Rome had removed capital punishment jurisdiction from Jewish courts, except for temple violations. The Jewish leaders used this opportunity to test whether Jesus will reject the law, compromising his patriotic Jewish following, or reject Roman rule, which would clearly allow them to accuse him (with eye witnesses) to the Romans.*

- *Most credible scholars of the bible and cannonization of scripture do not all support that the story of the "adulteress woman" (**lady in red**) was part of the **authors** original text. They do however accept and affirm that the text was authentic apostolic writing dating from the apostolic period - and that the text is consistent with both apostolic style, language, and consistancy.*

***Quote From: A Textual Commentary on the***

*Greek New Testament... “the account of the "adulterous woman" of John's gospel has all the earmarks of historical veracity. It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and was subsequently incorporated into various apostolic manuscripts in various places, giving it the necessary strength to pass the New Testament canonization criteria of Eusebius in 325 AD."*

### ***Five Principles of Canon Criteria***

- ***Apostolicity (believed to have been written by an apostle)***
- ***Orthodoxy (coherent with core teaching and verifiably passed on)***
- ***Antiquity (the date of the writing)***

- *Usage (how the scripture served the worship of the Church)*

- *Inspiration (motivated by the Holy Spirit).*

- *According to biblical history God wrote the Ten Commandments with his finger (Exodus 31:18). The speculation of what Jesus wrote in the dirt that day with His finger is more than compelling when the complete scriptural knowledge of Jesus the "rabbi" is considered. (Exodus 20) "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." (Exodus 23) "Do not [be] a malicious witness." (Deuteronomy 17, 19) or maybe Jesus wrote words from the writings of the prophet Daniel... "Mene, Tekel, and Parsin" - meaning; The days of your power are limited, you have been judged and found guilty, Your kingdom is divided and finished.*

- *The agreeing eye witnesses were normally the*

*first to throw the stones, but false witnesses were to pay the same penalty they had determined to inflict on their victim. If there were no agreeing eye witnesses to come forward against the accused then there could be no formal accusations or legal charges brought.*

- *The response of Jesus (Yeshua) response revealed four things: 1) He was not against the Torah. 2) He was merciful and sensitive toward woman. 3) He was opposed the sin of everyone. 4) Jesus could silence hypocrites, critics, and hecklers by exposing them to themselves.*
- *Ironically this incident with the "Lady in Red" took place at the eastern part of the Temple - a place called "The Court of Women" which also housed what was called "The Treasury." This was a very large courtyard almost the size of two football fields side by side. This area was as far*

*as women were allowed to proceed into the Temple. Four high towers (86 feet high) sat in each corner of the courtyard, each carrying four golden lamps which were lit and burned continuously during the entire Feast of Tabernacles. The Court of Women was the place designated for women to hear and be acknowledged by temple and religious leaders. Jesus spoke in the early morning on the 7th and last day of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) on behalf of the "lady in red" from "the court of women" not far from the treasury tables on the seventh and last day of Sukkot (Feast of the Tabernacle) called Hoshana Rabbah (Please Save Us). During Sukkot people were encouraged to set up commemorative booths (tents) inside the outer-courts of the Temple such as the Court of the Gentiles and The Court of Women. Ironically,*

*there is no historical evidence that Jesus ever physically went any further into the Temple than He did that day. Yet effectively He was for the first time publicly pardoning sin outside the designated sacrificial area for absolution of sin.*

- *As Jesus finishes His time with the "**Lady in Red**" He turns to all who are gathered there that morning and proclaims... "**I am the light of the world: whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life.**" Remember the words of the Jewish Messianic prophet Isaiah, spoken almost five hundred years earlier (Isaiah 9:2) "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine."*

***Read the Red - "**Red Letter Revolution Freedom*****

## ***Fighters'' Part 1 (October 20th)***

### ***John 8:31-37***

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "But we are descendants of Abraham," they said. "We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, 'You will be set free'?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free."*

### ***Context and Content (John 8:31-37)***



I said last week that "Jesus had religious issues." Is that shocking to you? And if it is, why? Religion and religious people were now (in the person of Jesus) being confronted by real relationship with God and godly righteousness in Christ - everything that represented anything else was man's religion and needed to be revolutionized. So while He is in the temple that morning Jesus further exposes with light a sinful religion and those who were practicing it. He teaches that by faithfully continuing to grow and to be changed by the Word (God's truth) there is a true form discipleship - and the only proof of true salvation. Jesus taught that when we obey His Word, we increase in spiritual knowledge and wisdom; and as we grow in spiritual knowledge and wisdom, we grow in freedom from sin. *Life leads to learning, and learning leads to liberty.*

As was often the case when speaking to a mixed crowd (believer, non-believer, Pharisee, Jew, non-Jew, men, women), the majority of the listeners did not understand the point or heart of the message.

On this early morning in the outer temple court Jesus was speaking about true spiritual freedom - freedom from sin. These people were only thinking about political freedom. To Jesus that was not true freedom - and He says it out loud. *"The truth will set you free."*

When they hear Jesus say it they claim they are free and that their descendants (Abraham) had never been in bondage. We know that was not true... by simply looking at the recorded and oral history of their own Torah. According to the Book of Judges the Jews had been enslaved by seven mighty nations. The ten Northern tribes of Israel had been enslaved by Assyria, and the two Southern tribes

had gone into seventy years of captivity in Babylon. And at the very moment they are arguing with Jesus, they were enslaved under the greatest military and political power of the known world - Rome! The bottom line is that were in bondage physically and spiritually - they knew it and Jesus knew it. *But it is really difficult for proud religious people to admit their own sin and confess their own needs!*

So Jesus explains in a relatable way that the difference between spiritual freedom and bondage is a matter of whether one is a son or a servant. The servant may live in the house, but he is not a part of the family; and he cannot be guaranteed future hope. Maybe Jesus may had Isaac and Ishmael in mind here (Genesis 21.) *Red-letter Jesus...*

*"Whosoever keeps on practicing sin [literal translation] is the servant of sin."* His message was difficult but true... Without a ***red-letter revolution*** in their heart these religious leaders would not only die in their sins, but they were then living as slaves in bondage to their sin!

*How can slaves of sin be set free? Only by the Son of The Father - Jesus.* He was standing right there in front of them and in a few minutes they would try to kill Him.

*How does Jesus release someone from sin?  
Through the power of His Word (Truth).*

**Note:** the emphasis on the Word in John 8:38-47, and He had already told them, ***"The truth shall make you free"*** (verse 32). But they would not ***"make room"*** for His Word (the truth) in their hearts.

## ***Read the Red - Who's Your Daddy?***

***(October 27th, 2013)***

In the rest of this narrative, we can see the conflict intensify as the exchange centers around ***one*** word - ***Father***. Jesus identified and represented Himself as the Son of God the Father in heaven (*Yahweh*), and He then identifies the religious Jews with the father of hell. Biblically known as the ***Devil or Satan***. Of course, the Jews claimed Abraham as their father (*Luke 3:8*), but Jesus made a specific distinction between "*Abraham's seed*" (physical descendants) and "*Abraham's children*" (spiritual descendants because of personal faith; *Galatians 3:6-14*).

*In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. What's more, the Scriptures*

*looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith. But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life." But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was*

*hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith."*

So the obvious problem is within the corrupt hearts of the Jewish leaders. They claimed to belong to Abraham, but in reality were nothing like Abraham. Abraham listened to God's truth and obeyed it - rejected the truth, even when it was standing in front of their face.

Consider this... Nature is determined by birth, and birth is determined by paternity. If God is your Father (*born into the kingdom of God*), then God shares with you His nature (*2 Peter 1:1-4*); but if

Satan the Devil is your father, then you share in his evil nature. Jesus never said that every lost (*without Christ*) sinner is a "*child of the devil*," but we know in reality every lost sinner (*without Christ*) is certainly a child of wrath and disobedience (*Ephesians 2:1-3*). Both here and in the *Parable of the Tares* (*Matthew 13:24-32,36-43*), Jesus said that the Pharisees and other "*posers*" and were the *children of the devil*. That is tough to hear - no one wants to be told something like that - true or not. Satan is an imitator (*poser*) (*2 Corinthians 11:13-15*), and he gives his followers a false sense of righteousness that can never give them true freedom or get them into the kingdom of heaven (*Romans 10:1-4*).

What were the obvious characteristics of these religious leaders who belonged to the devil?



- *They rejected the truth and tried to kill it.*
- *They would not make room in their heart for God's truth.*
- *They did not love God, and in hate and pride could not love or understand God's truth.*

As followers of Jesus we need to remember that the worst kind of prison or bondage is the kind that the prisoner himself does not recognize. *Thinking you are free, yet really being a slave.* The Pharisees and the other religious leaders thought they were free, but they were actually enslaved in spiritual bondage to the sins of pride, greed, and hatred. *They would not face the truth, nor would they make room in their hearts for it - and yet it was only the truth that could set them free. **They needed a red-letter revolution.***

A **red-letter revolution** is to experience and learn (to put into practice) the teaching and heart of

209

Jesus. We start with the truth instead of a lie. For example...

***Lie*** - To know right, but to intentionally and habitually do wrong (as the Pharisees had done) is true freedom and is acceptable godly thinking and behavior.

***Truth*** - To practice the love of Jesus and in love faithfully follow His teachings is to experience and learn a truth that brings complete and total freedom the bondage of intentional sin, evil behavior, and bad habits.

***Final Thoughts (November 3rd, 2013)***

***Red-Letter Revolution Freedom Fighters (Part 3)***

*"You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. So if the Son sets you free*

*you are truly free."*

*John's biography of Jesus (8:31-37) combines several of his most significant theological images regarding spiritual freedom in a revealing way.*

- *To "know" the truth is not to merely comprehend it intellectually, but rather to learn it through revelation, experience and practice.*
- *To know the "truth" is not to focus on a body of knowledge or information, but rather to live our life in touch with reality as God knows reality (in Christ).*
- *To know the "truth" in the teachings of Jesus is not an expectation "doctrinal perfection" or a license for "spiritual superiority", but rather it is a personal commitment to forming the flow and ordering the content of our daily lives through the love and teachings of Jesus.*

- *To know the "truth" of Jesus as "freedom" is not to live by doing or saying whatever one wants to do or say, whenever one wants to do or say it. But rather to live an intentional and godly life which leads us to freedom from our bondage to sin, so that the choices we make will lead us forward to those things that help us, rather than to the things that hurt us.*

All of this this becomes wonderfully alive and powerfully real when we become active and willing participants (*freedom fighters*) in the *red-letter revolution of Jesus*.

*What is a Red-Letter Revolution Freedom Fighter, and... How does this passage in John 8:31-38 have anything to do with it?*

Jesus came to free and save all mankind from the curse, death and damnation of sin. God came to us... God with us. That is a *revolution*. Why? Simple... Because of God's war and our struggle against sin. God created us for love and life - not for sin and death. Because He loves us He gave us victory over sin through Jesus. And because we love God we fight against the powers and forces of evil and sin - not only in our own life, but also in the lives of those that we love; *children, family, friends etc.* There is in existence a real and genuine revolution against sin and its destruction.

*"For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly*

*places." (Ephesians 6:12)*

The apostle Paul would write in his letter to the Roman Christians... *"Love God, hate sin"* (Romans 12). It is clear that in and through His *red-letter truth* that Jesus came here to fight and overcome the sin that steals, kills, and destroys the life and soul of God's greatest creation - us. Jesus was the original *red-letter revolution freedom fighter*. Sent by God the Father, Jesus (God the Son) is the word of truth that only God the Holy Spirit can reveal. *In coming to us Jesus began a red-letter revolution against sin and death*. The *red-letter revolution* is not metaphorical or symbolic - it literally is real... it was then, and it is now. *Freedom fighters* are for real... they were then, they are now. Jesus came to defeat sin. Not the sin in His life, mind you - but the sin in my life. Jesus came - fought - died - and came

back to life for victory and freedom over sin and death. Jesus was and forever is a *freedom fighter*. He clearly calls us to be *red-letter revolution freedom fighters* alongside Him.

*Closing the Gap Between What We Believe and How We Live*

*"When Jesus calls us to come and follow Him, He is not calling us to to come live, and then die in sin. He is calling us to come die, and then live free from sin."*

That is the beginning of the *red-letter revolution* led by *freedom fighters*.

*"The red-letter revolution is not fought by those who live in rebellion to truth, but by those who have surrendered mind, body, and soul to Jesus,*

*who is the truth."*

So to answer the question *"What is a red-letter revolution freedom fighter"? I will tell you this...*

*"A red-letter freedom fighter is one who by faith comes to God, by believing in Jesus Christ. The red-letter freedom fighter fights against sin by obediently loving God and neighbor more than he or she disobediently loves sin and self."*

*Read the Red (November 10th, 2013)*

*The Good Shepherd - Part I*

*(John 10:1-18)*

*"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of*



*the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."*

*Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd*

*sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.*

*"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.*

*"The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to*

*take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."*

### ***In Red-Letter Context - Shepherds, Sheep and Robbers***

The opening lines of chapter 10 what is more of an allegory than a parable. Behind the backdrop of the healing the blind man whom the Pharisees kicked out of the synagogue Jesus gives these unique images and dynamics of the good shepherd and his sheep. John the disciple writes in this sequence of events that Jesus reminded the people who were confused by what had happened to the blind man of roles and character of shepherds and sheep so that they could relate to His role and character in their own lives as a Good Shepherd. The Middle Eastern sheepfold or pen was pretty simple: a stone wall, usually about 10-12 feet high, surrounded it, and a

simple opening served as the door. The shepherds in the village would drive their sheep into the sheepfold or pen as the sun would set and would leave an apprentice or hired porter to stand guard. The porter (or one of the shepherds) would sleep at the opening of the fold and actually become "the door." Nothing could enter or leave the fold without passing over the shepherd. In the morning each shepherd would come through the door of the pen and call his own sheep, which would recognize their shepherd's voice and come out of the fold single file.

According to John, Jesus made a point that a true and good shepherd comes through the door, and calls his sheep by name, and they immediately recognize and know his voice. And that even though thieves and robbers, try to call or access the sheep in some deceptive or subtle way, the sheep

who have a good shepherd will not recognize or follow the thief or robber.

### ***Red-Letter Shepherding 101***

**1-2** - The winter months were colder, sheep were kept inside a pen at night for warmth and protection; the pen usually had a stone wall, which might have briars on top of it. Jewish law actually distinguished between thieves and robbers: thieves lived within the cities and broke in to the homes of the wealthy and merchants to steal - robbers mostly lived outside the cities and assaulted and stole from travelers, merchant caravans, and herders. Since shepherds were in and out of the city they continually had to guard against losing sheep to both thieves and robbers. Away from the city to be robbed and beaten, and then in and around the city to have the sheep stolen from pens at night were

always a concern and caution for a good shepherd.

**3-4** - In the Old Testament, Israel "heard God's voice" when they obeyed His law and message through the prophets. Those Jews who were truly his sheep — in covenant relationship with God — knew him. It is said that shepherds customarily knew each of their sheep by name. In the Old Testament, God called His closest and faithful servants, "*by name*" (Isaiah 43:1). "*Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine.*"

**5** - In this context the strangers and Pharisees are the thieves and robbers of verse 1. Deceiving, exploiting extorting, and destroying the sheep. (**Note**) The synagogue/temple leaders who expelled John's Jewish Christian readers claim to be true shepherds, but when John's audience hears this passage they will be able to see them in a different

light.

**6-9** - Sheep were led "in" and "out" of the sheepfold back and forth from pasture. Some historians scholars give a modern example of shepherds sleeping across the gateway to serve both as shepherd and door. John knows that Jesus is both the Shepherd and Door/Gate and that Christ alone is the full and complete guide and access to God the Father. He is ***Protector, Provider, Priest, Prophet, Procreator***. He is the Good Shepherd. (Much more on this later!)

**10-11)** A thief (in the context of unfaithful leader) acts for his own good, certainly not that of the flock; a shepherd risks his life to protect his flock at all time from predators and thieves. Ironically Pharisees considered shepherds members of an unclean profession, and political aristocrats despised them as lesser than lower-class workers.

So it is easy to see that the critics of Jesus would not be open to identifying Jesus as the protagonist (good guy) of His story - that would make them the antagonists (bad guy). Jesus said...

*"My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."*

In the Jewish vocabulary the word "life" was most always short for "eternal life." When Jesus places Himself in the role of Shepherd to the people there is now a clear message that Jesus intends to heard...

*I am the way, in fact I am the only way. I am the Good Shepherd who leads you to the Father.*

*The Good Shepherd Part II (November 17th)*

*(John 10:11-18)*

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will*



*run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.*

*"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.*

*"The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has*

*commanded."*

### ***Excommunication Versus Reconciliation***

In Israel, the people viewed any leadership position (political or religious) as a "Shepherd." Kings, priests, fathers, and authorities all were viewed in some significant way as leaders and shepherds of the people. Going back for a moment to the *"excommunication of the beggar"* gives this teaching of the true and good shepherd a context understanding of the heart of Jesus regarding the role and responsibility and the uses and abuses of spiritual leadership moving forward.

(Read Chapter 9)

Filtering this *"true shepherd - good shepherd"* teaching through this story makes it more obvious as to why? The next piece is to be reminded of who

is the target audience for this particular teaching of Jesus.

***First*** - this teaching is for the frustrated, seeking, broken, doubting, proud, arrogant, wounded, unbelieving, and even the hypocritical Jews. They are the sheep of the old covenant pasture, the Good Shepherd's chosen - sheepfold of His promise. The promise made to Abraham, passed on through Isaac, and fulfilled in Jacob who would become Israel. It includes of course *Genesis 17:1-8*, *Genesis 35:10-13*, *Psalms 100:3*, but also includes *Isaiah 56:9-12*, and *Jeremiah 23:1-4*. "*I will be your God, and you will be my people.*"

***Secondly*** - Because of Jesus, the teaching is now also (*the ones **only** the Good Shepherd brings*) for the Gentiles (non-Jews), and all Jews who have been scattered and ***excommunicated*** by the poor leadership of self-serving, flock-fleecing, corrupt,

and deceptive shepherds who did not really care for the safety or well-being of the sheep of God's pasture. The truth is (even though they claimed or claim they do) they do not even care for the safety or outcome or even just one insignificant lost sheep. The *"true and good shepherd"* lays down his life for all his sheep. This sacrifice includes all the sheep - those brought in by open invitation from the Good Shepherd under provision of the New Covenant fulfilled by the blood of the Lamb of God, and the resurrection of the Son of God. In this open covenant, Jesus is both sacrifice and servant. On the other hand, the *"pretender and bad shepherd"* will always sacrifice the sheep for his own best interest and outcome. He will excommunicate the sheep he does not want, need, or that do not serve his best interest. It is pretty clear that the heart of God, and *the message and mission of Jesus is to bring*

*everyone into one fold, to follow one true and good shepherd. Ephesians 2:11-22*

### ***Good Shepherd Leadership Part III***

***(November 24th)***

#### ***Good Shepherd Leadership***

- ***Protector*** - *Covers and Safeguards with Wisdom, Certainty, and Understanding*
- ***Provider*** - *Productive and Faithfully Serving - Leading the Family to Health, Unity, and Hope*

- ***Prophet*** - *Watchman and Truth teller -  
Correcting and Disciplining in Love*
- ***Priest*** - *Purifies Through the Cleansing of the  
Word - Spiritual Leader in Character,  
Consistency, and Compassion*
- ***Procreator*** - *Bearing Good Fruit - Speaks Life  
and not Death, Blessing and not a Curse.*

### A "Shepherds Pie" Closing

My closing is both meat and potatoes all in one pie, the Irish call it "*Shepherd's Pie.*" It has something good for everyone. Our Shepherd's Pie has something for those who love being told what they want to hear, and something for those who want to be told what they need to hear. In context, I'm sure it is important that we tell both. And as shepherd of the community at Reunion it is important for me at

times to build some of you up, and then at times it is also necessary that we tear some unhealthy things down in the rest of us. The real truth can do both.

As we close out the ***Read the Red*** Series We all move forward with the words and eternal truth of Jesus our - both are important. I guess we could call those words of Jesus that we *need to hear* but don't always *want to hear* - ***pressure points***.

### ***"Red-Letter Pressure Points"***

And, we can call those things that we *want to hear* but don't always *get to hear* - ***power points***.

### ***"Red Letter Power Points"***

This is not exactly nuclear physics. It is much simpler and far more important. *Pressure Points* in the ***Red Letter*** context will always represent what God wants from us - *Power Points* in the ***Red Letter*** context will always represent what we want from God. As we have learned in the past nine

months Jesus told us both.

### ***Red-Letter Pressure Points***

- **Red-letter Jesus says... *"One Voice, One Flock, One Shepherd."* (John 10:15-16, Ephesians 4:4-7)**
- ***"Do you love me? Then feed my sheep"...* (John 21:15-17)**
- ***"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me."* (Matthew 16:24)**
- ***What is it about these words of Jesus that we either don't like or want to hear, and find so hard to understand?***
- ***Whatever it is... until we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, the Holy Spirit will never truly work through us - at which point we are nothing more***



*than lost sheep. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)*

### ***Red-Letter Power Points***

- ***Red-letter Jesus says... "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)***
- ***Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ every good thing that is pleasing to him. (Hebrews 13:20-21)***
- ***"My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. Now I***

*am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are."* (John 17:9-11)

- *What is it about those words that we love to hear and find so easy understand?*
- *Whatever it is... when we hear them we feel safe, secure - like sheep who know the way.*

*"And he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes."*  
(Revelation 7:15-17)