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Christian: It's Not What You Think (Based on a series by Andy Stanley)

When Gracie Met Truthy - John 1:14 NIV

The title of our preaching series is, "Christian: It's Not What You Think." The term Christian is not defined in the Bible and these days it's defined anyway you want to define it. You can be Christian and do whatever you want; believe whatever you want; behave however you want. Take any issue of the day and you will find Christians on both sides of that issue.

So far we have discovered that in Biblical times Jesus followers were called Christians by those who were not Jesus followers, but Jesus followers did not call themselves Christians, they used a different term – disciple. Disciple is defined in the Bible. When you open up the pages of the Bible you find Jesus saying, "if you don't get anything else get this." Let this characterize you more than anything else. Here is what He said; **John 13:35**

**"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

By this - not a cross around your neck, not the bumper sticker on your car, not because you were baptized, not because you attend a church – He says here is how you are going to know you are my disciple, "if you love one another." And in the same conversation He said here is how that love is defined, it is to be love "as I have loved you." I want you to love as I loved. Jesus said ok, people will know you are my disciples if you love one another and I want you to love one another as I have loved you.

Now here is the problem, when you open up the Bible to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and see how Jesus loved it's a bit terrifying; it's inconsistent; when you look how Jesus loved there is a tension there. It is a tension we all, to some extent, want to resolve. There are two sides to loving as Jesus loved. Sometimes He's forgiving and other times He holds people accountable. Sometimes He seems harsh and other times Kind. And if you take serious loving as Jesus loved you feel the tension of that. We have really tried to hold on to that tension here at our church. But growing up you may have gone to a church that was on one end of the spectrum and others grew up in a church that was at the other end of the spectrum. And it wasn't that you didn't believe in what they were saying, but it seemed like something was missing. And perhaps there was. Because when you open the Bible to see how Jesus loved you will find that it was: **Messy, inconsistent, (and sometimes you may think, ok that was just) unfair, and at the end of the day really confusing.** Because there is a tension and my temptation and your temptation is to resolve it. But hear this, if you try to resolve this tension around Jesus' love you give up something really, really important. Yet we are tempted to do that all the time. Jesus was comfortable with the tension, we may not be, and some may be confused by it.

John made it to old age. His buddies, all the other apostles were martyred, but John became an old man. And he must have been encouraged in his old age to write about

his experiences of what he heard and what he saw. People must have said, John you need to write these things down. So he wrote what we know as the Gospel of John. And he begins his gospel about Jesus with a picture of Jesus being a Word. And God sent His Word, Jesus into the world and so Word became flesh, He became human and walked among us. It's as if Jesus painted a painting full of people then entered the painting He created, to interact with the people in His painting, and the people in the painting didn't recognize Him as the artist and they threw Him out. John writes about this, then gives us the terminology -the words - that best capture this tension that if you are a follower of Jesus you are going to bump into at some point or another; a tension that if you are a follower of Jesus it makes it hard, and messy, because you want to go one way or the other. And this is the word John left us with. He said this:

John 1:14 NIV

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. [There is great imagery with these 3 words, *dwelling among us*, that Jesus camped out with us; that Jesus moved in with us, lived with us. And when he says, "us" he doesn't mean us 2000 years later, he means literally He moved in with us like me and the guys.] We [and he's not talking about you "we" he's talking about he "we," John and his bros/buddies who lived with and ate with and talked with Jesus] have seen [John is saying we have seen something you have not seen. I've have seen something you would have had to be there to get. I have seen something I wish I could have captured so you could have seen it as well.] his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, [then he gives us our words] full of grace and truth. [Full, to the brim of grace *and* truth. And there is the tension. When it comes to the love of Jesus, the love we are to copy, we see grace and truth.]

You know what grace is, and you know what truth is. Truth says you are accountable, graces says, awh, you're forgiven; grace says you're fine, truth says naw, your broken; grace says, you're okay, truth says, ah, you're got to work on it; grace says no matter what you do I love you, truth says, yeah but you're accountable. And there is a tension. And you know what depending on our personality we tend to lean in one direction or the other don't we. Growing up you had one parent who was grace and one who was Mr. un-grace and which one did you liked better, let me guess – Gracie. I love grace, I love, I'm fine, I love, you love me just the way I am. But we need truth and accountability too. Your parents behind closed doors had to work that out. And so do you with your children. Certainly you want to show them grace, yet they must also learn that if they are going to have privileges they must show responsibility. See there's grace and truth and if you grew up in a great home you got a good dose of both.

But here is what John said, this is so remarkable, John said, I spent years watching Him, and as I begin my gospel of what it was like to be with Jesus here is what I saw. I saw that He was absolutely full of both grace and truth. See we want it be one or the other, we want to push Jesus in one direction or the other - usually I lean toward truth when I'm telling others what to do and grace when it's about me. But Jesus...He was fill to the brim with grace and truth. They were perfectly blended in everything He did. Then John said this, "out of His fullness..."or

John 1:16-17 NIV

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. [we have received grace upon grace upon grace. Then to clarify he says this]

For the law was given through Moses; [The law was given through Moses – we saw the movie right, the 10 commandments was given through Moses. The law of what God expects and what would happen if they didn't keep/obey those laws. The law of the "thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, and thou shalt really not and if thou doest thou shalt goest thee to the temple and make a sacrifice for the atonement of thy sins. The law was given through Moses and not just the 10 Commandments but 611 other laws as well. But then here is a huge distinction] grace and truth came [John doesn't use given he uses a different term, came from word to generate it's like was born – it came as a full package – grace and truth came] through Jesus Christ. [Not the balance between, that's where we want to live, not the balance between but the full measure of grace and truth, not the balance of, but the fullness of, the embodiment of. This is what made Jesus confusing, this is what made Him unpredictable it's because everyone wants to lead either one way or the other and John said he was all of both and He brought all of it to bear on every person He talked to and He brought all of it to bear into every situation. And just when you think He was going to go one way or the other, Jesus was full of grace and truth in a body. Not sometimes grace and sometimes truth but both fully in every situation and to every person].

Like the time He was sitting at a well and a Samaritan woman came over. And He talks to her, which you're not supposed to do – there's grace. And she said why are you talking to me, Jews don't associate with Samaritans. But Jesus said I'd like some water can you take your jar and give me a drink. She was surprised and amazed that He is talking to her, like what is up with this a Jew asking not only a Samaritan, but a Samaritan woman for a drink from her jar. And just when things were going good Jesus said hey, go get your husband and then come back. And she said, "well, I have no husband." And He said I know ... Then He moves into the most painful, shameful part of her life. And He says, you've had five husbands and the man you are living with now you are not even married to him. You have done a horrible job as a woman when it comes to men. You are not good with men. And we want to say, "what are you doing, Jesus, hello did you not even go to seminary, take a counseling course, you don't say that. You don't bring up the painful, shameful part of person, why are you leaning on her so severely? And then Jesus reveals to this woman something He has not revealed to anyone else. He looks her in the eye out there alone by this well and He says, "Guess who I am? I have not told anyone else this yet but I've chosen to tell you, a Samaritan woman – you are face to face, eyeball to eyeball with the Messiah! And He said to her, I can give you water that will quench the thirst of your soul like no man will ever do it. And she leaves her jar and goes to town and tells everyone she sees, "I've met the long awaited Messiah." Grace and truth.

In the first message of this series we talked about Matthew. Everyone hated Matthew, he was a tax collector, they hated tax collectors, I mean you hate them now, they hated

them back then. They were all traitors, they were Jews collecting taxes for Rome, even collecting more than Rome required to keep some for themselves. They were so bad that they had their own category; the people referred to tax collectors and sinners, they weren't just sinners, they were worse.

Then Jesus tells Matthew, one of these despised tax collectors, "Come, be one of my followers." His followers must of said, "Wait, wait, wait! If we have a tax collector in our group people are going to think we approve of tax collectors. Jesus, aren't you afraid that people are going to think you are approving of tax collectors by having a tax collector in our group?" To which Jesus would have said, "it's going to get worse. We are actually going to go to his house and he's going to invite all his tax collector friends. So if you think your reputation is in jeopardy now, wait until this evening about 6 o'clock when the party starts up." Jesus, doesn't it concern you that it will appear that you approve of what they do, don't you care what people will think? To which Jesus would have said, "What do you think I'm here for? I came to seek and save the lost. I'm not here to guard my reputation." Oh, yeah, right, someone write that down.

When Jesus was crucified, He was crucified between two thieves, and probably not just common thieves, they crucified the worse of the worse. And one of them says, "We're getting what we deserve." And do you expect Jesus to say, "no, you have a good heart. You're a good man, don't be so hard on yourself."? But Jesus was like, "no argument there. But, when you breathe your last breath and I breathe my last breath we are going to the same place. Today, you will be with me in paradise." Paradise? Okay wait, wait, wait, time out. A few chapters ago this young rich guy comes to you and says, "I want to have eternal life." Do you remember that? Do you remember what you told him? You told him in order for him to have eternal life he would have to sell everything he owns and follow you for the rest of his life. And this guy gets in with one minute left on the clock that is like totally unfair, and confusing. Okay, wait, we had to give up everything and follow you and he gets in at the last minute. He doesn't even have time to follow you, and you say today you will be with me, the worse of the worse with the best of the best, today we will be together in paradise. See there is a tension there, and if you try to resolve it you lose something.

And then one last story that is found in the Gospel of John of the woman caught in adultery. It's such a strange story because they bring her to Jesus and they say according to the law, remember the law was given through Moses, well according to the law, she is to be put to death, she is to be stoned. Jesus says okay we'll go with the law of Moses, go head then stone her, and let's begin with the person who has no sin, you go first okay, just try to hit me, okay. But the person with no sin, you start. The person who has never committed adultery in your heart you start. The person who has never looked at a woman lustfully, you start. The person who thinks, Oh, I would never ever do that, you start. And soon the law of Moses and the law of retribution breaks down and they all go away. Jesus makes everyone uncomfortable, and He looks at this woman and He says, "I don't condemn you, go and leave your life of sin." Okay, wait, which way is it, I don't condemn you or you're a sinner? "Yes. I don't condemn you, now go and leave your life of sin." Did you have to bring up the sin part? "Yes." Well

then how can you say she is not condemned? Because this is how I love, I am the embodiment of the fullness of grace and truth.

You see Jesus called sin, sin, then paid for it. Sin has a gotcha that's why you must confess, and repent, because sin has a gotcha and I don't want it to get-cha. I know of churches that are always grace, something is missing. I know churches that are always truth, something is missing. Grace is the only way home, the only way to be reunited with the Father., but If Jesus is the embodiment of grace and truth then we must accept the tension between grace and truth. The church is at its best when it embraces both grace and truth and refuses to let go of either. There are times in each of our lives when we need moments of truth and moments of grace; the church must minister both. Jesus says, yes you sin, I forgive you, I died for you, you are not condemned, I love you.

Grace and truth, let's thank Jesus for extending both to us and ask Him to help us to extend both to others.