

**God's Not the Problem:**  
**June 7, 2026**

A couple weeks back... **[1 Joy]**  
We had Pastor Chris Davis...  
from the Rocky Mountain Synod...  
With us... here at our worship.  
He's a great guy.  
And he honestly seemed... to enjoy our church.

He walked around... observed...  
Talked to people... did his synod thing.

Before he left... he mentioned... that he noticed...  
That the people of this church... tended...  
To tease me...  
Just a wee little bit.

I of course...  
Feigned innocence.  
Like I didn't understand...  
And definitely...  
Had nothing to do with it.

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Well... this is a story...  
About the teasing nature...  
Of some members...  
Of this otherwise... very serious congregation.

Not sure how we got on the topic...  
But a gentlemen... of our church...  
One of you...  
Was teasing me...  
About the length of my sermons.

Which by the way...  
Is low hanging fruit...  
When it comes to...  
Teasing a pastor.

But he did it anyway...  
And I responded... by saying...

You know... It's a shame... it's just sad...  
That you can't give...  
An hour and ten minutes...  
An extra ten minutes...  
To God... on a weekend.

He looked me straight in the eye... **[2 Not the Problem]**  
And said... God's not the problem.  
And that my friends... is hilarious.

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And you know what...  
That's exactly what I thought...  
When I read the gospel lesson for today.

God is not the problem...  
In any of these stories...  
From the gospel of St. Matthew.

People are the problem.  
People who think they are right.  
People who think they are better...  
Than other people.

People who hang onto rules...  
At the expense of other people's...  
General well-being.

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And why?  
Why do we humans...  
Choose to divide...  
Why do we constantly take sides?

Why would we choose hate...  
And anxiety... and fear... and conflict...  
Over love?

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Because the truth is... we are insecure...  
We know... quietly inside our hearts...  
We aren't that great.  
We lash out at others... because...

We want to justify ourselves.  
We want to prove that we are worthy.  
We want to show the whole world...  
That we are good and right and special.

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Listen... I always tell young couples... **[3 Both Ends]**  
Before they get married...  
That marriage is a constant negotiation...  
A ongoing give and take...

And each person needs to commit...  
To holding up their end...  
Of the relationship.

Sometimes... you might have to carry a little more...  
Sometimes... you may have to ask for help.  
It's always changing...  
And you have to work...  
To take care of your marriage.

Or any relationship... right?  
Typically relationships are a two way street.

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Well... not with God. **[4 Got This]**  
In our relationship with God...  
We don't have much to offer...  
We bring nothing to the table.  
We don't have the power within us...  
To make ourselves right...  
To heal what is broken...

But it's still a two way street... kind of...  
But our part of the deal...  
Is to come to God... in humility.  
And ask... for God's help.

Every day.  
Every single day.  
We need God's help.

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But too often... we choose pride.  
And judgement. Division. Hate. Conflict.  
Self righteousness.

Well... Jesus came to break all that.  
He came to break the system.  
He came to break the Law...  
He came to break our hearts.

So that we will turn.  
With all sincerity... and humility...  
And come back to God...  
Who loves us.

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That's what this gospel is all about.

Three stories in a row...  
That signify a change...  
In how God is working...  
And what God wants from us.

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First. **[5 Eating with Sinners]**  
Jesus chose a tax collector...  
And asked Matthew... to follow him...  
Matthew was working for the Roman government...  
In opposition... to the freedom...  
And the sovereignty... of the people of Israel.

He was on the wrong side... but Jesus chose him...

And then...he ate with him... which is a big deal...  
Because if you eat with unclean people...  
Guess what... it makes you unclean...  
But Jesus chose Mathew... ate with Matthew...  
And other tax collectors... and sinners.

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Couldn't he find better friends?

Well.. if by better we mean...  
More honest... more respectable...  
Hoity toity.... Fancy pants...  
Good church people....  
Like the Pharisees...

Sure. He could have found some of them.  
They were always nearby... watching him...  
Waiting for him... to make a mistake.  
All the time...

Then he did... and they caught him.

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And the good church people... the Pharisees... were mad.  
But they didn't confront Jesus directly... oh no...

Instead... they went to his disciples...  
And asked them... why does YOUR teacher...  
Eat with tax collectors and sinners.

But Jesus heard them... and said... **[6 Doctor]**  
Those who are well...  
Don't need a doctor.  
Only those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means... you Pharisees...  
I desire mercy... not sacrifice.

I have not come to call the righteous...  
But sinners.

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I mean... think about what he said...  
Those who are well... don't need a doctor...

And those who are righteous...  
Don't need a messiah.

In other words...  
If you can do it... all by yourself...  
Then what is Jesus all about?  
Why did Jesus come?  
Why did Jesus die?

If you... by your good works...  
Have this whole God thing... in the bag...  
Then why do you need a Savior?  
See we all have to decide...  
Am I sick... or not? Am I a sinner... or not?  
Do I need a Savior... or not?

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Ok. Second story. **[7 Help]**

The child who has died.  
That's what her father said.  
He was leader... of some kind...  
Important in government... or the church...  
We don't know.

What we do know is... he humbled himself...  
And came to Jesus and said... my daughter is dead...  
Come lay your hand on her....  
And she will live.

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Now... that doesn't make much sense...  
Why would he think... that Jesus...  
Has the power to raise someone from the dead...

At this point in the gospel...  
He had never done anything like that.  
He had cast out demons.  
He had healed the sick.  
He had even calmed a storm.

But never ever ever... had he raised the dead.

But this man... believed he could.  
Hoping against hope...  
He asked Jesus... to do the impossible.

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So early in my ministry...  
When people died...

I would go to the casket...  
And touch the person...  
On their arm... and pray for them...

I did it... so that I would become...  
More comfortable with death...  
So I could understand...  
What it meant to be dead...  
But also what it meant...  
To ask for Jesus...  
To raise them to new life.

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But did you know... it is against the Law of God...  
To touch a dead body?

Because death was a corruption of God's will...  
Not the way it's supposed to be...  
Death is the ultimate result of sin...  
Therefore... if you touched a dead person...  
It made you unclean.

And any Jewish teacher... worth his salt...  
Would refuse... to touch a dead person.

They would walk around the body.  
They would avoid the situation... at all costs...

But this man... asked Jesus...  
To lay his hand on dead child...  
Just touch her...  
And she will live.

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Ok. Hold that thought...  
Because right in the middle of the second story...  
The third story happens. **[8 Fringe]**

While he was being asked to help... this little girl...  
A woman who had been sick... and bleeding...  
For 12 years... with no medical help... no physical relief...  
Suddenly appeared.... In the crowd...

And her life... was really hard...  
She was constantly considered unclean...  
She could not touch other people.

But... in her desperation...  
She worked her way... through the crowd...  
Probably touching people... here and there...  
Bumping into them...  
Which was risky...

But she didn't care...  
She had gotten to the point...  
Where she thought...  
If I can just touch his cloak... even the fringe...  
I will be made well.

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So. You know those fringes... that you see hanging...  
From a Jewish man's shirt... or prayer shawl...  
They are called the tzitzit.

They wear them... because of the command...  
From the book of Numbers 15:38-39.  
Speak to the Israelites,  
And tell them to make fringes...  
On the corners of their garments  
Throughout their generations.

And to put a blue cord... on the fringe at each corner.  
You have the fringe... so that, when you see it...  
You will remember... all the commandments of the LORD  
And do them... and not follow the lust  
Of your own heart... and your own eyes.

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So you know how all words..  
Have numerically values?  
The numerical value of the word TZITZIT... is 600...  
And there are 8 strings... that make up each fringe...  
And there are 5 double knots... tied on the fringe.

If you add all those numbers together...  
You get 613... which is the number...  
Of God's commandments in the Torah.

I know. That's a lot of math...  
Just know this.  
The men wore these fringes...  
To remind them... to be good people...  
And fulfill God's Law...

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So... I don't think...  
It was an accident...  
That the woman who was unclean...  
Thought... if I can just touch... the part of his robe...  
That represents the VERY Law of God...  
Then I will be made well.

Right? It's a rational thought.  
But it's such a dangerous thought.

This woman who was rejected by the Law...  
Bravely and hopefully... embracing the Law...  
Reaching out to God... for help.

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But please understand...  
It was not the Law...  
That made her well...

Jesus said... Take heart... daughter...  
Do you hear the love he had for her...  
He called her daughter.  
You are my family.  
And I love you.

Then he said... your FAITH...  
Has made you well.

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Ok. Back to the second story. **[9 Talitha Cum]**  
I'll make this quick.  
He goes to the leader's house.  
Sees all the commotion... mourning... and grief...

And he says...  
You know...  
She's not dead...  
She's just sleeping.

Which was only true...  
Because he had the power... to wake her up... from death.

So he did that thing...  
He wasn't supposed to do.  
That thing... that made him unclean.  
That thing... that no good teacher would do.

He took her... by the hand... he touched her.  
And the girl got up... and lived.

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Well... we are drinking from the fire hose today.  
But all these stories... point to the same thing... **[10 New Kingdom]**  
THIS IS THE NEW KINGDOM OF JESUS...  
These stories... teach us... what the kingdom looks like:

We have learned... we can't be self righteous...  
It is so arrogant... to think...  
That we have the power...  
Within ourselves...  
To make things right.  
We can't. We won't.

Only God makes us righteous...  
As a gift... through Jesus.  
Not by my own doing.

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We have learned... we can't save ourselves...  
Jesus is the Savior.  
Not you. Not me.

Jesus. He is source of all life and hope.  
So it is to our advantage...  
To be honest about that.

Be like the tax collectors...  
Be like the sinners...  
Be like the leader...  
Be like the woman...

Know who you are.  
Know what you need.  
Know the limitations...  
Of your own self.

And reach out to him.  
He will save you.

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We have learned... there is no life...  
To be gained by strict adherence... to the Law...  
Sure... it can help us... not kill each other...  
But it's faith... in Jesus... that brings us life.  
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So don't be a Pharisee.

You don't get to choose...  
Who is eligible for this promise.  
You can't decide... who is in or out.

And it doesn't matter...  
What side of the political...  
Or social... or economic...  
Or even religious line...  
You choose to stand on.

It is irrelevant...  
When it comes to God's grace.

God has decided... to love the whole world.  
Who are you?  
He sent his only Son... to make that clear.  
We don't get to choose. God has chosen.

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And the ridiculously joyful good news is...  
God has chosen us.  
Can you believe it?  
He has chosen you.  
To love. And to give you life..

And shouldn't that just make us...  
Want to reach out... to as many people... as we can...  
People who are hurting and broken...  
Who are prideful and angry...  
Who are self-righteous and arrogant...  
Who are sad and lost and lonely...

Doesn't the fact...  
That God has loved and chosen you...  
Make you want other people...  
To feel that same joy and freedom.

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Well. THIS IS THE NEW KINGDOM.  
And you are living in the NEW KINGDOM.  
Right now. Today.

Jesus has changed how things work.  
He has changed how we understand God.  
He has changed everything.  
In order to give us hope.

So now... it IS... your job...  
And my job... to let the world know.

Thanks be to God.  
Amen. X