

InterVarsity Graduate & Faculty Ministries Conference 2007
The power of the gospel to save: Inviting people into the Kingdom
Helping others to see Jesus: lessons from the Master himself

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1.0 A thesis: evangelism happens when people encounter, or see, Jesus
Our job is to bring people into contact with Christ and see him for who he is
But what does this entail? we can use some help here

2.0 How did Jesus reveal himself to others?

A passage to consider: The end of Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem, right before Palm
Sunday

Look at Mark 10 and Luke 18-19, which give different interesting details

Mark 10

Pharisees and divorce
Jesus and the children
Rich young ruler
The coming passion of the Messiah
The disciples and servant leadership
Healing a blind man

Luke 18: 9-19:28

Parable of the Pharisee and tax collector
Jesus and the children
Rich young ruler
The coming passion of the Messiah
Healing a blind man
Zaccheus

In these episodes Jesus interacts with lots of types of people
He shows many different sides of himself.
Let's join him in this process.

The Pharisees and divorce

Audience: Pharisees: learned, teachers, authorities. (academic and professional types!)
They have issues within that hinder authentic interaction with Jesus
Jesus shows himself as 'up to their level,' to be taken seriously
He shows himself as unafraid of controversy and conflict
He shows himself as totally dedicated to the truth

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector

Told "to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others
with contempt"
Quite likely the Pharisees themselves
Jesus shows himself as reversing the order of things, and as revealing a merciful Judge

Jesus and the children

Audience here? The children....or the adults?
Adults, primarily. Their issues: self-righteousness, but also wanting to control Jesus
Jesus shows himself as tender, paying attention to weakness, and not needing protecting

Rich young ruler

This is the story I really wanted to be central today
Rich young ruler: has occasioned many different personality analyses
Might be haughty, or trying to kiss up to Jesus, or to manipulate him....or not
in Mark: "Jesus, looking at him, loved him". Why? something *genuine* here
How does Jesus show himself? many sides
As someone who will demand clear sight from others (why call me good?)
As God incarnate (implying that if he is called Good, that attribute of God fits)
As someone who deals with others in truth and expects them to be truthful as well
(note the choice of commandments--asking, is the issue externals or internals?)
As someone who sees and loves the best *in* us
As someone who wants what is best *for* us
As someone who longs for fellowship *with* us
As someone who regrets every lost relationship with him
As someone who we can trust...but it will cost us
The young man can't trust and loses out (a trope on Abraham and Isaac?)
Isn't this a friend you could love? a friend worth having?

The coming passion of the Messiah, the disciples and servant leadership

The audience: the disciples
Jesus shows himself as willing to give, as well as demand; as generous; as above-human

Healing a blind man

The audience: the crowd. Again, we see these issues of protecting and controlling Jesus
Jesus shows himself as someone who has time for those in need
As someone who wants honesty from ourselves about our needs
As someone who is not just talk, but makes real and worthwhile differences

Zaccheus

The audience: the crowd, esp. the self righteous, but also Zaccheus (politico money man)
Jesus shows himself as not defined by others' expectations
As eager to seek and save the lost
As ready to celebrate with us

3.0 Let's be honest: this is hard to do.

Some hearers have problems in themselves
Some hearers have problems with Jesus (foolishness to the Greeks, a stumbling block)
Some hearers have problems with us as the messengers
But, after all--this is about Jesus. And people rejected him in his day. They *killed* him.
We need to be realistic; Jesus faced rejection, and we should not be surprised by it.
"We are the aroma of Christ.." the smell of life? or death?
But like it or not, we *are* that aroma. Which is good. And God is in charge of the hearts of others.

4.0: To finish: the parable of the unjust judge, which sets the stage for all that we've seen.

A simple point in this parable: we are to be faithful in prayer because God listens.
Luke precedes this final passage with this parable specifically as a call to faith
in the face of the challenges faced by people encountering Jesus.