

Contagious Christianity
Contagious Message
October 18, 2009
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We're continuing Contagious Christianity. It is such an important message and it's such an important series because as our church begins to reach our community, as our church tries to do the impossible with the relocation and all the things we're doing. The only way that the message of God is going to get out is going to be through you. It's the only way. Now it would be great if we could have a worship service that attracted many. It would be great if my sermon was good enough to attract people. It would be great if our programs were enough to attract people, but at the end of the day, the message of Christ is carried to the world not by foolishness of preaching, not by the worship services we have, not by the programs we offer for your children. It's done by you, because you have earned the right to speak into people's lives. You've earned the right to tell people about how much you care for them and what God means to you and so it's got to catch on in your heart first. That's where the fire has to start. Listen, this message is an incredible message of God's love. It's an incredible message of God sending his son to die for me; to die for you; to die for those who just reject him; for those who take his name in vain; for those who don't even give him the time of day. There's a story in a book I read recently. It was about a girl who was very sick. She was sick to the point of death and needed a blood transfusion or she wasn't going to make it. They went to the older brother who was a couple years older and said, listen your sister needs some blood and you're probably a compatible match. Would you let us test you and see if you're a match? The little boy was tested and he was a match and they came to him and said if you give blood to your sister she'll live. He said let me think about it and so the next morning when he woke up he said yes I'm willing to give blood to my sister. They put him in the room and they took the blood out of the little boy and they began putting the transfusion into the little girl and the doctor walked by to make sure that everything was okay and the little boy opened his eyes and asked the doctor this question, when do I start to die. You see, he thought by giving his blood to his sister to live that he was sacrificing his own life. You hear about sacrificial love and it just stirs your heart and it makes you think that is the sweetest thing but let's be honest in here today, there's a lot of you that would give your life for somebody else. When you think about it for a moment, there are some people in your life that you would sacrifice your life for their well being and you know that. There's not a husband in here that would allow his wife to die if given the choice between him and her. There are not a lot of wives in here that wouldn't do the same thing for her husband. There is not one parent in here that would not give their life for their children. I'm I saying something not true? Is there a parent in here that would say, not me; I can't stand

my kids. Nobody, it just doesn't happen. The bible says it in John 15; greater love hath no man than he lay down his life for a friend. There are even some friends that you may lay down your life for. But what makes this an incredible message and what makes this story so over the top is the fact that God sent his only son to die, not for a friend, but for an enemy. God sent his only son to die. Now, I could lay out this wonderful story that we've heard many times and I've seen and they talk about it all the time about the man that took his son to work with him and the man's job happened to be running the bridge over the river for the railroad. His job was to raise the bridge so that the ships could pass through and to lower the bridge so the train could get across safely. The story goes that one day he is standing there and his son is with him and the train is coming and he looks down and he's about to throw the switch and he notices that his son is trapped in the gear shift and he has to make a choice so through much agony he choose to throw the switch and the gear killed his son and the story goes the train speeds by and the people are laughing, eating and drinking and have no idea about the sacrifice the gate keeper has just made. I want you to understand something, that story's not true. It didn't happen. Do you know why it didn't happen? Because not one of you would give your child's life for a stranger; not one of you. I'd hope that I would give my life for my church but you ask me to give the life of one of my children, it's not going to happen. But what of it's a hundred of us? Not going to happen. What if it's all of us? You mean you wouldn't trade one of your children for all of us? What a horrible person you are. You're right, I just wouldn't. But God did. That's incredible. God did not spare his own son because he wanted you and me to be reconciled to him. He wanted to make things right in our life. We were enemies to God. The bible tells us we all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God but God demonstrated his love for us while we opposed to God, while we were enemies of God. Jesus himself died for me and you.

As we look at this story, I want you to see with me the four key characters in the story. The first character is God himself. I want to go through some characteristics some God things you need to know about. The first thing you need to know about God is God's a loving God. That is an easy concept for us. God is a wonderful, gentle, loving God. He's in heaven and he looks down at us; he loves us intensely and he wants the best for us. He wants to take care of us and that is all true. He is that kind of loving God. The problem in our generation is most of us wants to leave God at that point. We want to leave God as a loving God and you'll hear all the time through the T.V., through the radio and talk shows...God is a God of love. If God loves us then he would send any of us to hell. God is a loving God so how in the world would a loving God allow anybody to suffer. This week I was reminded of that when I watched a video clip of Oprah Winfrey and she was talking about her pilgrimage, about her searching for God and about her path that she's on which is actually the path to hell and she's taking a lot of people with her. Now if you're an Oprah fan today and I've offended you, you know how I feel. Let me tell you I would love for her to be saved. I would love for her to go back to her roots and find

Jesus Christ because she could lead a lot of people in the other direction but let me tell you what she said. It was striking and it speaks for our generation. She said she was 26 years old, sitting in a Baptist church. The church was packed. It was a dynamic preacher preaching and as he was preaching he was talking about some attributes of God and in that he said that our God is a jealous God and he is jealous of us. Oprah Winfrey says at that moment she stopped and she thought, God can't be jealous, that's not a positive thing. God can't be jealous. He is all loving and all wonderful. God wouldn't be angry with me and she says that's when she began her pilgrimage to find out who God is. Let me tell you what she did. She went out like many of us do and she created a God in her own image. She created a comfortable God. She created a gentle God. She created a God that would overlook everything that we do and just love us. J.B. Phillips wrote a book called *Is Your God is too Small*. He says in it...We have a tendency to reduce God to something that he is not and try to turn him into something we want him to be so if people can view him as merely a warm and benevolent force for good then that feels comfortable and safe. While God is loving and I would never say he's not, there's other attributes that he talks about. He's not just a loving God, it says a holy God and that word holy means totally different from you and me; totally separate; totally cut off; made of something entirely different. It says he is holy which means he knows no sin; he knows no imperfections; he knows no flaws; he has nothing in his presence or around him remotely evil. He's a holy God and because of that holiness; because of who he is; evil, imperfection, flaws cannot enter his presence. In fact, he says with sin there is a wage to be paid and that wage is death. He is that serious. He said sin is not something that I take lightly. I am a holy God and imperfection cannot be in my presence. Because he is a holy God he's a just God and just means he is going to measure out judgment based on his holiness and so when his holiness shines in our heart, wow, because without looking at God's holiness you and I measure up pretty good. I mean, let's be honest, most of us in here except for a couple of you, most of us in here when we look at ourselves in the mirror we know that we are basically good people. We love our family, we pay our bills, we don't cheat on our taxes, and well half of us don't cheat on our taxes. We don't wish evil, we've never killed anybody. We've never committed adultery, we've never done all those big things, so we're basically good people until God's holiness shines in and when God's holiness shines in there's not a person in here that can stand before him. That's why the bible says we've all sinned. Well you've never killed anyone but have you spoken ill of someone? Have you hated someone? Have you been angry at someone? Well you've never committed adultery but have you ever lusted after someone? Have you ever looked at someone and wished they were your spouse? See, when God's holiness shines in we see the imperfection and God is so serious about his holiness he has to be the judge. Let me ask you a question, if someone murdered your family and he came to trial two years later and the judge said he's had enough time, let's let him out. Would anybody be outraged by that? But yet we think when God is just; when God looks at sin and says I've said that sin equals death. The

wages of sin is death, but we want a God that will simply look at our sin and go you're human, you all fail, its okay. I love everybody. Everybody gets a free pass. That's what we want, but that's not the God that we see in the bible. God is loving, God is holy and God is just. That means we fall short of his standards. Everyone in this room falls short of his standards. God made us good and he said we were good but with our decisions we became sinful. The bible says from the womb I am a sinful person. We have all failed and you know that today. I do not have to convince anyone in this room that there are imperfections in your life; that there are flaws in your life. That you've done things that if we put them on the screen today you would be humiliated by. So if that sin is in our life what does it mean? It means you and I deserve death. The wages of sin are death. We have a debt that we cannot pay off. There is nothing we can do. We have to give up our lives to pay it off. We have a debt that we cannot pay so Jesus became a substitution for that. Jesus said the wages of sin is hell. You cannot get by; you cannot make it; you are bankrupt. There is nothing you can do. So we see Christ come in. Christ is God himself. In Philippians it says that he emptied himself and he became in the very likeness man. He poured himself out so he could be our sin offering. He lived a perfect life without sin and he said if the wages are death, I'll take it. He wants to substitute. You see, by him substituting his life for yours and his death for yours he expresses the love of God. He upholds the holiness of God and he satisfies the justice of God. Usually here I get a couple of questions and one of the major questions people ask me is he's God, why couldn't God just forgive and forget? I mean honestly, we're humans and we forgive and forget don't we? I mean we have the ability right? Let me ask you a question, if you walk out today about to go and eat lunch and one of the church members here is standing by your car because they backed in to it and smashed it, now I know as loving and as patient as all of you are, you'd simply go that's not a problem! I see you didn't even scratch your car, good for you! You go ahead and have lunch that will be fine. You have the ability to do that am I correct? You could choose that but the problem is if you choose that you have a dent in your car and I know some of you, that's not a problem. I remember when I got my truck brand new. The first new vehicle I'd ever owned. My fifteen year old daughter wanted to drive it and she did. She drove it right off the road over a stop sign. I'm embarrassed today of how mad I got over a dent this big. I forgave her. I probably need to call her and forgive her again, but I forgave her, but the dents still there. Then about two weeks later my oldest son was coming from baseball and my oldest son is not real bright he took his bat bag and from about twenty yards away he decided he was going to throw it in the back of the truck because he was racing to the truck. He threw it and it hit the side of the truck and guess what it did? Dented it. So I took the bat out and broke his leg, no I had to forgive him but that dent's still there and I still see it. So we can say hey God, just forgive and forget it, we'll live with our dented lives, its okay. We can still function, but here's the problem with the analogy, we're not automobiles, we're finely tuned instruments to bring God glory. God created us wonderfully. It says we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

God created us to bring him glory. It's kind of like an instrument is made to make music, we were made to bring God glory and so here we are a perfect instrument in his hand and then sin begins to enter our life. Well God can just forgive and forget right? It's not a big deal; all the music people are nervous, sorry. What's a little sin? This is what sin does [he breaks a guitar]. It's not just a little scratch; it's not just a little bruise. Sin makes us not be able to bring God glory. No music will be played on this again. It may make noise but no music. So when we have sin in our life Jesus comes and said listen, you've really messed this up so I am going to pay the price and I'm going to make you new. I'm going to pay the price and I'm going to put you back together and you are going to play beautiful music because you're going to be a perfect instrument again. Yeah you know even after we are put back together sometimes we ding ourselves but sin no longer has power over us and sin will never destroy us again and even though we get a little ding, God looks at it and goes, I've got that. Sin can't destroy us any longer. That's what Jesus did, he made you over. He couldn't just forgive and forget. He had to do it all again, aren't you glad.

That brings us to the final part, the final character and that's you. One of the problems we have in our bible belt is that you do the best you can and you try to look good on the outside but you've never really responded to Jesus. You're religious, you're a good person and you give money and you go on mission trips and you do all these incredible things but you've never responded to Jesus. You see his gift is not automatic just because you're born doesn't mean you receive the gift of God. You have to have a personal response. One of the most frightening verses in the entire bible is found in Matthew 7:21-27. ²¹**"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** ²²**Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'** ²³**Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'** In our culture this says did I not teach Sunday school? Did I not volunteer in VBS? Was I not a greeter God? Did I not give to the building fund? God I did all these things. God says I never knew you because you never personally responded to me. You never bowed your knee and said I messed up God and I need you. You never said, God I'm going to live for you. You're not only going to be my savior, you're going to be the leader of my life. I'm going to give it all to you. This is how you know if God has entered your life or not...have you begun the process of being spiritually transformed? Are you different today then you were? Has God begun to shape you in the way he desires you to be? Has he worked on you or are you just the regular guy that you've always been? You just go to church. I can tell you I'm not the person I would have been without Jesus. I can promise you that. Has that transformation happened in your life? I want you to look inside and I want you to hear me. You can't share this message until the message is real in your heart. You can't share this message until you personally respond to Jesus and say Father forgive me for my sin, come in to my life, and make me new. God use me for your glory, make music with me. That's

my question, I want you to bow. I want you to take this question seriously today. Has there been a point in your life that you've cried out to the Lord, not just using his name, not just walking the aisle, not just being baptized but has there begun to be a spiritual transformation in your life because there was a point in time that you said Father forgive me and come in and your life changed from that moment. Let me tell you the Holy Spirit doesn't come in you and not change you. You say well I still have sin in my life, yeah there's a difference than a nick on a guitar then destruction. This is the prayer, Father, I am a good person but your holiness reveals God that my righteousness is filthy rags. My right standing means nothing to you and I may be better than some of the people around me and I may be better than the criminals on the street God, but today you've revealed to me that I have sinned in my life and sin reigns in me. Today I want to give that to you God. I want to confess that to you, I want you to not only be my savior I want you to be my master, my boss, my leader. God I want to follow you. I want to give up the things of old. I want to give up the old habits. I want to give up the old ways and I want to follow you. Today God I want salvation to be mine. Now without anyone looking around, if you prayed that prayer will you raise your hand? Listen when you pray that prayer; begin that transformation in your heart. Right now let God begin to work on you. Follow him, get involved in a LIFE Group, and follow him in baptism. Don't let Satan steal this seed that God has laid in your heart right now. Don't walk out of here right now and go to lunch and forget all about what you were experiencing right now. For those of us who know Jesus is it contagious. Your staff isn't going to win people to Christ, you are. One last verse, Colossians 4:5 says, ***"We should be wise in the way we act toward outsiders and make the most of every opportunity."*** So I urge you to make the most of this opportunity boldly inviting people to join you next week, offer them a ride, provide them with a meal, don't wait till Friday or Saturday, right now prepare to make bold invitations to the people you know and this is what I'm going to ask you to do, I don't want you inviting people from The Oaks, I don't want you inviting people from Farley Street or First Baptist, invite someone you know that doesn't go to church. Make up your mind right now to be contagious with this message. The ushers are going to make their way to the front. This offerings a little different today, yes we need your financial responsibility, we need your tithe. If you're a guest, we're not asking you to give money, that's for the members of the church to do. We're asking every person in this place when that plate goes by pray for one name, just one, one person that you will make a priority to invite them this week to sit right beside you. One person that you know. Do you believe in hell? Do you believe it's real? Do you believe the message of Christ? One person that you know without your word may spend eternity separated from God.