

**Contagious Christianity**  
**God's Contagious Love**  
**October 26, 2009**  
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For the last six weeks we've been talking about this contagious Christianity. How if we truly believe that we found grace and mercy, if we truly believe we found eternal life how it should be contagious when we find out how much God loves us that we're going to want to tell other people, we're going to want to share that message with our friends; with our neighbors; with people we barely know. We've talked about some ways to try to impact somebody's life with this wonderful message. Today I wanted to talk more about it and I wanted you to understand very quickly how important it is to share with non Christian people this contagious love. Now, the problem in Ellis County is the word non Christian people because everybody in Ellis County is a Christian which means they're not a Buddhist, they're not a Muslim, and they're Christians. Most of the people you meet day to day will tell you of course I'm a Christian. They have no idea what the true definition of what being a Christian is all about. They have no idea that true Christianity is more than knowledge of a religious system. It's more than even attendance in a local church; it's something much deeper, something much more intimate, and something more real. It is a relationship with the creator God. We sang the song Oh How He Loves Us, and he does and he wants to pour that love into us but I want you to hear me today, he loves us so much he can't leave us the way we are. He loves us so much that we've got to turn our lives over to him. He loves us so much that he knows that we are disconnected from him because of sin in our life and he loves us too much to let us stay that way. The verse that scares me more than any other verse in the bible concerning Ellis County is this, In Matthew 7:21-23, <sup>21</sup>**"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. <sup>22</sup>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?' They are saying, Lord did we not attend church regularly? God did we not give our offerings? God did we not teach Sunday school and VBS? We did all of these things and Jesus looks at them and says, <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'** That's a frightening verse because you see accepting Christ is more than accepting a pattern of life. It's more than accepting a model to follow. It is actually asking Jesus Christ to come into your life and to be your Lord and Savior, to forgive your sins and be your leader and let your life start a spiritual transformation. So today if your life has never begun that spiritual transformation, if your life has never been changed by a holy savior, if your life is not different from the world around you then you cannot cry out Lord, Lord and expect to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Today what we're going to do with this contagious love is we're going to boil it down to the central core of Christianity. For some of you it's going to be a review and that's good. For others of you it's going to take some of the haze off of it, but for some of you it's going to be like a lightning bolt because for the first time we're going to strip away everything we think Christianity is and get down to the core message of what Christianity is all about. So today as we begin this I want you to see what it means, I want you to see the love because I believe when you understand the love that God has for you, you'll want it. I believe when you understand the gift of grace, you'll want it. So as we look at the core essential of what it means to follow Christ I want you to understand something, there's a lot of confusion about God, a lot of confusion in our world. Many people think God is just a benevolent creator full of love and peace and he is, but they stop there and they believe this creator is going to let everyone go to heaven because God is all love and he knows that we're all sinners and he just loves us so much that he's going to wink at sin and let us by and it really doesn't matter about what we do, it doesn't matter what path we follow. It's that old thought that all paths lead to God. So we just live our lives trying to do the best we can and many people find themselves confused about who God really is. Then there is another group of people and a lot of you in the church, a lot of you who've been around the church, a lot of you have been abused by the church and you've got this idea of Jesus and it's a whole different concept. It's an idea of a judge standing in the sky and looking down and disapproving everything you do. God is up there keeping a tally sheet to say you're about one away from a lightning bolt son! So you really focus on the holiness and judgment of God but you never understand the love that he has for you. For many of you, your view of Jesus is much like this video. **[Start video]** *Now it's time for me to tell you all what you've done wrong since I've last saw you and don't try and hide because I'm Jesus, I will find you. Let's start with you Peter; you lied to your mother the other day. Andrew, you said a naughty word when you hit your finger with the hammer. James, you laughed at him when he hit his finger. Moving right along, John, you drank too much wine the other night, not way too much, just enough to make me angry. Matthew, we fell asleep in church didn't we? Yes we did. And Thomas, you were slow dancing a little too close with that girlfriend of yours. Let see...you, I forgot your name so you're off the hook for now. Phillip, I saw you smoking a cigarette behind that big rock the other day. Thaddeus, I hate to say I saw you stick up your middle finger at someone who cut you off when you were riding your camel. Benjamin, you're not wearing your WWJD bracelet. Jacob, I don't mind you saying my name but not after you stub your toe. Frank, you know what you did, I just can't repeat it because I'm Jesus. Alright, all you sinners come with me. It's time to pay the piper. Look at all these sinners. Alright listen up. Listen to me, I'm Jesus. Listen to what I have to say, I have done many wonderful things. I have healed many people of diseases. I have performed many miracles so that I can tell you this...you're all evil. There is no hope. That's it, thank you.* **[End video]** Now, I hope that didn't offend you, it's a joke about how actually people see Jesus. They truly see Jesus in that light, they see the church

in that light and they think that's what we're about. Now, it's understandable because we understand punishment for the things we do. We understand being held accountable for crimes we've committed. In fact, we have this internal sense of justice in our life. When someone does a crime, we expect them to pay for that crime and when they don't pay for that crime it really upsets us. Just like when the twin towers were bombed, we wanted them to pay for what they did. We were behind anything we could do to get them to pay for it. The guy that blew up the federal building in Oklahoma, he paid for his crime and we see justice in that. Some of the reasons many of us were upset with the O.J. Simpson case is two innocent people were murdered and there was no justice; nobody paid for that crime and that's what justice is about. That's what we use atonement for. It's atoning for a crime; it is paying the punishment for a crime that's been committed and I want you to hold on to that because that's something that God put in all of us to understand there has to be atonement for any crime committed.

The second idea that's the core of Christianity is that of substitution. We understand substitution. Anybody that watches sports understands substitutes. Last night, I'm watching the Texas game with Colt McCoy and they brought in his substitute and you know what I did? I changed the channel. Substitute came in, Colt McCoy's not in, game over. We understand what substitution is about in our life and today, what we're going to do is we're going to put those two words together and help you understand the core of Christianity. This is what Christianity is about. It is a substitutionary atonement. That's it. There's a crime that's been committed against God, it's called sin. It's disobedience and because of that sin there's a penalty and that penalty for sin happens to be death. But God sent a substitute. Now this began a long time ago. It began way back in the book of Genesis and if you look in the book of Genesis you begin to see this concept. See God made this world perfect and he put Adam and Eve in the world and he told them, he made a commandment to them and he said this, this is what I want you to do, ***"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;<sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*** So here's God, he set up this beautiful garden, this perfect paradise and he puts man and woman in this paradise and he says you're free to eat from any tree but I have this one tree and I want you to stay away from it. That's my desire for you. Stay away and do not eat from this tree. It's not long and the temptation enters the world and Satan comes and says, did God really say not to touch that tree? He never said that. Well no, he didn't say not to touch it he said not to eat from it. Pretty soon, Adam and Eve are fooled and are tricked and they make a choice to disobey God and listen, it's not about eating a piece of fruit. It's about here you have this creator God that has done everything for you, has provided everything for you and yet, you do not respect him enough to follow his commands and so sin entered the world. It opened the door and the bible tells us we are all born in sin and sin reigns in all of us through that one man and we have that sin in our life and so here's the big thing, God comes down. What's he going

to do? He's already told them if you eat this you will die so is God going to go down and wink at them and said just kidding. It's just an apple; it's not that big a deal. Is that what God's going to do? God can't do that and still be God. So God comes down and he says, what have you done? And then death enters our world; and decay enters our world and man is going to face death, every one of them but so they could live for that moment in God's presence God did something incredible. He took an animal and in front of Adam and Eve he slaughtered it. I want you to understand something about that, Adam and Eve loved the animals in the garden. They cared for the animals in the garden. This is the first time they've ever seen death. As a little boy do you remember the first time you killed something? I remember the first time I saw a deer shot, the deer didn't die very quickly. It was kicking and fighting and it was in pain and somebody went up to it and cut its throat and I remember that. Well, Adam and Eve because of their sin are looking at an animal and that animal was put to death and that blood spills out on the ground and God substitutes that animal for their sin and he says he uses the skin and he covers their guilt and shame and that's very symbolic to understand that the death of that innocent animal covered their sin so they could still stay in the presence of God so that sin could be atoned for from that animal. We go on and we see in the book of Exodus God has had enough and judgment day is coming and he looks at the children of Israel and the people of Egypt and he says the first born is going to die, every first born animal and man alike is going to die unless you go out to your field and you pick out the perfect lamb, the lamb that's going to make you the most money and you take that lamb and you kill it. Then you sprinkle that blood on the door post of your house and on that night when that judgment comes, the angel of death will pass over the house that has the blood of the lamb on the door post. I picture a fifteen year old boy walking out with his dad. It's his dad to tend the sheep and he's looking out over it and his dad is out there and he says listen, we need to pick out the best looking lamb of the bunch. The boy's like, okay, why? We've just got to find it. They find the best lamb in the bunch and he says we're going to have to kill this lamb today and put the blood on the door post. The fifteen year old is like are you kidding me? Why would we do that? That's the best one. That's the one I've been raising, that's the one that's going to produce the most income for our family. Why would we kill that one? The dad looks at him and says son, it's either the lamb or you. The boy's like do you want me to do it? Because when it comes down to it, okay we can do that. The next morning they wake up to find the first born dead all over Egypt except of those who were covered by the blood of that lamb. It goes on and it shows us the sacrificial system in Israel. In Israel whenever a sin was committed an animal had to be sacrificed and it went through thousands of years where you saw these animals sacrificed for the sin of the people and that blood had to be spilled for the sin of the people and they had to bring that sacrifice to cover that sin and they would only be absolved from their sin when an animal was sacrificed. Isaiah says something frightening about 700 hundred years before Jesus. He begins to talk about a man that is coming. He says he will be bruised for our transgressions. He will be

beaten for our sin. The iniquity of us all will be laid upon him. They're listening to that thinking, wait a minute! We have this sacrificial system of animals. Isaiah seems to be implying that one day a man's going to come and he's going to be the sacrifice. Fast forward 700 years later, Jesus is born under miraculous circumstances. He grows up perfect, he walks out and John the Baptist is baptizing and John the Baptist sees a crowd and he points to him and he declares behold the Lamb of God who has come to take away our sin. There it is. Isaiah talked about it. Genesis foreshadowed it. Israel in the exodus showed it and here he is the perfect man, God himself poured out, living a perfect life and one day he stands before God and he says I want the penalty, I want to pay the price, and I want to substitute my life for yours. I'm going to make the atonement. I'm going to do what needs to be done. That's the core of Christianity. Jesus Christ taking our place. Jesus Christ paying the penalty for my sin, for the things that I've done wrong. He says you are a sinner from birth, you have sinned, you have disobeyed me and I love you so much that I'm going to take my life and I'm going to lay it down willingly for you. I'm going to pay the price. Substitutionary atonement, what an idea, the lamb of God paid the price for our sin. Every other religious system I've studied has a different core idea. Each one establishes some kind of performance expectation. If you try hard and struggle and strive and give money and do all kinds of things well you might raise your status enough to make it and I'm afraid in many places the church had disintegrated to that same thought and that's not the core of Christianity. The core of Christianity is not about works, it's not about what we do it's about something that has been done for us. That's what it's about. Today, you have a choice because ladies and gentlemen judgment day is coming. God promises there's a day where he will say enough is enough. So I have to ask you, do you want to stand before God and try to measure up? Do you want to stand before God on your own in your sin and say you know what, I did it and I'll pay the price or do you want to stand behind Jesus and let him take that hit? Let him look at us and say, I'll take this for you. I'm going to give my life so that you can be in fellowship with me for eternity. I know I want Jesus to take the hit for me so what keeps you from that personal relationship. Not knowing about God but that personal relationship, that moment in your life that you pray and ask Jesus to forgive you and be the leader in your life, to make a change in your life, to transform your life. What keeps you from that today? Is it fear? You're afraid of what God is going to ask you to do? Is it pride? Hey I've got this covered, I'll take care of this myself, and nobody pays my price. What foolish thought in your head keeps you from finding the contagious love that God offers through his son Jesus? Judgment day is coming and I don't know about you but I want Jesus to take the hit and it's very simple. You simply ask him. You simply pray this prayer. You simply ask Christ's atoning work to take effect in your life, you reach out for it, and you receive forgiveness and leadership by faith and thank him for the love and grace in your life. That's it, that's all you do and then you follow that up and it doesn't save you but you get baptized. I have a lot of people who push back on that, they say why do you always talk about baptism? I'll tell you why we always talk about baptism,

because that's the first thing Jesus says after we get saved. In Matthew he says all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me therefore go and make disciples of all nations and what does he say the first thing after you accept Christ, he says baptizing them. Boy, Jesus is big on it so if Jesus is big on when you accept Christ, be baptized, I guess you and I should be big on it don't you think? I really question the people who say I love Jesus but I don't know about that baptism thing. If you really love Jesus and you've taken a commitment and there's a transformation in your life and Jesus looks at you and says I want you to be baptized, I mean honestly do you look at him and say I don't think so? I could see on my wedding day my wife saying I want you to wear this ring so everybody knows that we have a relationship and you're married and I say, not that. I don't want everybody to know, it would really hurt my dating life. That's what a lot of us say about Jesus isn't it? Jesus I will follow you as long as it's convenient for me. Jesus, I'll pray this prayer every day just don't make me change my life. It's not salvation.

How are you baptized? Guys, its immersion. We've got to be dunked and I know a lot of you have been sprinkled and you think I was sprinkled and it was baptism. It's really not. Biblical baptism is immersion. It's the symbol of your old life being buried with Christ and your new life coming up. That's how Jesus baptized, that's how John the Baptist baptized, and that's baptism.

When are you baptized? After you receive Jesus. 27 times in the bible baptism is mentioned. Not once does it have anything to do with infants. Hey if you were baptized as an infant, I'm happy for you but that was for your mom and dad. Honestly it just ticked you off, let's be honest. Ain't no way any of you got anything out of it. You're sitting there minding your own business and someone splashes water in your face and you scream. That's not baptism. Baptism is after you receive Jesus you follow him. Some of you, you've accepted Jesus but you got baptized when you were young and you think that counts. I want you to understand something, it doesn't count. You just were a wet sinner. That's all that was; you publically took a bath in front of everybody. It's like a single guy going out here today and saying man I'm going to buy me a wedding ring. Not for a girl, I'm going to wear it myself. A single guy puts a wedding ring on and you're like what are you doing? He says I'll be married one day. Probably not. Some of you, the baptism happened long ago before you every had a relationship and you need to follow Jesus today and you need to take that next step. So today our invitation is twofold, I'm going to ask you to do two things today. First of all I'm going to ask you to make sure your going to heaven. I want you to do this, if you have a pen or paper in front of you I want you to write down a number from one to ten. Ten meaning that you know for sure that if something happened today that you would be in heaven. You know for sure without a doubt today you would be in heaven if you died. Go on down to one and one says, I'm going to bust hell wide open. Just be honest, between one and ten write that number. If

you don't have a pen, get that number in your head. What is your number between one and ten? While you're thinking of that number I want to tell you what my number is, my number is one hundred. I know that I know without a doubt that if my life ends this morning I will see Jesus face to face and spend eternity in heaven. I know that. Why? Because I'm such a great guy! Not a bit because it doesn't have anything to do with me. It doesn't have to do with the good things I've done; it doesn't have to do with the bad things I've done. It's has nothing to do with me, it's all about him. It's what he did for me. Some of you have the number 7 or 8, and you're sure that you accepted Jesus, you know that you prayed to receive him but your life hadn't been going the way you think it should and so you put a 7 or 8 down. I want you to scratch that out because it's not about what you did or didn't do, it's about what he did so you go ahead and put a 10. But for some of you today you need to pray this prayer for the first time today and mean it with your heart. You need to enter into a relationship with Jesus. I want you to pray this prayer with me in your heart. I ask for Christ's atoning work to take effect in my life. I reach out for it and I receive your forgiveness and leadership right now by faith. Thank you for your love and your grace in my life. Make me who you want me to be and spread your contagious love through me to others, in Jesus' name, Amen. Now, I'm going to ask you to do something. If you prayed that prayer today for the first time and meant it, if you prayed that prayer and truly desire to be in relationship with God, to accept the substitutionary atonement for your sin, pays the price for your sin, if you prayed that prayer, I want you to stand up right now where you are. No head bowed, no eyes closed, nothing like that. Jesus Christ hung on a cross publically for you I want you to publically stand and say I prayed that prayer. Stand confidently, don't look at the ground, be proud that Jesus Christ paid that penalty for your sin and came into your life. I want you to give them a round of applause. Go ahead and stay standing for me because the second part has to do with everybody in the room. The second part of this is following Jesus in baptism. Many of you say I've prayed that prayer but I have it out of order. I'm going to ask the band to come on up and they're going to play a song and as they play when you stand as soon as you stand if you say I need to follow Jesus in baptism, I need to get it in order, I want you to come out and I want you to come to the front and I want you to sign up. We're going to baptize next Sunday in all three services. In the 8 o'clock service six people gave their life to Jesus and there are only four of them in there so that was amazing. Today, you're going to say I want to follow him in baptism. Next Sunday we're going to baptize you. I want you to do this as soon as we stand. I want you to come forward and make that declaration. I want you guys to come forward and say I've accepted Jesus Christ and if you're ready to be baptized which you should be, I want you to check yes and we'll baptize you next week. Right now, do not let anything stop you.