

**God is Dangerous**  
**June 28, 2009**  
**Pastor Lee Coleman**

Today we're going to be talking about how God is dangerous. God is dangerous. This should freak you out a little bit; I hope that it does because God is dangerous. God is a God of compassion, a God of love but he is also a dangerous God. If you read scripture, which we should, you see that God does some really crazy stuff. So we are going to talk about how God is dangerous and what that means for you and what that means for me and in the context of where we live. I would like to right now get into the word of God. We are going to go to Matthew chapter 8, so mark that spot in your bibles because we are going to get to that in a second but before we do I want you to think...what are some rules that your family had when you were growing up? I want you to think about it. What are some rules that your parents gave you that you had to follow? I'll take one from each section. In by ten, how did that go? Not too well, okay. Someone else? Not to sleep during church, I like that. How did they enforce that; shock collar? No phone calls after 8 p.m., wow, did you ever break that rule? Yes, you did. Thanks for your honesty. Another rule? If you go out on Saturday night you better be up and in church on Sunday morning. How did that work out for your family? It did real good? Good. Well, my family had some rules too. Some of them were not as scary as that one but when I was growing up we had lots of little rules such as no horse play around the pool. What about no swimming for thirty minutes after you eat? How many of you also had that rule? It's a lie! It's not that big of a deal. Parents would say you would cramp up and drown. How about running with scissors? Look it's not that big a deal. We have rules and they were enforced and part of our culture. My family had another rule; my mom in the summer when me and my sister were home she would tell us before she left for work during the day, don't play in traffic. Okay, I guess she was under the assumption that while she was gone that's what we did. Do you know what's weird? We, as families, as a church, have done the same thing. We, through the years have put weird rules into our system as a church; we've put things in place that we believe that keep us safe; kind of like not running with scissors. All these little things that our family has worked in to keep us safe and which we also have done that as a church through the years. We've looked at scripture and we've seen the things that God calls us to do and we try to abide by those but then as a people we have through the years began the process of adding to that. I mean, even us as a Baptist church, we have added little things that Baptists do and Baptists don't do. We have added things to our list so we remain safe and okay. Listen, the God that we're going to talk about today is the same God who is the God of comfort; the God of love; but he is a dangerous God. God is dangerous and I don't know if you've ever thought about that but it's true, he really is. He, as is recorded throughout scripture, does some really

dangerous, crazy, weird stuff. Stuff that can happen today but we often times turn our heads to it and don't pay attention to it and don't see it or seize the opportunity to be a part of it. We are going to understand that more as the morning goes on.

Listen, as a church we have a God who doesn't call a room like this a sanctuary. There is nothing safe about this room. This is not a sanctuary, a place where we can go and be safe. If anything, this is a place you come to be challenged by God's word, God's unsafe, challenging word and that's what we're going to do today is we are going to look into God's stuff and see what he has to say to us in this room. Now, here's the thing, if God is a dangerous God and we are his church, and then aren't we supposed to look more like God than just like us? The answer to that is yes. So tell me if you've ever heard this phrase before spoken somewhere in this room. The Avenue Church is here to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Has anyone ever heard that? Good, at least half of you have listened to a couple sermons here or there because David says it almost every week some way form or fashion. We're here to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ, that's our mission. Now our process is to do this...to help people know God, grow together and serve the world but you know what we do a lot of times? We stop with the know part. We show up on Sunday and we come and are a part of this whole worship thing and we're getting to know God but then we don't take that next step and get into a LIFE group which is dangerous. Why? Because then you take a chance on having to build relationships with people. Uh-oh, that's awkward! You get a chance of getting into a small group and you're like oh no, I don't see eye to eye with that person so this is awkward so I'm out. No, that's part of what it means to live dangerously. God puts you in these situations so that you can grow and a lot of us prefer to stay right here and just know God, just experience him in a worship setting. Being a Christian is not a Sunday thing, it's a seven day thing. It's an everyday of your life experience and knowing God is one thing; growing in him and then serving him...you can't serve him unless you grow in God and you can't grow in God unless you know God so that's our process here at The Avenue Church. So the deal is as we walk through that we understand how dangerous God is. Why? Because as a person walks in this door knowing nothing about who Jesus Christ is and then they're introduced to him through a service like this, then the process begins of living dangerously with that person, trying to help them walk through the process of what it means to be a believer because being a believer in Jesus is not just a normal life, it's just this completely different, completely counter cultural experience. It's completely opposite of the culture that we live in and that's something that I want you to think about as we walk through this because of this...A safe god does this. I want you guys to realize this, a safe god who is opposite of our God; a safe god strives to keep the people happy. If you look at some other world religions you see that. In order for you to reach happiness; in order for you to attain this and have a good life, you can please the gods by this or that. Listen, a safe god strives to keep the people happy; a safe god avoids controversial issues and a safe god guards the status quo. Guys, it's very clear if you have read any scripture

to begin to see that we don't have a safe god. Why? Because his job is not to keep us happy; God does not exist for our happiness. He doesn't. I know I just blew your mind there but he does not exist for happiness for us. Do you know what else? Our God, he doesn't avoid controversial issues. You read scripture, oh yeah, Jesus talks throughout scripture talks about homosexuality; talks about adultery; talks about the way you treat your body. God talks about your self image. God talks about all the issues that we as a culture might consider taboo. God talks about drinking. God talks about everything through scripture that we often times as Christians we want to just leave completely alone. And here's the thing, when we look at this, we can understand that God has addressed lots of circumstances and situations in life. All of them, which causes us to look at where we live and how we live and how God is completely opposite of those things, that is what a dangerous God does. He confronts issues, he also doesn't exist to make us happy and he also challenges us when we are just filling the status quo, just being normal. See God is the same yesterday, today and forever and it's interesting he is that he constantly wants us to push forward, to change, grow and know him better and continue to seek him more so that we can communicate his love and his passion and compassion to the rest of the watching world.

So guys, here we go...I want you to look in Matthew chapter 8 with me and I want you to look at this dangerous God. If you've got a bible you want to go there; it's church you ought to bring one. Jesus heals two demon possessed men and it's going to get nuts alright? Dangerous God, look out now! When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, two men were possessed by demons met him. First of all, that's weird. Second of all, keep going here, they met him and lived in a cemetery, second weird thing, they were so violent that no one could go through that area. That's a tough neighborhood when two dudes live there and nobody can pass through. That's a scary place to be. Jesus gets off the boat, he just starts walking and looks, and there are two demon possessed guys. I mean most of us, that doesn't happen except when we're at Wal-Mart. It's not one of those things that we're used to seeing on most occasions. It's one of these deals where this is unusual. Let's read on. It says in verse 29, "*they began screaming at him*" of course they did! They are demon possessed. "*Why are you interfering with us Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God's appointed time?*" What, are they trying to work Jesus over here, come on, and get real! You demons shut up! Okay in verse 30, "*There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance so the demons begged 'if you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs,'* you know what's interesting about this? Sidebar: Here's the deal...demons, just like us, have a tendency to ask God to do things the way that we want them done. In verse 32 Jesus says, "*all right go.*" Three words are all it took. All right go. That's in English, he didn't speak it in English but if he had he would have said all right go and when he said that, they went. They went off into this herd of pigs, so the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs and the whole herd plunged down this steep hillside and drowns in the water. They didn't just go for a nice piggy stroll, okay, they stampeded down the hill into the

water and they didn't swim, they went under because I don't know if pigs float or not, but they went under and they drown, they just kept going. It wasn't just this pig going down and testing the water...they went in which was a completely weird situation and to me dangerous. Anytime a herd of pigs is stampeding, that's dangerous. Anyway the herdsman, it says, fled to the nearby town telling everybody what had happened to the demon possessed men. Do you know what I like about that? They are talking about the demon possessed men and what had happened. They were talking about how these men were transformed and how they've been changed. I love that. Then it says the entire town came out to meet Jesus. So, these herdsman are going listen you've got to hear what happened to these guys! And they didn't talk about the pigs; at least we don't have it recorded here. These guys come out, the entire town hears the story and all of a sudden a guy who is the spokesman says but they begged Jesus to go away and leave them alone. Why; because they were scared, they were nervous, they saw the power of the Holy God right there in their presence and how he transformed two men's lives and they saw what he did and how dangerous it is to know him and to be around him because crazy stuff like that happens and they didn't want anything to do with it. I think the church in America has done that. We have said we like to gather together having our potluck dinners, enjoy our small group, LIFE group time together, but don't do anything crazy like this Jesus because people just won't want to come to church. Jesus was so dangerous that people pleaded with him to leave. Write in your notes, God is dangerous and turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. What do I mean by that? This God who is so dangerous wants to take your life, your ordinary life. Most of in here, I know your mommas all think you're awesome and you're super incredible and you are, but, we're basically in this room pretty ordinary people. But God wants to take us from being that to being something more. Why are we so afraid of that? When I watch what Jesus did in the cemetery and I watch the craziness that happened, I'm like man, I want to be a part of that. I am a little nervous about that when I say that to God and I'm a little scared of that but at the same time if I'm walking down the trail at Getzendaner park and there are two dudes walking around out there and they start coming towards me, I'm not super fast but I'm going to become super fast pretty quick. That's kind of scary. The thing is if we were walking through there it would be a freaky situation for most of us. God is dangerous and turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. Think about this, how many of you guys know how to do origami? Have you seen those people do it? They take an ordinary piece of paper and make stuff out of it. That just amazes me! Some of you guys in here do wood working and you can take a piece of wood and make something really ornate and really cool out of it. If I tried to make something, I'm going to make book shelves and they are going to be more like a ramp for your books. Like...ramp up to reading. Working with wood is dangerous. There are saws and power tools involved and guys, people get hurt and lose fingers. How many of you know someone who has lost a digit? It's dangerous and guys, when God begins to do that with your life and with your heart and with everything that is in you; when God begins to transform everything that is in

there, it's an awkward, dangerous, risky place to live because God begins to confront everything in our lives that is not of him and that gets dangerous. That gets tough. I want you to hear this in Acts chapter 4 verse 13, *"When they saw the courage of Peter and Jon and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."* Ordinary men, ordinary, regular run of the mill guys, unschooled ordinary men. People were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus. When's the last time someone said that about you and when the last time was you were okay with someone saying you're just an ordinary person, but I can tell they've been with Jesus. There is this other verse in Acts chapter 19 verses 11 and 12 *"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul so that even handkerchiefs ...that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured..."* Even the things that people blow their noses on; an ordinary handkerchief was used in a way that brought honor and glory to God. Something simple as we are can be transformed and used to the glory of God. When is the last time you believed God for something extraordinary in your life? When's the last time you believed in God for something extraordinary in someone else's life near you? When is the last time you've entered into that type of relationship with our dangerous God? For many of us it's been a long time. For a lot of us it's just God, help me make it through today. How could after today our prayers begin to change? How can we begin to ask God to do something else, something bigger and different? Why are we are so afraid of being amazing or being amazed? Our dangerous God turns the ordinary into extraordinary. Do you know what else he does? He turns consumers into contributors. You might want to pull your toes up real quick because I'm about to step on them so get ready. Here's the thing, if you are a part of The Avenue and you've been here for quite some time then this is probably hopefully ring a little more truly for you. If you're kind of new here and you really haven't found your groove yet, then that's okay, you're going to hear some things that are challenging to the church to the people that God has called out here to be the church body and if you've yet to join those ranks yet, then just listen because this is the kind of stuff that God expects of us. God is dangerous and turns consumers into contributors. What would it be like if this entire church or let's take it to this entire community, what would it be like if this community of people who attend church, people who show up every Sunday and want to sit and soak and hear what the pastor has to say, to see what the worship team has to do, to just see what's going on and just sit in a pew, what would it be like if those people, if us people, if we decided to stop just consuming and to begin to contribute? What if we just stopped sitting here saying man I really needed that today, that's good...what are you going to do with it now? What's next? How do you take what you heard in a sermon and then use that in your life in an everyday basis? How do you go from just sitting in a pew or dropping off your kids, going into Sunday school and coming in here to worship and then never engage in serving in the local body or never engage in serving in our community? How can we do that? God transforms us those of us, including myself, who are consumers into contributors.

Look what it says in Acts chapter 2. These are some real contributors. *"All the believers were together and had everyone in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."* Guys if you will seek God with everything that is within you, he will change your world. He will change the way that you look at church, not just about showing up on Sunday, but living it every day on a seven day basis serving him in lots of different capacities. We have a lot of things that you can do here. A lot of times on Sunday's people meet you at a door and hand you a worship guide, listen, that's not the end of the road. It's not like that's where you have to serve. It's about welcoming into people into this place, say, come and worship with us and we are glad that you're here. Some of us we won't even do something like that. Some of us we really prefer to drop off our children and just come to worship and do Sunday school and that's fun and we enjoy that but when is the next step going to be for us? When are we going to go from know, to grow and then to serve? When does that happen? Our dangerous God is one who wants to challenge us to take that next step wherever you are right now. When are you going to go to that next level? I hope that you will be challenged by that today because listen, this past week Vacation Bible School was incredible. Lots of people, lots of fun; we had every night somewhere between 206-220 children here. Isn't that cool? I mean that's a lot of kids. We have that every single Sunday. Did you know that? We have over 200 children here every week. This past week during vacation bible school we had 98 volunteers including teenagers. On Sunday mornings we have 62. We could get our church to commit to one week of service but we can't get our church to commit for whatever reason to a yearlong investment in a child's life. Guys, I hope that God, not in just that area, but in our homeless ministry, in our greeter ministry. If there is something that you have a gift for, why not use it and use it to glorify God. I know that's a challenge and I get to talk three or four times a year up here and I may have just lessened that to one and a half or so but here's the deal, I do believe that God has something for us to know in terms of this moving from consumers into contributors. This is something that I have had on my heart that I want to challenge myself with every day and I want to challenge you with here this morning. When is the last time you have given of yourself sacrificially? Not just come to church or not just walked out of your house in the morning so that you had a good day. It involves risk. A few years ago I decided to train for the White Rock marathon which was a great idea. So I was going to run in this marathon and I did it and in the process I began it when I was about 282 pounds or so. Because I was burning a lot of calories and had to put calories in to make sure everything balanced out. So, my buddy and I trained for this marathon and we are doing the best we can. We started in June and it is now November and Thanksgiving was coming up and we're getting ready to do a really long run like 24 miles and a marathon is 26.2 miles so we go to White Rock Lake and we're going to run around it a couple of times and so I bring my camelback, which is this water hydration system and I also packed in that backpack some fuel right, because I don't want to run out of energy on the run. I put a couple of ham sandwiches back there and a bag of

chips and some candy for some of that sugar energy and so we're running around there and I'm pulling it out because when you're training for a marathon you get good at stuff like that. It came race day, time for the marathon and I got up there and it was exciting and I got up there with the elite runners because they have this elite runners box and I get up there because I'm never going to run another marathon again so I want to see what it's like. I'm up there by these incredible athletes who have trained and prepared and are going for the goal of winning this race and there is the rest of us. So I'm right there and the gun goes off and these guys are taking off and I am like that is so cool and then hundreds of people are going beside me, passing me and I'm just doing my thing and taking my own pace which is faster than I should have been running and it eventually caught up to me at mile 13. Mile 13 my body says...dude you're too fat to be running this. I am done with this. My legs started cramping up and then all of a sudden coming up behind me were this group of people who were wearing red shirts with a heart on it and you're thinking these are paramedics who are coming to pick Lee up. No, what it was, was a group running to raise money for stroke victims and as they were coming up, I didn't realize this at the time because I was breathing too hard but as I began to get in a conversation with one of them, because you're out there for a long time, I realized the group were actually stroke victims. They had all had a stroke and one time or another and as I began to look around and realize that they were not all functioning right. Some of them had some limbs that weren't completely working correctly and they had a limp and I'm like running with one of them at the back of their group and they're going ahead of me, passing me and I'm like are you serious! They trained just like me and they had physical impairments and I trained for this, but I didn't train to win. I got ready for this but I didn't get ready to really run the race the way it really should have been run. Guys, some of show up to church every week not ready to run the race the way it should be run. We just consume too many ham sandwiches in our training and we get too filled up on things and never completely run it the way it was supposed to be run. When you go to a football game do you go to see the team in a huddle? Do you ever go and think I can't wait to see another huddle! It's going to be great, I'm so excited to watch them get together and talk about what it is they're going to do. No, say you go to the Cowboys game this year and you pay I don't know 700 dollars for a nose bleed seat or whatever they are and you go in there and say dude, this is going to be a great huddle, watch this! Impressive huddle! We don't go for that, we want to see action, we want to see teeth flying out, we want to see stuff happening. We want to see stuff going crazy. Listen, we don't go to watch the huddle. All you see is a bunch of rear ends. We don't want to be like that as the church and just come together and huddle together and this is our thing, we are called by a dangerous God to be out there active, making a difference. I want to challenge you on that today, but it's going to take risk. It doesn't happen all the time but church like this can be unsafe. I'm just going to put that out there because when we begin to follow a dangerous God, stuff like this happens, look out now. Acts chapter 19; this is not our primary text this morning but catch this, "Then

*the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.*" Listen if that happened at The Avenue, man, people are coming! That's a life changing church event, okay. But listen, that kind of crazy stuff happens, that kind of wild stuff really does happen when the power of God gets hold of the church, gets hold of the people and gets hold of us as individuals and God transforms us to being this person who is absolutely devoted and committed to whatever God has for them to do and when that happens our lives no longer become just this average thing.

God is dangerous, turns consumers into contributors and number three real quickly; God is dangerous and turns the living to the dead. Here is the thing, God is dangerous and turns the living to the dead. It says in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..."* When I was in high school I went to this church camp before I was a believer in Jesus and we had this awesome thing called softball that we would play at church camp. This was back in the day when church camps were still kind of manly and you could go and have competitive sports at camp. We would go to these and we would basically recruit our softball team/youth group to go and be a part of this camp with us. It was kind of like we were paying to be in a tournament. We would go and they actually gave out trophies back in the day, so every year it was this fun, cool event. So this one year, I'm up to bat and I take a swing at the softball and it wasn't intended to be a bunt but it was and so it fell right there and I thought I've got to go and I start taking off running and there is this little bitty skinny guy on first base from this church and I don't know what church it was but I remember he was small and I was thinking I could take this guy out. If they throw the ball to him and I hit him and he drops and I am safe right? Okay, the plan half way to the base has been made, so they throw the ball to him and I tag him, the ball flies out and blood begins to trickle. He is on the ground laid out and I'm like, yeah that's right, trophy is ours! My youth minister comes over to me and he just starts griping me out. I was thinking he was coming to tell me I've got to take the knees out, but he didn't say that. He said, what are you thinking? That is completely wrong and this is before I was a believer in Christ. This is before I'd given my life to Jesus and this next year over my sophomore year was when I completely understood what it meant to turn myself completely over to Jesus and be transformed and made new and when I did that in October of my sophomore year in high school we came back that next year to that same camp and guess who we were pitted up against first game? Same church, same skinny first base guy who apparently had not hit puberty yet. Here's the thing, don't feel sorry for him okay, he had a good loving church group. Here's the thing, I had become a believer and honestly I really was changed. I was different. I was still competitive but God had shown me a little bit different way to handle myself, my nerves, my excitement over sports and I saw their group talking and we're about to play them and I start to walk over to him and I see him trying to find somewhere to go and so I walk over and say hi are you guys ready to have fun and their kind of like...yeah....and I looked at the little guy and said you remember me from last year? He

said yeah. I said how you doing? Okay...and then he was kind of shy about it and I said hey, it's going to be awesome, I shook his hand and I said listen things are different this year. I'm different. That guy last year is gone, he's dead. I'm a completely different person. I gave my life to Christ this year and I just wanted you to know that. I told him that and he was like thank God! You could tell in his face he was so relieved. Guys, that kind of stuff is what a transforming God does. He takes us, the life that we're living, kills it and turns it into something that he wants it to be; his thing and that continually; constantly gives glory to him and to him alone. In Galatians 6:14 it says this, *"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* Here's my question to end it with...Are you dead yet? Have you died to yourself and committed yourself to a dangerous God who wants to dangerously change your life and this community to bring honor and glory to him? Has God called you to endure something painful? Has God called you to experience something extraordinary outside of the realm of normal? What is the joy set before you? What faith risk is God calling you to take? What is the potential return? Has God called you to be a contributor instead of a consumer? What is God calling you to lose? What are you supposed to give up something you love even more? Being a Christian is not easy, it is dangerous; it is scary and it is wild sometimes but if we fully commit to the God that knows all; controls all and handles all we can have confidence that even in the danger moments he is in control.