

The gospel which attracts or offends

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[0 : 00] Gospel of Christ according to Luke. And let us read at the beginning of chapter 15. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he laith it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. And I would like us to focus our attention this evening especially on the opening words of this chapter. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. It is strange but true that the very features and the character of the Lord Jesus which make and most precious to every Christian believer are the very features which most offended the rulers and the religious people of his own land and his own time.

And among these features that every Christian rejoices in when they see it in the Lord among them is this fact that Jesus all through his public ministry attracted not only the ordinary, common, uneducated person but he attracted the very vile of the earth.

And here when publicans, the tax gatherers, the most hated part of the Jewish society of the day of Jesus, when publicans and sinners came around Jesus and drew near to hear every word that came from his lips, the Pharisees and the scribes, the legalistic, religious professors of his day took offence.

[3 : 15] And you know I think that to some extent still this very feature of Christ, the fact that he then and now attracts publicans and sinners to hear him and saves them, that's still the fact that he then and now attracts publicans and sinners to hear him and saves them.

And that still divides men. The gospel of the Lord Jesus in its power to save the soul and transform the wicked and the sinful and the lost.

The gospel is an anathema. The gospel is an anathema. Still among legalistic, religious people. And sadly for many generations in our own land.

That gospel, the gospel of the Lord Jesus in our own land. That gospel, the gospel of redemption through the blood of Christ, of salvation through his suffering and offering of himself on the cross. The gospel that tells us that there is nothing which can cleanse the conscience and purify the soul but the precious blood of Christ.

[4 : 43] That gospel for almost the last hundred and twenty years has been an offence in our own land. It is unbelievable but it is true that just a few years ago a young man went to a city congregation in one of the cities of our land.

I knew him well. And he went there with the old gospel of the Jesus who attracts sinners and who saves them that are out of the way.

The gospel of the day. The gospel of the day. The gospel of the Jesus whom the common people heard gladly. And when that young man began preaching that gospel in that congregation in one of our Scottish cities.

Do you know what happened? His elders would come and his deacons to church only on the day on which they were down on the door, Rhoda.

And they would come and they would gather the collection of the people and they would count it. And they would put it in the safe in the church.

[5 : 59] And then they would go home without coming in to listen to the gospel. Why? Because the Jesus who attracts and saves sinners was an offence to their unchanged minds and their unconverted hearts.

And I believe that one of the clearest signs in any one of us that grace has wrought its saving work is simply this.

That we joy and rejoice in God's way of salvation. And that our whole soul delights in Christ and him to survive.

And that one of the most attractive features about the Lord Jesus is just this. The Republicans and sinners and those who come to know the lostness gather round him to hear what he has to say. I think that it speaks to us supremely of what I would call the approachableness of Jesus. Really that's what I want to preach on this evening.

[7 : 24] The extreme. The beautiful. The amazing approachableness of the Lord Jesus.

Something without which my friend no sinner could have any hope. And something which when a sinner finds hope in Christ is precious to him or to her to the end of the journey.

I want us just to do three things and we'll take the first one first the way we should do. I want us to look at the scriptures and just to prove from them the approachableness of Jesus.

And indeed this feature and fact of Jesus character scarcely needs any proving. It lies on the very surface of his life.

If ever there was a man in all the running course of history who was approachable and who attracted ordinary people.

[8 : 38] That man I believe was Jesus of Nazareth. And in that he was very different from most men. And especially was he different from most men who wielded power or authority of any kind.

In the time of Jesus to gain the audience of an Eastern king was almost impossible. The book of Esther many years before Jesus.

But the book of Esther tells us that. Esther herself could not go in to see the king but only under certain limited conditions. And the philosophers, the Greek philosophers and even the men, the philosophers of the days of Jesus himself.

Were aloof from the ordinary people and they would certainly have nothing to do with sinners. The story is told of one of the most famous Greek philosophers.

That over the door of his school he had this. Let no man enter here who does not know geometry. Why? Well it's a great mystery. That heaven doesn't depend on our knowledge of geometry or trigonometry in some cases.

[9 : 53] Jesus was not like the kings of the East. And my friend Jesus was not and is not like the philosophers of the East.

Jesus came to be made in all things like unto his brethren. And I want us to list one or two things from the gospels and from his ministry.

That prove this very, very wonderfully to us. And if you're a Christian this should be precious to you. And if you're unconverted then my friend it should encourage you.

Because you'll find Jesus far more approachable. And you need an approachable saviour. You'll find this saviour far more approachable than any other under heaven.

Take for example first of all some of his offices. We can't go through them all. Time won't permit it. But take his office as mediator. He was set up by God to be the mediator between God and man.

[11 : 03] And Job it is who tells us that a mediator is a days man. He's one who stands between both. And God took his own son.

And in human nature he made his own son to be the mediator between us and himself. And he said to us that a mediator is a mediator. And he said to us that it is necessary that a mediator be able to place his hand on both.

My friend Jesus can do that. He can put his hand as it were on God for he is God. And he can put his hand on you and on me for he is man.

A mediator is not a mediator of one says the epistle to the Hebrews. A mediator is one who comes to unite two who have been separated.

And Jesus can do that. And what a gulf separates the people who are spoken of here and the eternal God. What a gulf.

[12 : 13] And yet we see that gulf spanned in the man Christ Jesus. Publicans and sinners. We came out of our meeting here on Friday night to go up to our car.

And we saw a sight that saddened us. People like ourselves under the influence of drinkers. Seven or eight on an evening. Eight o'clock on a Friday evening.

And for a while we thought we would have to get the police. A woman being beaten up by a man. Very much the worst of things. These are the kind of people that Jesus did not stand off from.

Do you know the thought that came to my mind? What a terrible thing ungodliness is. How unlike the creator who made them. The very beasts of the field.

Would not bring themselves down to behave like that. And yet. There is one who came to draw people like that. Near to God.

[13:19] Then drew near unto him. And do you know who they were drawing near to? Oh yes you say Jesus of Nazareth. And didn't you draw near to Jesus of Nazareth my friend?

They were drawing near to the eternal God. And they can still do it. Because he is God. In our nature.

And he is the mediator. And then there is a lovely name. Name that has been tarnished perhaps. But it is the title. The name of a precious office.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our priest. And a priest. What a priest is. A priest is not one who dresses up. In clothes that separate him.

From the ordinary people. But again. A priest. Is a true brother of the people. Read the story. Of the priesthood of Aaron.

[14:19] And you find out what a priest should be. Or read the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you find out what a priest should be.

For he is the priest. Who was pardoned out. By the priests of the Old Testament. And again. The chief title. Or the chief function of a priest.

Was to. Was to. Bring men. Into the presence of God. And bring the presence of God. In among men.

And how well fitted Jesus is to do that. One thing stands out. In the Old Testament priesthood. That shows how.

How. How. How. Deeply. Their priesthood. Entered into. The illness. And the sinfulness of the people.

[15:17] The leper. What in the Bible. Is. Is. Is. Is one of the. The. The figures used. For the awful. Ugliness of sin.

Do you know. Who was the last person. In a Jewish community. Allowed. To touch a leper. The priest. And if under God.

The leper. Begun to be healed. Do you know. Who was the first person. To touch him again. The priest. The priest. Go. Show thyself.

To the priest. And my friend. In the Lord Jesus. We have a priest. And our one hope. Is that that priest. Will touch us.

And cleanse us. And the. One of. One of the. The things. That the gospel does. Is to speak to us. In the leprosy. Of our. Of our sin.

[16:15] And say. Go. Show thyself. To the priest. There's none other. Can deal with it. But this priest. Can. And there's another.

There's another. Office of the Lord Jesus. He's known as mediator. Priest. Savior. And when you think of the. The. The.

Name of Savior. Then my friend. You're thinking of what he came. Especially to do. To save sinners. The son of man. He said himself. Is come. To seek.

To seek. And to save. That which was lost. No wonder we find the Lord Jesus. Surrounded. By. By. All. Kinds.

Of sinners. Surrounded by people. That the righteous. Shrunk back from. And that the religious. Would have nothing to do with.

[17:09] His offices. They help us to prove. How approachable he is. Because they all speak. Under other offices. Prophet. Priest. King. But. As mediator. As priest.

As savior. His sole function. Do you see. His sole function. Is to bring. Lost men. To God. And to glorify God. In the bringing of them. This is the wonder of the gospel. Not just.

That it is God's way of saving sinners. But my friend. That it is God's way of saving sinners. To the glory of his name. And Jesus will have glory in the salvation of his people. If it is. His soul function.

His soul function. Do you see.

His soul function. His soul function. His soul function. Is to bring. The soul function. To bring. The soul function. Is to bring. The soul function.

To bring. Lost men. To God. And to glorify. God. In the bringing of them. This is the wonder of the gospel. the salvation of his people for all eternity.

[18 : 05] Unto him who loved us. Yes, but it goes further than that, the song of the redeemed through eternity. Unto him who loved us and washed us. What from?

Washed us from our sins. How? In his own blood. Unto him be glory and dominion and power. What a song that is.

And it all points to the fact that Jesus came to bring publicans and sinners, the lost, to God.

The names and titles. Let me just mention a few of them. Jesus in the scripture is often called the Lamb. Now I'm sure that most of you here have seen a wee lamb just of two or three days old.

I can remember, one of the things I remember about wee lambs was this. How fond children were of wee lambs. There was nothing in the world that a wee boy or a wee girl, even from the city, would approach without, with less fear than a wee lamb.

[19 : 10] And they always, somehow, they always wanted to put their hand on it, didn't they?

Please, please, please, sir, can I touch it? A wee boy from Glasgow, seen a lamb for the first time in his life.

And the first thing he wanted to do was touch its nice white wool. It's such an innocent, inoffensive, unaggressive, little creature.

And my friend, that is one of the titles that God has given his son, our saviour, the lamb.

Isn't a lamb unapproachable? You would pick a lamb up in your arms. My friend, that is how approachable God wants you, wants, and made his son to be for you need and my need.

He is ours to take in the arms of our faith as the lamb of God, to lay our hands on his head and confess our sins there, because as the lamb, he is our supremely, our sacrifice, the sacrifice for our sins.

[20 : 21] Or take another name, the shepherd. I am the good shepherd. You and I, if we will journey on a journey in the east, and we saw a crowd of men come in toward us, we would be a bit worried if they were soldiers.

Perhaps we would be worried until we found out what they were. But if somebody said to us, oh, don't worry, they're only shepherds. You and I would say, is that so on? Shepherds are very ordinary creatures. And we wouldn't be a bit apprehensive about them.

In fact, we would feel they were quite approachable, strange but true. Those of us who were born and brought up and crafts know it, that people who look after animals are nearly always kind people.

They're approachable. The man who's nice to his horse or his cow or his sheep is usually not too bad a person to talk to. And the Lord Jesus was the shepherd of the sheep of God.

My friend, you never see a shepherd chasing the sheep the way out of the flock. You always see him gathering them into the flock. The Lord Jesus is very approachable.

[21 : 31] We know that from his titles. We know it from the fact of his humanity. That's one of the things that's stressed in the epistle to the Hebrews. Why we read it?

To be a high priest suitable for us he must be made in all things like us and he was. Strangely but truly he learned obedience in our nature.

As mediator and as priest and as savior he learned obedience through the things which he suffered. not that his disobedience that his obedience to God ever fell short in any measure but he experienced what it was as a passion to render obedience to God.

And he did that for you and for me who were disobedient and he hands that obedience over to us as owls.

He obeyed the law for us and yes he is God and and we we cherish his deity.

[22 : 49] It's one of the most precious doctrines of the of the word of God. and it's one of the things that we that we do not and must not lose.

If Jesus of Nazareth is not God then he is no savior. But we must not allow the fact of his deity to impair the reality of his humanity.

My friend Jesus of Nazareth was through man as well as through God. and because he is true man he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

There's a man on heaven's throne tonight. Not just not just the eternal son of God but a man in our nature glorified and exalted but he's there in our nature and he's there for only one purpose to be our priest still in God's presence.

And as a man what kind of man? There's one word that says it all a man of sorrows.

[24 : 10] Have you ever seen a man in tears? I'm sure you have sometimes not often. when you see a man in tears you see a man that is most approachable because you see a man are his weakest and in need.

And you are never afraid of being rebuffed or offended by a man who's a man of sorrows. and Jesus was a man of sorrows. Jesus was a man who had all our sinless infirmities. It's amazing. And as one goes on and the more one ponder that fact the more amazing it is.

Jesus remember how approachable he was when he said to the woman of Samaria give me to drink. It was the only thing which would have encouraged her a woman to speak to a man at all far less a man who was a Jew and she a Samaritan.

How approachable the Lord Jesus was in his humanity. His language how Jesus spoke to people.

[25 : 31] They said often never man speak like this man and no wonder come unto me and his invitations are so numerous that we can't quote them all.

We sum them up in this one. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. He wants us to come. Oh Jerusalem Jerusalem how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens.

But he would not. it was never that he would not. But they would not. It is never my friend between our souls and him that he will not.

But we will not. And his actions. Look at the old saying that actions speak even louder than words. And when you study the actions of the Lord Jesus how powerfully they prove just the sheer approachability of the Lord Jesus.

[26 : 38] Remember the mothers who came with their little children that he would lay their hands on them and bless them. And his disciples said take them away don't bother the master.

Jesus gave us one of his most beautiful sayings. Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.

And a man again a man who can take a baby in his arms and handle it gently and seek God's blessing on it is a man who will always be approachable.

A child doesn't need to be afraid. to approach the Lord Jesus. And above all my friends at the cross yes ceremony on the cross Jesus in his agony Jesus in his suffering Jesus in his offering we see the approachableness of Jesus we see a thief cry out to him Lord remember me there must have been something wonderfully attractive and approachable in the very face and character of Jesus even as he suffered and offered and one cried and his cry was answered today thou shalt be with me in paradise prove the approachableness of Jesus the whole scripture proves it but my friend my Christian friend does that not delight your heart my unconverted friend does that not encourage you the saviour who is offered in the gospel is more approachable than any person who will ever speak to you about your soul or about your need or for your good more approachable than anyone who will ever preach the gospel to you no matter how tenderly or how passionately or how earnestly the preacher is more approachable than anyone who has ever helped you down through the years of your life and many have now let's not just let's leave the model let's go on in the second place to do this let's not just prove the approachableness of Jesus but let's approve it what do we mean well for the

Christians let us delight in it is not this one of the the most beautiful features of the character who is altogether lovely but he's so approachable and in approving it it's easy to approve it isn't it we approve it because it means that sinners can come to him and sinners are invited to come to him and their coming to him is the way in which they are saved from their sin you know for many years or at least for a number of years once I began to feel conviction of sin in my late teenage years I used to hear the ministers talk about coming to Jesus and I would say I wish they would tell me how to do it and I couldn't see how to do it and I used to blame them and I would say well if I knew what it was to come to

[30 : 17] Jesus I would be able to explain it far better than they're doing I remember thinking that very clearly on the Sabbath evening communion when I was just after my 21st birthday and feeling my sin I'd say why is that man talking about coming to Jesus but he's not telling us how to do it and then I discovered when grace opened my eyes that you come to Jesus in a spiritual sense that you

come with your heart and with your mind and you cast yourself wholly into his hands for salvation I can't explain it I now find that the very thing I was blaming the preachers for is true of myself I've been trying for 26 years to explain what it is to come to Jesus and I've never been able to do it it takes a miracle of the Holy Ghost to show what it is to come to Jesus but we come mentally spiritually with our minds and our hearts we cast ourselves into his hands hands and we're encouraged to do that because he is so approachable we see in him one who casts none away and we approve this because when sinners come Jesus helps them once we have come we discover that it takes the power of

God to make what we'll call a coming sinner every sinner is a going sinner until he becomes a coming sinner what do I mean they are going further and further away from God until at last they'll be separated from him by an eternal gulf and only the power of God the saviour working by his spirit revethes that and then instead of instead of going sinners they are coming sinners he drew me and I followed on that's the pattern isn't that lovely not only is he approachable but he holds out his approachableness to us and he wins our trust and our confidence and our affection he helps coming sinners and it's easy to be a coming sinner when God gives you eyes to see Jesus because there's no other you would trust there's no other you would help who could help you say with Peter Lord to whom can we go but unto thee for thou alone hast the words of eternal life has God closed off every other avenue of hope or of help for you then my friend he's opened up a big door to Jesus because it's these other avenues and other hopes and they are hopes that will perish that keep many from Jesus perhaps you hope that going to the free church or St.

Columbus or reading your Bible saying your prayers or being as good as you can perhaps you hope that one day God will add up these things and just open the door and let you and no he won't there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus and if you're not saved through faith in his name my friend you'll be lost and you'll be lost forever that's a very solemn thing an irreversible eternity but why be lost when there's a savior like Jesus proving the approachableness of Jesus approving it and lastly just in a minute or two improving it that's a word the old Puritan used to use improving the word of God improving the sermon improving the preaching

I'm just giving you these words so you'll remember the way by which we have come how do we improve this great wonderful tender truth of the approachableness of Jesus let me speak just on two things and first of all I want to speak to my brothers and sisters in Christ my friend that you and I improve the approach ableness of Jesus by humbly emulating it if your master was approachable by the cast offs and the offscorings of humanity if they found him approachable then how approachable you and I should be some of you here are going into the ministry of the gospel and God is making ministers of you let me say this to you whatever else you are as a minister of the gospel always be approachable to your people do you know one of the things that amazed me when I became a minister was that people would say to me well Mr.

[36 : 00] McMillan we're amazed to find that you're so approachable although you're a minister a minister of the gospel of Christ should be the most approachable kind of Christian there is you're a contradiction of all that Christ was if you're an unapproachable minister and you'll be far better out of the ministry if it's going to put you a hundred feet away and six feet above the people of God and my brother and sister in Christ you should be approachable to it's costly to be open to other people I know that it's costly sometimes even in reputation it's costly to open your heart and your life to the need of others it's costly to open your home to the need of others but my friend you're serving a master who counted not the cost why are you counting it there are many things in the character of Jesus which we are unable to emulate but surely we can have this that others will find us approachable your neighbor the person you're working with if they came under a conviction of sin are you approachable enough for them to talk to you and say could you help me and point me to the savior you seem to love and serve are you that kind of

Christian if you're not then you're the wrong kind of Christian you're not like Jesus and now a word to the unconverted they have been very hard on the converted ones haven't I now I'm going to be very gracious to the unconverted very tender my unconverted friend you are far more of a burden on my heart and my mind this evening than the Christians because you're lost and you're without God and you're without hope and you'll be lost forever unless God reaches out his hand in mercy on you let's make no mistake about it if you're here tonight and you have not been born again if you have never rested your soul on Christ never trusted your ways to him then God says it not just the

preacher

God says that you are under his wrath and curse and condemnation my friends you don't need to stay there Jesus is approachable and he's approachable by you because he's the savior of sinners like you he's saved sinners who are far worse than you I mentioned a little while ago that he was willing to take up in his arms and touch and bless the little children that mothers brought to him he was willing to bless the kind of passions we spoke of who were out there the other night and there was one of them whom he blessed because she was forgiven much she loved much she had found him approachable in all her sin and guilt and he was always approachable to her it was she who he said himself washed his feet with her tears and dried them with the hairs of her head she found him approachable you know this that every sinner you look through the new testament through the gospels and you'll find that every sinner who ever came to him found him absolutely open to them sometimes at great cost to himself we never read of him or hear of him turning one away that would be unlike Jesus and my friend

Jesus was always the same and he's the same tonight he hasn't changed although he's ascended and glorified perhaps you're a little bit afraid sometimes I'm a little bit afraid myself until I go back to the scripture at the very thought that Jesus is ascended and he's not beside the throne but in the midst of the throne but do you know what the book of Acts tells me he is ascended there to give two things you need and I need repentance and remission of sins that's why he's there and if he's there to give repentance and remission of sins then my friend he hasn't changed at all he is as approachable tonight on heaven's throne as he was when the sinners crowded round him in Galilee to hear him isn't that wonderful that the most approachable in all the world for you needy soul and mine is the one who is on heaven's throne and who says all power in heaven and in earth is given unto me that's the kind of saviour we need that's the kind of saviour my heart wants my friend is there for your heart also take him trust him come to him trust him believe him he casts none away and then you'll be able to see what every

Christian here says how sweet how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear it soothes his sorrows heals his wounds drives away his fear let us pray a