

“The World Itself Could Not Contain the Books”

By Chris Ulrich

Sunday, April 9th, 2017

Amen. Thank you; you may be seated. It's good to see everybody here this morning, and getting into Spring, a little bit, here, which is good to see. I'd like to welcome back some people that were traveling. I know Ken and—I know Abby's not here—but Savannah, they were down in Florida, so welcome back to both of them. Brought a little bit of Florida with you. And, Brent and Amy were in Minnesota; glad you didn't bring any Minnesota with you. Anyone else traveling this last week, wasn't here last week? Okay. Well, I'm going ask, right now, Rob Severance, if he could come up; he's going to lead us in a word of prayer for the sermon this morning.

Rob: Lord Jesus, God, we give You thanks for this day. We give You thanks for Your goodness and Your mercy. WE thank You, Lord for breathing the breath of life into our lungs, and allowing us to wake, and allowing us another day to come before Your throne and worship You, Lord, God. We pray for Your blessings upon the message, Lord Jesus, and ask that Your Holy Spirit would have Its way, Lord God, that You'd speak through Chris, Lord, God, and that Your Spirit would say what we need to hear, Lord, God. We pray that we have open hearts to receive, and do what You say. God, we give You glory and honor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you, Rob. So, this month, our theme has been, “Jesus Christ, the Firstborn from the Dead.” And, it's appropriate, this being the month of Palm Sunday, and of Easter, and celebrating the life of Christ; celebrating the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. And, our main verse has been First Corinthians fifteen and twenty, which states:

1 Corinthians 15:20 *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

This message has two parts:

Part 1 – For This Purpose the Son of God was Manifested

Part 2 – What Would Jesus Do, or What Would Jesus Have Me Do?

Part 1 – For This Purpose the Son of God was Manifested

And this might seem like a strange way to start off a Palm Sunday service, but I get the impression from the general public that people got bored with Jesus Christ. And, maybe, I'm looking at that from a standpoint—maybe they're just bored with just about everything, from this instant gratification standpoint that, “We want it all! We want it all, and we want it now, and we don't know what it is, but we want it now.” And I want to let that statement sink in for a minute, just because, it's not a statement that's intended for shock value, or where it's just to get an instant knee-jerk reaction, or to get people on their heels, but, for the sake that, we, as Christians, we that call ourselves believers, understand what we're up against. There was a gentleman by the name of Don Rickles, a lot of you might have known him, he was a comedian, he passed away this past week, and, Bob Heirtzler and myself were watching an old episode of Johnny Carson—how many remembers Johnny Carson? Okay. So, this was from 1973, so, going back quite a ways, and, what was kind of interesting, as we were watching it, we were kind of like, you know, kind of analyzing it a little bit, that the pace seemed quite a

bit slower. It just seemed as though, you know, there wasn't a lot of gimmicks, there wasn't a lot of—he had his orchestra, and everything—and, I'm making a point, here. This isn't about the Johnny Carson show, or, really, about Don Rickles. But, it was more about, I appreciated watching it because there was uncomfortable moments. There was moments where it wasn't that funny. It wasn't about trying to have so many explosions or just trying to say something that's just so off the wall, or something that was so attention-grabbing that—it wasn't about that. And, I have to say, something else that we noticed that was kind of interesting, at one point, Don looked over at Johnny, and he said, “You know, I just got say that God's really blessed your life.” That's really—I appreciate that, and I feel like, I give glory to God. It was something that was unexpected, that you just don't hear a typical, in this day and age, very often, especially in a public forum, maybe, from a Hollywood standpoint, or whatever. And, I know that our focus isn't to be influenced by that element, but, we still are, in some ways. There's still that influence in society that, getting back to the point of, like, being bored. Well, if there's always this entertainment value, and we're going to get into that, today, about, in Jesus Christ, I mean, it's not about entertainment. I'm not saying that there aren't some enjoyable things that we could do in life, but how swayed are we by that opinion that the world has about what Jesus is, or isn't, or should be? Well, we shouldn't be. And, as far as I'm concerned, there's nobody, living or deceased, that has a greater influence on my life, and I believe the same thing for all of us. Or, if not all of us, most everybody in this room. I mean, I understand that I haven't met everybody here, and there's visitors here, but, for those, I want to say, welcome. Good to have everybody out, to join us on this Palm Sunday. But, looking at Christ, as far as being, like, being that influence, or that, I guess you could say, like a titan of greatness, in a historical perspective, just being, maybe, from an analytical standpoint. There's a word out there that, now I cringe, because it's been overused so much, and the word is, 'polarized.' They describe somebody if they take a stance in life—I'll give you an example: Tim Tebow. Football player, he's retired, now, he's making a go in the minor leagues, but, when he was playing in the NFL, a lot of times he would have prayer—and the guy was soft-spoken. I mean, it wasn't like he was out there trying to start fights, it was just like, “I'm going to pray. This is my stance.” But they would describe him as polarizing, and I thought, “How is he polarizing?” The guy just wants to pray to God! The guy just wants to live a Christian life.” And there's other people out there like that; maybe he was one of the more notable ones, recently, but, I just have to say that there isn't anybody, not just from an analytical standpoint, but a spiritual standpoint... The Bible talks about, in Acts chapter four, that there's no other name, given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). It talks about it in Colossians three, it talks about, whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17). It talks about—Christ Himself said, in John fourteen, He said, “I am the way, the Truth and the Life: No man can come unto the Father but by me.” (John 14:6) And that's just getting warmed up. That's just the tip of the iceberg. Not me, I'm just talking about those are some principles and some things that we have, as far as =, like, that foundation of Christ in our life that we just keep building on. We should becoming more convinced as the days, and months, and the years go by, not convinced, or less certain of our faith in Christ.

There was a point that Parrish mentioned last week, that I appreciate, because he talked about there have been a lot of people that have come along that have tried to take the stead of Christ, or tried to take the stead of God. And he mentioned a few of them, and I appreciate that, because he did his homework, and, yet, the thing is, every single one of them was proven false. Every single one of them was proven to be a liar, for lack of a euphemism, there. But Christ hasn't. And, going back, we have to have faith. Without faith it's impossible to believe God, it's impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). I have to look at it like, okay, I never met the man. I wasn't walking around Jerusalem in that time frame, and, yet, we've got to remember, we have the Holy Ghost. We have the Holy Ghost that guides us, not only into Truth, but keeps us in Truth (John 16:13, Ephesians 1:13). This isn't something where it's just, like a fairy tale, or a cleverly devised fable; these are real things, and we have to try the spirits. We have

to know that there is a spiritual realm, and there is a physical realm, that's a manifestation of what's, I guess, behind the curtain—you want to call it, 'behind the curtain?' whatever way you want to describe it, but, if you peel back that fleshly manifestation of what we call the world, there is a spiritual realm. So, the real question isn't about what everybody else thinks about Jesus, but, "Are we getting bored with Jesus?" The answer is obvious, but, I believe that Satan fights us in so many different ways to try to get our attention, to try to get us more interested in something else. I'm not saying we can't have hobbies, or activities, or outings, or traveling, or functions or a lot of the same things that other people do, as well, but not everything.

In this passage, the highlight, of this first part of the message today is, "For this purpose, the Son of God Was Manifested." But, First John tells us to Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16). So, we can't sit here and think, "Well, I just want to become so worldly," or—where do we draw the line? There's not really any book of do's and don't's except the Bible, where we have to be able to find balance, and it gives us clarification on this. How many risks do we want to take? As long as we're not taking risks that are going to jeopardize our soul.

1 John 3:1-8 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

You know, one thing I've noticed about humanity, and I would imagine a lot of us have, as well, is that people like to feel like they've got a sense of purpose. How many agrees with that? It could be a cause, it could be a charitable organization, it could be a business, or it could be athletics, just naming a few. I'm not here to jump up and down and claim how Christianity is the greatest purpose for everyone else because that wouldn't be fair. Because, we have to make that assessment on our own. We have to decide, "Okay, well, is this purpose that I've found better than anything else, or more worthwhile than anything else?" I get it, again, we talk about balance, that there are other things that we tend to as our life unfolds, but, there's no doubt about it. And I say that without any hesitation, that there's nothing greater than the purpose in God. And I don't say it boastfully, or spitefully, or angrily, or pompously, or in a way that is anything other than, it's just that. It's the number one, it's the top of the chart. And I say it because, when I look at the spiritual side, it's a no-brainer. I understand the purpose of Jesus coming into the world, and that, through Him, and only Him, do we have the power to destroy the works of the devil. That, to me, stood out quite a bit, because, I'm going to share some things here, in a moment, that...

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Lamentations 3:22-25 *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. 24 The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

I do want to share one more account, and this is not to give you tales of woe, or sadness and sorrow, because there's victories, too, that we have to look at. But, maybe five or six years ago, there was a guy that we worked with. I had known him many years. I had known that guy, at that time, I would say, probably twelve or thirteen years. I knew him pretty well, but, he very unexpectedly committed suicide, so, it was real splash of cold water in the face for people. I'm not saying that, as Christians, we're unaffected by things that happen around us, but I want to share this passage, because there was a guy, and I'll share his name, his name was Andy Luxon, a good friend, a guy that I hadn't really known, at that point, a real long time, but, he was just, like, "I can't believe that..." the guy that committed suicide "...did that. And he shared, and he wasn't really a religious guy, but he said, "You know, God's mercies are new every morning." And, to this day, I remember that. I mean, in the aftermath of that tragedy, I remember him sharing that, because that was something where it's, like, it's part disbelief, but it's also part strength in the midst of that tragedy, and, being able to hear that, it was uplifting. It was encouraging, but it made me know, "Right. God's mercies are new every morning." Regardless of what happened yesterday. The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but His mercies are new every morning.

So, I want to go all the way back to the question we started with: Are we bored with Jesus? I know I can't answer for everyone, but, for me it is a resounding no. And, we might all have different reasons for believing, and taking that stance, but, it doesn't matter: there's nothing wrong with that.

I know in my life, in my travels—and I haven't been to as many countries as Parrish—twenty-four countries? He was in the Navy, so, all you guys that are in the Navy, you might end up going to twenty-four countries, or more. Or more, so just stand by, stand by; enjoy the ride. But, I would say that I've been to some places and seen, just, some spectacular, some incredible sights, and all I can do is just sit in awesome wonder every time I think about that, think about God's creation. But even if I didn't have those experiences to fall back on, I could still say that I am thankful to have that power that God gives us over the evil, over all the things in this world, to be able to stand up, to be able to know this life is worth living, and we do have an answer, and we do have a hope in Christ, and it's not something that's just a fable, or, it's not some fairy-tale, like I talked about earlier.

Part 2 – What Would Jesus Do, or What Would Jesus Have Me to Do?

So, I know, "What Would Jesus Do?" it's a common phrase, and I'll say this: I would even go as far as to say it could be worn out a little, but I'm not going to say don't ever use it, and I'm not going to say I don't use it. But, I am going to say, it's not worn out among believers but it has become kind of a cliché. So, I want to share a story—this was, actually, on this visit—I was talking to my sister-in-law, my brother's wife, and she works in a Christian school, and I wouldn't say that she's a real religious woman, I mean, I think she's trying. And, she had a lot of questions, and kind of unexpectedly. These were questions—I mean, not like I was blindsided, but, I was like, "Bring it on! Ask your questions! Sure! But, also, realize that there are things that you are going to have to do, or maybe perspectives in your mind that you are going to have to change, yourself." So, she said that she would hear this expression, a lot, and, after a while, it got to be tiresome. Not that she was blowing up at people or anything like that. I think she just bit her tongue, and said, "Okay, okay. That's true." And, I want to, kind of, piggy-back on that, but I also want to say that there are expressions that are used; it's not like we're trying to stifle it, ever, but, there's a Scripture we're going to look at in a moment, here. Let's back up a step. About twenty years ago, there was a guy who wasn't a member of our body of believers that was actually going to be getting married, and we were doing the wedding at our church. So, I remember trying to get to know him. So, "Where you from?" "How you doing?" but, every time, it was like, " "GLORY TO GOD!!!" GLORY TO GOD!!!" "How you doing, brother?" "GLORY TO GOD!!!" After a while, it was like, "Okay,

yes, glory to God! That is true.” But, it was like, we need to have a conversation, edgewise, sometimes. I mean, I get that there's times when the Spirit gets moving, and, yet, again, getting back to the balance. So, I want to read from the Book of Acts, chapter sixteen, because this is sort of an unusual passage, because, what you'd think, from this particular passage that, what this woman is saying is absolutely right. But, I'm going to read this:

Acts 16:16-18 *And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. [Now, it sounds to me like that's a good thing to say. It sounds to me like, “Yeah, that's right! These are the servants of the most high God, and they show us the way of salvation, but, then, here's the part—and this is kind of tricky, but, please hear this:] And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.*

So, again, think about it, this woman that was possessed and, yet, was making these vocal claims about these are the men of God. On the surface, she is saying encouraging and righteous things, but, we have to look at it from the standpoint, like, we can't quench the Spirit. It's not all about just sitting there and blabbing something out, and, please, please, don't mishear me on that, I mean, we hear something, or we hear different songs, or we say, “Hallelujah,” or, “Thank God!” But, what could possibly be wrong? But this particular point, right here, if we quench the Spirit, we're going to miss our opportunity to minister.

What I mean by that, if we just say, “What would Jesus do?” and a couple of us were talking about this the other night, and we just think, “Well, what would Jesus do?” and we're thinking, “Well, if He was here, and the situation arose, and we thought, 'What would Jesus do?' Well, He would cast out all the demons, or He would wipe them all out,” or whatever. I mean, He would perform a miracle, and then we think, “Well, if Christ would do that, there's no way I could rise to those expectations. So, basically, I'll just let it go. I'll just let it slide. I'm really not going to try to do anything. I'll just sort of sit back, and fold my hands, and just give up, because, what Jesus would do is way, way more beneficial and spiritually effective than what I could possibly do.

How about, “What would Jesus have me to do?” Because, that puts us, not in the driver's seat, but it puts us in a position of responsibility and accountability. Because then it's like, we do have the Holy Ghost leading us. So, it is as though Christ is standing right there, if we allow the Holy Ghost to lead us. That is a difference maker. That is something that, that's an on-going thing. And, just because there's not a physical manifestation of the man Jesus Christ, standing there, that's the leading that we have. So, if we make that decision, whatever it happens to be, when we get to that fork in the road, when we get to that deciding of what we're going to say, what we're going to do... There was something that our brother Tom Hansen shared with me, many years ago. Tom was a school-teacher, here in this area, and he's actually down in Jacksonville, Florida, now, to be part of the fellowship, there, but, anyway, he told me that he was at a Target, or a grocery store, maybe a Jewel... It was interesting how he shared it, because he felt like, life comes at you fast. So, he was standing in the check-out line, and he said that there was somebody that he either turned to behind him or in front of him, but the person was pretty grossly deformed, the way he described it. I mean, it was something where it was like, people are going to look at your reaction, too. And it's a matter of being prayerful and—because, if they see you cringe in horror, or draw back... And that's one thing: I have to say, when I saw my friend, down in Florida, I was taken aback, but I was prayerful going in, and I was like—it was kind of shocking. Because, he is—I guess the best word I can use to describe his condition is emaciated, which just means, drawn out and, well, look it up. I mean, it's one of those things where it's like, if you've ever seen

pictures—and I would say his condition wasn't quite this severe—but, if you ever see pictures of people that have survived the concentration camps, I mean, men that were my height that were, like, a hundred and ten pounds, or a hundred pounds. They were like skeletons. And, so, when Tom shared that with me, all he could do was react, at that moment, the way that he was prayerful, up until that point, to be able to react to. And, I can't remember if he said, "Well, I felt like, well, I kind of looked away quickly..." I don't remember what he shared, but, I think it was one of those moments where it was almost like, you sort of feel like you're being tested. But, it's not; it's just the way life is. These are the things that we face, not all the time, but we do face them often enough. So, don't get me wrong, I whole-heartedly believe in, "What would Jesus do?" but, we also have to ask ourselves, "What would Jesus have us to do?" And there's a difference, and I hope you hear that. Because I'm not trying to confuse anybody, and, don't ever forget, like I said, we do have that Holy Ghost, which is with us. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (John 14:26)—this is part of Palm Sunday, because we're talking about the legacy of the life of Christ.

So what is our role in the game? The reason I ask is because we're in this world now and we have to deal with whatever comes along, whether we like it or not. We're on the hook because we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, whether we like it or not. But God's not our enemy, unless we make Him our enemy. So, it's not a matter of looking at it like, "I've got to stand at judgment, so, I'll just do as little as possible, to not make as many mistakes." That's not what Christ wants us to do. And it's not always a battle or a crisis that comes our way. It could be someone seeking advice, or counsel, or an explanation about a spiritual matter. It could be a physical matter, too. But we always have to have a prayerful approach.

John 21:20-25 *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

So, I was reading through this passage, and I noticed something that I hadn't really noticed before, as far as, like, putting two and two together, but, Peter was asking Jesus—now, this is after the resurrection—he was asking who it was that would betray Him. And I'm thinking, He was already betrayed once, did he think He was going to get betrayed again? Obviously, he did, but the interesting point is, not that Jesus was evasive in His response, but He didn't say, "I'm not getting betrayed again, you got that?" But, He answered him a little bit differently, and I like that, because there are some things that we are left—that are mysteries. I'm not talking about the plan of salvation, but I'm talking about there are mysteries in the world, in life, in God that, it may take us a long time to get there, or we may never get there, but it doesn't annul us from understanding the plan of salvation, or it doesn't take away that responsibility or that accountability that we still have. But, by the way, the second part of that last verse, "The World Itself Could Not Contain the Books," is the title of the message today. And I chose that because that's another statement that we have faith to believe that that's even possible, because, if you think, "how many books are out there?" Go on Amazon. There's probably like a million, five million, who knows? And we're talking about all the books of the world couldn't contain the works of Christ? And, then, if we think, well, the guy only lived to, like, thirty-three. How is that even possible? Without faith, it is impossible to believe God. Do I believe what the Bible says about Him?

Yes, I do. Because, we're talking about somebody who wasn't just a great businessman, or, you know, a great athlete, or a great historian, we're talking about the One who actually came to Earth, God manifested in the flesh to take away the sins of the world. So, it is worth studying, and it is worth aligning our lives to follow His guidance, and not get bored with it. The Bible talks, in Romans, about "...the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33) It's not the kind of thing where—if we choose not to, we won't. And I'm closing in a moment, here.

But, Palm Sunday is about the culmination of the life of Jesus and how his legacy is that great, that even the things that are recorded in the Bible, now, hear me on this: The things, the deeds, the statements, it's just a small sample of what He did. Because, if all the books in the world, then this book right here, that's not all of them; that's just one. And it's something where, understanding the greatness of Christ. And, it's absolutely right that we should acknowledge and never forget the works and the miracles. Christ was manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. And if it were possible that all the things that He said, all the things that He did, all the acts of kindness, all the miracles, that all the books of the world couldn't contain it. Do you believe that today? I'm not looking for people to raise their hand; it's something to just think about. Because, we have that choice; we do have that option. And there's so many things that have happened over the course of history that it's up to us to believe it. Do you believe that Noah was a real man? Do you believe that the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea? That Bible says that it's true, but, not everybody believes it, but that's their fault; that's their choice. We're not sitting there trying to force it down their throat. But, living the life that we do, it is a game-changer. That is the reflection we need to have, not just from a knowledge standpoint, but, more importantly, from a spiritual standpoint. That is the reflection we need to have in our remembrance of all that He did for us.

I thank you for your time, and God bless you.