**The Teaching of Jesus**

**Eph. 4:17-24**

Introduction:

1. The teaching of Jesus is not just “the words of Christ in red,” but a coming to know Christ so that we are radically transformed.

2. This passage describes it as “being renewed in the spirit of your mind,” and “putting on the new self, which is in the likeness of God.”

3. Learning Christ, stands in direct contrast to the default position characterized by the Gentiles who walk in the futility of their mind, darkened in their understanding and excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.

4. In this study you will do well to recognize some difference between “the teaching of Jesus” and “the teachings of Jesus.” “The teaching of Jesus,” the teaching of who and what He is, is the broader concept. “The teaching of Jesus” encompasses “the teachings of Jesus,” the details of what He taught. We need to know who He is and allow that to transform us into the likeness of God.

5. But the transformation is not without particulars and thus the “teachings of Jesus.”

Discussion:

I. There are criticisms leveled at the teaching of Jesus.

A. “The teaching of Jesus is magnificent, but impractical.”

1. “It was good for the first century, but not adequate for our 21st century

civilization.”

2. But the greater complexity of our modern life is largely a myth.

a. While we have different and more complex technology.

b. The life issues addressed by the teaching of Jesus are largely unchanged.

c. The reason is that we struggle with the same human issues that were

common in the first century—such things as laziness, greed, the love of

pleasure, the instinct to hit back, the use of power to get our way, and the like.

3. The question is, “How do we surmount these issues?”

B. “The teaching of Jesus is too demanding. It is impossible to do.”

1. “If people could not live up to the expectations of the Old Law how can they live

up to the New? It seems it is even more exacting and searches even into the

hearts of men.”

2. To that criticism I would note that it is really not about a new list of rules and

regulations but about a temper and spirit which should govern a person’s

attitude toward God and his/her neighbor.

3. After all Jesus did summarize the law as loving God with all one’s heart, soul

and mind and one’s neighbor as himself.

4. But some object, “This love thing leans in the direction of mere sentimentalism—

ex. Can’t we all just get along and be sweet to grandma?”

5. To be sure the teaching of Jesus goes beyond mere sentimentalism. It involves

definite kinds of actions and either approves or condemns them. There is a

transforming effect, a change in behavior, associated with “learning Christ.”

II. The teaching of Jesus involves teaching the will of God.

A. The Jewish law was not merely a set of rules of conduct evolved from human

wisdom, and neither is the teaching of Jesus.

1. They understood the O.T. as the revelation of God’s will.

2. It was the revelation of the very nature of God Himself.

3. Given their acknowledgement that “a man’s way was not in himself,” they called

on the Lord to give them correction (Jer. 10:23). His way was for their good

always (Deut. 6:3, 24).

4. Any failure was ascribed to not walking according to the voice of the Lord (Jer.

11:6-8).

B. Jesus stood in this tradition.

1. In the Sermon on the Mount He corrects misguided interpretations with

what is for Him the correct intent of the will of God.

2. He asked some Pharisees, “Why do you transgress the commandment of God

for the sake of your tradition?” (Matt. 15:3). He said, “You invalidate the word of

God for the sake of your tradition” (Matt. 15:6).

C. Yes, the teaching of Jesus is difficult. It is hard because it goes against our

laziness, and greed, and love for pleasure, and the like (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

1. And so we modify the teaching of Jesus to make it more palatable to us (2 Tim.

4:3-4).

2. We want $2 worth of teaching in a brown paper bag. Not enough to bring self-

sacrifice, not enough to cause me any inconvenience, just enough to “hold a

form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5).

a. “Don’t ask me to teach, I get anxious!”

b. “Don’t ask me to give, I might not have enough!’

c. “Don’t ask me to interrupt my pleasure seeking activities, to worship!”

d. What happened to loving my neighbor who is ignorant and needs to be

taught? What happened to giving for the benefit of the one who does not

have? What happened to stopping my activities in recognition that all my

time belongs to Him?

3. What happened to our work of serving the purpose of God? Has it given way to

our serving our own purpose?

D. There are those who have denied that the teaching of Jesus is the revelation of

God. And there are those who deny the teaching of Jesus by their lives.

III. The teaching of Jesus is not concerned with a mere academic analysis of text, conduct, intention and motive.

A. Sometimes it would appear that our study of the teaching of Jesus is a mere

academic exercise.

1. Merely a gathering of informative materials.

2. If we are really diligent we might consider how our conduct relates.

3. If we are really really diligent we might think about our motives and intentions.

B. But Jesus is concerned with the whole character which expresses itself in life and

action.

C. For Him, the actions reveal the person.

1. You will know them by their fruits, He said (Matt. 7:20).

2. “Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself,” He said, through James

(2:17). “Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by

my works” (2:18).

3. We know the ones who know Christ. They have laid aside the old self and put

on the new self (Eph. 4:22-23).

IV. Jesus is the embodiment of His teaching.

A. In the gospels His life illuminates His teaching; and His teaching illuminates His life.

1. He washes His disciples feet. He says, “Go and do as I did unto you” (Jn.

13:15).

2. He hangs on a cross in service. He calls on us to take up our cross and follow

Him (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mk. 8:34).

B. For Him life and teaching are all one piece.

1. This means that His teaching is not about mere acts and motives but about the

fundamental relation of man’s will to God’s.

2. Repentance is not about striving to bring one’s conduct into line with the Law.

It is not about merely bringing one’s motives into harmony with God—from

selfishness to unselfishness. It is a submission of my will to the will of God, the

acceptance of His sovereignty. It is upon this rock that Jesus builds His

church. It is not a mere verbal acknowledgement of the fact that Jesus is the

Son of the living God. It is making Him Lord in your life! Baptism expresses this

submission as we give ourselves to Him to raise us from the dead. It is in this

process that we enter the kingdom and give ourselves to the word of the King.

3. In this our life becomes one with the purpose of God.

4. This life is lived fleshed out with the music of God’s purpose. It is more than

notes arranged in order—lived in mere burdensome alignment with the law. It is

a life lived as a harmonious symphony as purposed by God. Cf. a student of

music playing notes, contrasted with an orchestra playing Beethoven’s 5th.

C. Is this what it means when God says, “I will put My Spirit within you?” (Ezek.

36:25-27; cf. 11:19-20; 37:14).

V. The object of the teaching of Jesus is to give direction rather than directions, to point to the goal of good living rather than to merely legislate for particular cases. Is your direction correct?

A. The lawyer of Lk. 10:25ff asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

1. His answer was a direction answer. “Love the Lord with all heart, soul, strength

and mind; and neighbor as self.” Jesus said, “Do this and you will live.”

2. He asked, “Who is my neighbor?” What do I need to do particularly?

3. Jesus focused not on the details but on the direction.

a. Did he have to bandage wounds to be a neighbor?

b. Did he have to pour oil and wine?

c. Did he have to put him on his own beast?

d. Did he have to take him to an inn?

e. Did he have to pay the innkeeper?

4. The lawyer understood—The one who showed mercy was the neighbor. He is

the one who has the spirit of God.

B. The rich young ruler (Lk. 18:18ff) asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

1. Jesus reiterated some of the commandments.

2. “All these have I kept,” he said.

3. One more thing, “Sell all that you possess and come follow Me.”

4. It is about direction! Have you given yourself to the purpose of God?

C. We need to live our lives, even though we do so imperfectly, to serve the purpose

of God. This is the teaching of Jesus.

Conclusion:

1. There can be no looking for bare minimums to get by. There can be no restriction of the commandments so that we can justify ourselves.

2. Either we are all in or not.

3. When we learn Christ it takes us to the cross in complete and total devotion to the will of God.