

If you weren't here last weekend, I trust that wherever you were, you were able to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is the central event in all of human history, and the effects of this event continues to ripple throughout history. On a more personal level, the death and resurrection of Jesus continues to have a ripple effect in my life.

It's fascinating to observe what transpires when an object is dropped into a pool of water. The water on the surface is immediately displaced, and the first ripple can be seen. If you've ever thrown a rock into a pond, you've seen a ripple effect firsthand: beginning at the centre, the ripples begin to advance outward in concentric circles, growing larger and larger.

This morning I have a bowl before you, and I've been dropping marbles to produce a ripple effect. And if you were up here with me you would see that what is constraining the advance of the concentric circles (ripples) is the bowl itself...it acts like a barrier and the ripple effect is limited. Without this constraint, the larger the size of the object dropped, the larger the displacement, and, the more long-lasting the effect.

I think life with Jesus is meant to work in the same way. When we invite Jesus to forgive our sin and lead our lives, the effect He has is not unlike the effect of dropping an object into a body of water. When Jesus enters our life, and immediately all kinds of things are displaced.

His influence is like a ripple advancing in concentric circles...it gets larger and larger and larger. But, as we know all too well, the effect

Jesus wants to have upon our lives can be constrained; we can (and do) limit His effect by putting up barriers, in effect, we put up "Keep Out" signs in certain areas of our lives.

**Illus:** by a show of hands, how many of you made a decision to follow Jesus when you were young (under 10)?

I was six years old when I made a decision to follow Jesus. I've thought often about that day, because it has shaped every day since. Now, I did not know then what I now know about following Jesus, but that did not make my decision any less sincere or significant. Jesus met me on that day, He forgave me, He extended to me the rights of a son, and His ripple effect began in my life.

When I was younger, if anyone had asked me me what had transpired that day, I likely would have told them: *I asked Jesus to come into my heart.* Are you all familiar with this language...asking Jesus to "come into one's heart"?

As a child, I may have asked Jesus to come into my "heart," but it took many more years until I invited Jesus into the rest of my life. It wasn't until I was 19 that I even thought to invite Jesus into my career choice...until then I had been mapping out my future on my own. It wasn't until my mid 20's that I invited Jesus enter into the way I played sports; I was ultra-competitive, and wasn't beyond taking people out when necessary (just ask Dave Sattler).

These days I am inviting Jesus into my relationships, into my work, into my t.v. watching, into the ways I spend my money and my time. When it comes to "dropping" someone into your life , no one person

can have a bigger ripple effect than Jesus...if you allow Him full access.

Friends, right thinking about Jesus is not enough. What we believe about Jesus is a matter of life and death, but, Jesus is pursuing more than our minds: He has our whole life in view...He wants to affect and transform every dimension.

Last November we started a series entitled, “*Rethinking Church*,” this morning we are going to jump back into this series, looking specifically at 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. If you have a Bible (or Bible app), let me encourage you to turn there with me. If you are using the Blue Bibles located directly in front of you, you can find our text on page 1777.

As we look at this letter to the Corinthian church, we are confronted with what it means to be the church. The church is not a building, we are the church: God’s people, gathered together in Jesus name. And we need to continue to think and rethink what it means for Jesus to effect every dimension of our life, personally and corporately.

In 1 Cor. 6 we come face to face with something that might surprise you. You might be surprised to find out that Jesus is interested in the way we practice business, in the way that we relate to sex, and in the the way we express sexuality. You might ask: *what does following Jesus have to do with business or sexuality?* This week I’m going to talk about business, and next week about sex and sexuality.

Now just before I read the text, let me give some context to what you are about to hear. Paul had heard that there were some legal disputes going on between members of the Corinthian church. It would seem

that one of the members has defrauded another member in some kind of a business deal. The one who has been cheated has responded by taking the other one to court. Paul is horrified by what is going on and weighs in with the following response.

Please follow along as I read 1 Cor. 6:1-11.

*1 If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people? 2 Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

*4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!*

*7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. 9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?*

*Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were*

*washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

I would like to begin my response to this text by stating what is immediately obvious: the behaviour that was horrifying to Paul is unlikely to raise many of our modern eyebrows. Christians taking Christians to court? What's the big deal? *It's just business*, and that's how business works.

We live at a time, and among a people, where our "rights" are paraded about as preeminent, and we have zero tolerance for anyone or anything that infringes upon them. This is the lens through which our culture sees, and if we are honest, most of us are much more comfortable with this lens than with the one Paul holds out.

I trust you noticed that Paul didn't bother ask which of the two combatants was "right;" instead, to everyone involved (the plaintiff, the defendant, and the rest of the church), Paul says: *shame on you*.<sup>1</sup> In verse 7, Paul goes so far as to say, "*The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?*"

Why not? We could think of a thousand reasons "why not" but as Gordon Fee points out, likely every last reason begins "with the word 'but' (as in, 'But you don't know what he did to me') and are motivated by some form of self-protection or self-gain."<sup>2</sup> Paul was not concerned about "rights," but he was concerned that pressing

one's "rights" would destroy "relationship" among God's people, and discredit their witness among unbelieving Corinthians.

The fact that many modern readers do not share Paul's concerns reveals just how comfortable we are with the cultural lenses we're wearing. This kind of thinking reveals a sacred/secular split that Paul knew nothing about. Does it make sense for Jesus to rule in our Sanctuaries but to be banished from our Boardrooms? Does it make sense for Jesus to act as our personal CEO, but take a back seat in our business deals?

Again, like a stone dropped in a pond, Jesus intends for His influence to be like a ripple advancing in concentric circles, gets larger and larger and larger and for some of you, that means allowing Jesus to affect the way you practice business.

In the next few minutes, I'd like to walk through our text before I draw out some application and share a few stories.

### Walking Through The Text

Let me begin by saying that Paul wasn't anti-authority, nor was he out to discredit the legal system. As we read through the book of Acts, we see that Paul personally appealed to the Roman legal system on more than one occasion. And in Romans 13:1, Paul wrote "*let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that*

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: 1 Corinthians*, 237.

<sup>2</sup> Fee, 240-241.

*exist have been established by God.*” Paul is not opposing the legal system; his concern lies elsewhere.

Three times, in vs. 2, 3, and 9, Paul asks the question: *do you not know? Do you not know that when Jesus returns, we will participate with Him in bringing judgement to bear on the world? Do you not know that we will even participate in judging those angels who have turned away from God? Do you not know?*

And so, says Paul (vs. 3), if you are fit to judge such lofty matters, are you unfit to mediate between two brothers in the church? In vs. 5, with tongue in cheek, Paul writes *“how is it that you who claim to be so wise and spiritually mature, deem yourselves unable to render a wise judgement on such a trivial matter?”*

*Instead*, says Paul (vs. 4), you are bringing this matter before a judge who does not believe what you believe, nor value what you value as a follower of Jesus. So how can you hope for a “right” judgement?

In the ancient world, court cases were tried publicly in the heart of the marketplace; these cases were something like the daily news and town gossip all rolled up into one. Paul sentiment in vs 6 and 7 is clear: if you go to court against your Christian brother, it's doesn't matter who “wins,” everybody loses. The relationship between these Christian brothers will be destroyed, the unity of the church will be affected, and, the name of Jesus will fall into disrepute.

In vs. 7 Paul chastises the plaintiff for bringing his Christian brother to court saying, *“why not rather be wronged/cheated.”* In vs. 8, Paul chastises the defendant saying, *“you cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters in Christ.”*

In vs. 9-10 Paul goes on to name the tension that exists for every person who follows Jesus: the tension between what we profess to believe about Jesus, and the gap between what we believe and how we live. Paul's warning is real. Gordon Fee writes, when we persist *“in the same behaviour as those already destined for judgment [we] are placing [our]selves in the very real danger of that same judgment.”*<sup>3</sup>

But Paul does not conclude with a word of judgement. In fact, Paul didn't write a list of various sinful behaviours to help the Corinthians discern who was “in” and who was “out.” Paul's intent was to remind them that such behaviour belongs to an old way of living.

In vs. 11, Paul says, *“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Paul's point is to encourage the Corinthians to leave behind old ways of behaving, as one author suggests, *“just as the butterfly leaves behind the cocoon and the habits of caterpillar life.”*<sup>4</sup> Paul regularly reminds us that since we have been united with Christ, what is His is

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<sup>3</sup> Fee, 242.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: 1 Corinthians*, 100.

now ours. And so, God's invitation is for us to *become what we already are*: His holy people.

Friends, the sphere of Jesus' reach extends beyond the private/moral/religious to every aspect of life, and that includes the way we engage in business.

**Illus:** In the 1970's my father-in-law, who is an architect by trade, was involved in managing a series of homes being built by a developer. This developer, who was also a Christian, struck a deal with my father-in-law: he was to work with city hall on the zoning and permits, draw up the plans for each of the houses and in return he would be given property so he could build a house for himself.

The project got underway, and the houses were in construction phase when some of the contractors began to complain to my father-in-law that they were not being paid by the developer. When my father-in-law spoke with the developer, he realized that the developer was holding back payments, and in some cases, having work done that he had no intention of ever paying for. He encouraged my father-in-law to do the same. "*It's just business,*" he said.

*It's just business?* If Jesus is Lord of your life, is He not equally Lord in your business dealings?

*It's just business?* Well, my father-in-law couldn't see it that way, and he couldn't be apart of defrauding contractors and so he walked away from the project. The decision was easy to make, but the financial consequences were significant. He had to walk away from his own house, but still had to pay the bank for it. The debt was significant enough that he planned to declare bankruptcy; they could keep their

other assets (which were in my mother-in-law's name), his debt would be absolved, and they could make a fresh start.

When he mentioned these thoughts to his Christian accountant, his accountant told him "*If you go ahead with these plans, find yourself another accountant. What kind of a God do we serve? Can he not provide for you?*" My in-laws took this to heart, and they made a decision to chip away at their debt and trust God for His provision. And God supplied...not without hard work, some hard times, and much sacrifice, but God did supply their needs.

On another occasion, this time in the 80's, my father-in-law was working with another Christian businessman, who also worked as a part-time pastor. This individual had a parcel of land that he wanted to develop but he didn't know what to do with it, let alone how to go about getting it zoned, etc.

When my father-in-law met with this businessman, he proposed using the land for Seniors' housing; there was a great need for Seniors' housing in the area, and the government would look favourably on the project. So, the businessman and my father-in-law struck a deal. My father-in-law would work with city hall, get the land rezoned, get the building approved, and draw up all the plans. In return, he would be made a 1/3 partner and share in the revenue stream generated by the Seniors' housing.

My father-in-law, and his staff worked on this project for three years; the land was rezoned, the project was approved, the building was going to proceed...everything was going according to plan. But when the land was rezoned, it's value tripled. My father-in-law's partner came to him with dollar signs in his eyes and told him the deal was

off; if my father-in-law wanted any kind of partnership he would have to come up with a large sum of cash and buy in.

*It's not personal, it's just business.* In the end, my father-in-law was stuck with three years of staff costs and nothing to show for it except a broken contract and massive debt. Now my father-in-law was not without options. He had a lawyer, he could have taken this businessman to court, produced the signed contract, pressed his rights, and sued for what he was owed...after all, *it's not personal, it's just business.*

But as Paul reminds us, there is so much more at stake than money and “business” when two Christians go to court. Proverbs 22:1 says, “*A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*” In the sight of God, one’s reputation is worth more than one’s net worth. When a Christian goes to court against a Christian, there is more at stake than our money or our “rights;” Jesus’ reputation is at stake.

In vs. 11 Paul uses an important word in describing the Corinthians; he tells them that they have been sanctified. This word, *sanctified*, isn’t an everyday word but it means “*set apart*”. God chose these Corinthians, and set them apart so that they could represent Him in Corinth. His intent was that as this church followed Jesus, living everyday life in Corinth (working, playing, eating, shopping), as they interacted with people (friends, family, neighbours, customers), that in their living, in their interacting, Jesus would be on display for everyone to see.

I hope we realize that when we label ourselves as followers of Jesus, the people around us will make assumption about Jesus, about His

church, based on what they see, hear, and experience of us. Isn’t that a sobering thought?

I’ve met people who are really vocal about following Jesus, but when I see how they live I wish they would keep it to themselves; they’re doing more harm than good. Perhaps you’ve known Christian businessmen and women who fall into this category. You cannot label yourself a follower of Jesus, and in the next breath say to those around you, “*it's just business*”. Everywhere we go, we go in Jesus name. Every word we speak, we speak in Jesus name. Everything we do, we do in Jesus name.

It seems as though the whole world understands this truth, except Christians. Jesus gets an enormous amount of bad press in Western culture but how much of it can He actually take credit for...maybe 20%? Paul knows what’s at stake: the good news of Jesus Christ is at stake.

Friends, none of us can live up to the full measure of Jesus’ words or life; perfection is not possible before Jesus returns, but that’s not what Paul is talking about here. He faithfully reminds the Corinthian church to become what they already are: God’s holy people.

Paul says, “*but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*” The good news is that God has already done the heavy lifting for us. We have been washed (that is, cleansed and forgiven), we have been sanctified (that is, chosen and set apart to live for God in this world), and we have been justified (that is, we’ve been ushered into right relationship with God...the barriers between us are gone, unless we build new ones).

We don't have to worry about saving ourselves; Jesus has done that for us. And neither do we have to make ourselves holy; the Holy Spirit is working to align our thoughts, words, and actions with Jesus.

But...we need to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and allow the ripple effect of Jesus to continue to extend to every corner of our lives. Everywhere we go, we go in Jesus name. Every word we speak, we speak in Jesus name. Everything we do, we do in Jesus name.

I know that some of you here today are Christian businessmen and women, and you are wondering what it might look like to practice business in the name of Jesus. Surely there is more to it than not taking a Christian brother or sister to court; to be sure there is. And answering this question takes a lot more than one sermon. This Fall we're going to be running a Transforming Pathways class called "*One Life*" that addresses this very question.

As I conclude this morning, I want to make one last comment. I've spoken with many of you who work in the realm of business and there are significant challenges in practicing business in a Jesus kind of way among people that do not share your values or ethics. Regularly you are faced with decisions that are screaming for you to compromise.

You need to know that what do for work, business, is every bit as valuable to God as the work that I do. All work, all of life, when aligned with God's life, has a kingdom ripple effect: extending His name, His values, and His rule.

- **Pray blessing over those in business**

## **Worship**

### **Benediction:**