

Luke 9:18-27

Jesus is not very accommodating

*Tim Anderson 30/4/17*

In our sermon series,  
we're looking at Jesus is not very Christian.  
It's a bit of a challenge to us,  
to recognise that Jesus doesn't fit many of our stereotypes  
of what it means to be Christian.  
So last week we looked at the story  
of Jesus having his feet anointed with perfume by a sinful woman.  
And we saw that Jesus challenges us  
to be not too caught up with being respectable.  
I said we need to be prepared to associate with people  
who are looked down on in our community for one reason or another.  
Now someone asked me afterwards,  
"What about if the people who aren't respectable in the community  
actually pull me down?  
What if I take on their attitudes?"  
And of course that's not what God wants.  
God wants his people to be holy and distinct  
in their attitudes and behaviour.  
But he also wants us to treat others based God's love for them,  
and not based on what other people might think of us  
for associating with them.

There are in fact usually truths that need to be held together.  
God is sovereign and people are responsible for their actions.  
God loves everyone and God chooses some for eternal life.  
God is merciful and God is the judge.  
What we are doing in this series is taking hold of  
some of the truths that Christians might forget.  
The parts of Jesus' behaviour that don't fit the comfortable stereotype.  
We want to be followers of the real Jesus,  
not someone's syrupy stereotype.  
But that means that it's going to be a little provocative.

When we say Jesus was not very nice,  
we don't mean that he never behaved nicely.  
We mean that there's a particular incident  
where you wouldn't describe his behaviour as nice.  
So we should learn from that incident.  
It's helpful to have the stereotypes challenged.  
That stops us from thinking we know how Jesus would respond  
without first considering the things Jesus said and did.

Well today we have Jesus is not very accommodating.  
What does it mean to be accommodating?  
I think of someone as accommodating  
if they can fit in with your special requests.  
Most weddings we do are on Saturdays.  
But two years ago, I was asked to do a wedding on a Sunday afternoon.  
I had done three services already that day,  
and Yarra Glen didn't finish until 3.30pm.  
But we happily agreed to do the wedding at 4pm.  
That was being accommodating.  
It wasn't the most convenient for me,  
but in the interests of having the opportunity  
to speak the good news of Jesus into some lives,  
we put that aside.

Our mission in this church is  
'to help people discover Jesus and his purpose for our lives'.  
You would think that Jesus' purpose for our lives might include  
being accommodating of one another.  
All of us have our eccentricities.  
Part of caring for others  
is being accommodating of others with their eccentricities.  
To be easy to get along with.  
That makes for a good and caring community.

But in our reading from Luke 9,  
Jesus is not being very accommodating.

And since we take it as almost an article of faith  
that the Christian thing to do is to be accommodating,  
then maybe there's something we need to learn from Jesus here.

Another way to think about being accommodating  
is to think about its opposite.

What would be the opposite of accommodating?

Things have to be done exactly my way.

And in our reading  
there are three things that have to be done exactly Jesus' way.

Firstly in verses 18-20,

Jesus wants people to know exactly who he is.

Near enough is not good enough.

Secondly in verses 21-22,

In particular, Jesus wants people  
to respond rightly to his death and resurrection.

Thirdly,

in verses 23-27,

Jesus wants absolute commitment from his disciples.

Again near enough is not good enough.

Who is Jesus?

That's the first question.

Who do the crowds say that I am?

"Some say John the Baptist;"

John had by this time been executed.

So some people looked at Jesus as a resurrected John.

A bit strange considering Jesus was baptised by John.

"Others say Elijah;"

Elijah had of course been dead for centuries.

But the prophet Malachi spoke of an Elijah figure who was to come.

Could Jesus be the Elijah who was to come?

"Others say that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

Now Jesus could have had a relaxed and easy going attitude to this.

"Hey look, it doesn't really matter who they think I am,  
so long as they are listening to my teaching,  
so long as they are getting their relationship with God on track.  
That's the main thing."

He could have taken that attitude but he didn't.

This was not a matter about which he was accommodating.

"But what about you?" Jesus pressed the point.

"Who do you say that I am?"

It was really important to Jesus that his disciples recognised who he is.

And Peter answered,

"God's Messiah."

That's a key moment in the gospels.

It's the first time that someone has recognised who Jesus is.

Before Jesus went to the cross,

his main goal for his disciples

was to help them understand who he is.

And from the moment Peter had that God given moment of realisation,

Jesus intentionally directed his steps towards the cross.

It's straight to the cross from now on.

He taught his disciples about the meaning of the cross.

And his pathway took him inexorably to the cross.

Jesus is not accommodating about who he is.

He doesn't take a relaxed attitude to it.

There's no,

"If they want to think I'm John the Baptist resurrected,

that doesn't matter too much."

Why is he particular?

Because responding to Jesus correctly requires getting who he is.

If you think he's a prophet,

then he tells you about God and what God says.

But he's much more than that.

He's God the Son.

He didn't just come to tell us about the forgiveness of sins,

he came to achieve the forgiveness of our sins.

We don't just respect him as someone who taught the truth,  
we worship him as someone who is the truth.  
And any less won't be sufficient on judgement day.  
You have to get who Jesus is to be saved.

Jesus is not accommodating about who he is.  
He's also not accommodating  
about responding to his death and resurrection.  
This is verses 21-22.

"The Son of Man must suffer many things  
and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and teachers of the law,  
and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

You get the impression that this is central to what Jesus is on about.  
When Peter recognises Jesus as God's Messiah,  
that is the first time anyone had come to that realisation.  
And Jesus doesn't give it a few weeks to let it sink in.  
You know, they've just come to grips with a new concept,  
I'll give them some time before the next shocking instalment.  
No, it's straight out with it.  
They've recognised who he is,  
now straight away they need to know why he came,  
without even time to pause for breath.  
He focuses in straight away on his death and resurrection.  
And it's detailed.  
His suffering, at whose hands he would suffer,  
his death and his resurrection,  
including the timing of the resurrection.  
It's all there.

Why do they need to know in advance?  
Why can't they just find out when it happens?  
Because they need to know that this wasn't events overtaking Jesus  
that were out of his control.  
This was Jesus intentionally heading towards  
God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Jesus is not accommodating about his death and resurrection.  
They were non-negotiables for him.  
And they need to be the same for us.  
A Christianity that is not focused on Jesus' death and resurrection  
has lost the plot.  
It might strike you as strange that this needs to be said.  
But there are many counterfeit Christianities around.  
Over the centuries the church has been derailed often  
by losing the focus Jesus had on the cross and resurrection.

Currently there's a perversion of Christianity  
called the prosperity gospel.  
It's focus is on how Jesus wants to make you  
rich, healthy and successful in this world.  
An easy message to sell.  
But there's incredible dissonance in thinking  
that following an impoverished man of sorrows who was crucified  
will result in riches, health and success.

But there are other perversions of Christianity.  
Some focus on the life and teaching of Jesus but leave out the cross.  
It's the gospel of moral living  
without the repentance, without God's holy judgement on sin,  
without the freedom and transformation  
that comes from full forgiveness by grace through faith.

Jesus is not accommodating.  
As far as he is concerned,  
Christianity has the cross at its centre.  
Anything else is not Christianity.

So we've had two matters about which Jesus is not accommodating.  
He wants people to know who he is.  
He wants people to respond rightly to the cross.  
The thirds matter about which Jesus is not accommodating

is the commitment he expects from his disciples.

We live in a world that in many areas  
is very accommodating about commitment levels.

What do you have to do to become an Australian citizen?

Sign a piece of paper and turn up to a short ceremony.

What do you have to do to gain entry to a government school?

Live in the right area, put your name down and turn up.

What do you have to do to be a member of Holy Trinity Hastings?

Be baptised, sign a piece of paper and turn up a dozen times a year.

And even the attendance requirement is a recent addition.

They are pretty low levels of commitment, aren't they?

There are some parts of our community  
that demand high levels of commitment.

If you want to play football for an AFL team,  
then you have to turn up to training and put in -  
or you're out of the side.

It doesn't matter how good you are,  
if you don't turn up to training, you are out.

You have to agree to certain standards of behaviour.

Alcohol restrictions during the season.

Ways that you will and won't express yourself publicly.

The higher the level of commitment you demand,  
the more seriously you take the activity.

Footballers take football very seriously.

The church doesn't as a whole take Christianity very seriously.

We're too accommodating of low levels of commitment.

But how accommodating is Jesus of lukewarm commitment?

"Then he said to them all:

'Whoever wants to be my disciple

must deny themselves

and take up their cross daily

and follow me.'"

Commitment is about willingness to deny yourself.  
You deny your short term urges  
for the benefit of the long term goal you are committed to.  
The footballer says no  
to the short term urge to have a beer with his mates  
for the benefit of the long term goal of being in top shape for the game.  
The Christian must deny their urges to please themselves  
for the benefit of the goal of living for Jesus.  
So here's a question for you.  
What decisions are you making  
that would be different if you weren't a Christian?  
I hope the list is extensive.  
Jesus describes the process of self denial  
'as taking up your cross'.  
Now Jesus hadn't yet gone to the cross himself,  
so his disciples couldn't have understood  
the full impact of what he was saying.  
But later they would have.  
And we have no excuse.  
It's like saying take up your hangman's noose and follow Jesus.  
It's a symbol that your old life has been put to a violent death  
in order to begin a new life of following Jesus.  
It's hard to think  
of how Jesus could have made his demand for total commitment  
any more forcefully.  
And he says to take up your cross daily.  
This teaching of Jesus is in Matthew, Mark and Luke.  
But only Luke records the word 'daily'.  
So if we don't think about it now, we never will.  
Jesus demands self denial,  
Jesus demands total commitment every day.  
Even AFL footballers are allowed to let their hair down a bit  
in the off season.  
But Jesus expects us to live for him every day.  
There's no day off.  
Which is not to say



that the Christian needs to engaged  
in some kind of Christian activity every day.  
But every activity we are engaged in  
needs to be done for the glory of God.

Jesus continues,

"Whoever wants to save their life will lose it,  
but whoever loses their life for me will save it."

You can surround yourself with the comforts and protections of life.

And you can resist following Jesus,

because you fear that if you follow him

you might lose those comforts and protections.

The sad consequence of that decision is you will lose your life.

The alternative

is that you can relinquish the comforts and protections of life,

and instead resolve to follow Jesus,

and the happy consequence of that decision

is that you will gain eternal life.

It's a paradox.

The person who chases it, loses it.

The person who gives it up for Jesus, gets it anyway.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world,  
and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

Obvious answer to that question.

It's absolutely no good at all.

Vladimir Putin the president of Russia is in charge of a powerful nation.

Once the Soviet Union was the second most powerful nation on earth.

Papers leaked from a Central American law firm, Mossack Fonseca,

indicate that interests associated with Putin

might have \$200B secreted in off shore bank accounts

hidden by shelf companies.

That's a staggering amount of money.

It's about \$1000 for every person in Australia.

Or it's like personally owning BHP 2.5 times.

What good will it do him on judgement day

if he doesn't turn around and follow Jesus?

No good.

He will lose his life.

Jesus continues,

"Whoever is ashamed of me and my words,  
the Son of Man will be ashamed of them  
when he comes in his glory  
and in the glory of the Father  
and of the holy angels."

What's the difference between rejecting Jesus and his words,  
and being ashamed of Jesus and his words?

You can believe Jesus' words and still be ashamed of them.

If you believe them,

but you aren't prepared to go public with your allegiance to Jesus,  
then you are ashamed of him and his words.

Jesus is not accommodating of disciples who are in the closet.

We baptise people as a public declaration of faith in Jesus.

We do it at Jesus' command.

Baptism is not something you do privately.

It's a sign to the world.

Being a Christian is not about belonging  
to an anonymous facebook group under a pseudonym.

Being a Christian is about standing up  
and identifying yourself with Jesus,  
especially when that results in insults or worse.

Then the Son of Man will share his glory with you when he returns.

We prize being easy to get on with.

Being a chilled out good bloke is a high compliment in Australia.

And in some instances we ought to be accommodating.

But on three crucial matters we've looked at today,

Jesus is not very accommodating.

Jesus wants people to recognise who he is.

Near enough is not good enough.

He is the Messiah, God the Son.

He won't accommodate anything less.  
Jesus wants people to get his death and resurrection.  
That's the reason he came to earth.  
Christianity that minimises or bypasses the cross is on the wrong track.  
Jesus wants total commitment from his disciples.  
That means denying the protections and comforts of this life.  
It means doing that every day without fail.  
And it means being public about your allegiance to Jesus.  
Anything else is being ashamed of Jesus  
and will result in him being ashamed of you on judgement day.

Let's express our commitment to our Lord Jesus in prayer.