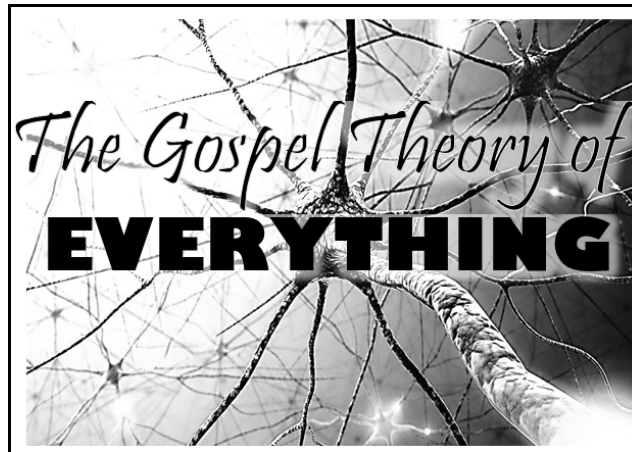


THE GOSPEL THEORY OF EVERYTHING



Scripture:

Psalm 22:23-31

²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. ²⁶The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. ²⁸For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

²⁹To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. ³⁰Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, ³¹and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

Mark 8:31-38

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



THE GOSPEL THEORY OF EVERYTHING

The Academy Awards was a week ago. Did you see the show last Sunday? I loved the movie *The Theory of Everything*. And I was so glad to see the actor who played Stephen Hawking get the Oscar! Eddie Redmayne did such a good job acting as if he had Lou Gehrig's disease. The story was about the life and first marriage of Stephen Hawking, whose PhD dissertation was on the concepts of Space and Time. The movie was about his gradual physical decline with ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) and the effect that had on his work and marriage.

The theory of everything is an illusive concept that scientists seek to understand the common theme in the workings of creation. Ever since the dawn of civilization, people have desired to understand the connections that interweave the universe. Scientists crave knowledge that explains the origin and mathematical order that threads the cosmos together. We yearn to know why we are here and where we came from.

Some believe that the String Theory is the Theory of Everything. In the movie, Stephen Hawking believes that a combination of space-time and Einstein's theory of relativity is the basis of the Theory of Everything. Pretty complicated stuff, right?

WE ARE ALL CONNECTED TO ONE ANOTHER

But if we look at the gospel message, we can see there is a central theme that we can call the Gospel Theory of Everything. And that theory is that we are all connected to one another through God's unconditional grace and love.

Preacher/Pastor David Lose also believes there is a Gospel Theory of Everything, a foundational truth for our lives. He said, "Each and every time we make ourselves vulnerable to the needs of those around us, each time we give ourselves in love to another, each time we

get out of our own self-centered egos and seek not what we want but what the world needs, we come alive, we are uplifted, we experience the glory of God made real in our world."

That's what Jesus means when he invites his disciples, then and now, to take up their cross and follow him because only those who are willing to lose their life out of love will save it. That is what is meant by *For God so loved the World*. That is what is meant by *you gain your life by losing it*.

GIVING OF OURSELVES IN LOVE

Pastor David Lose believes that the gospel of giving of ourselves in love includes sacrifice, denying ourselves and delaying our immediate gratification so as to meet another's needs.

We know deep down that this is true. Each time we provide a genuine need for someone else rather than just satisfying our own wants, we experience a connection to God's glory. We tap into life-giving power. Yet, so much in our culture is designed to make us think that the only thing that matters and the only thing that will bring us peace, security, and happiness is looking out for ourselves by gratifying our immediate desires, whatever they may be.

THE WORLD OF ADVERTISING

This is particularly true in the world of advertising, where so much time, energy, creativity and money is poured into ads that seek to make us feel inadequate in order to induce us to buy something that promises to make us feel better about ourselves.

But here's the thing: those commercials are lies. Sure there are wonderful things out there to buy and enjoy. But not one of them will make us feel complete, or more accepted or loved. The only thing that makes us feel complete, more human and loved is through our connection to God and others and to the community that those connections bring.

Connecting to others in order to fashion and nurture a faith and love centered community requires sacrifice. There's just no getting around it. And the marvelous thing is that when we stop worrying about gratifying our wants and instead look to the

needs among others around us, then it becomes contagious and others start to do the same.

As a result, we find more than we could have ever imagined. We find more life, more joy, more happiness, more acceptance, because we find a whole community looking out for our needs instead of only ourselves, just as we are looking out for the community of persons around us.

**THE MORE WE GIVE,
THE MORE WE RECEIVE**

This, I think, is the Gospel's theory of everything: that the more we give, the more we receive; the more we seek to be a friend, the more friends we gain; and the more we love, the more we are loved.

Leonard Nimoy who famously played Spock on Star Trek died last week. But he was more than Spock. He was a wise man in real life, too. And one of his famous quotes reflects this Gospel Theory of everything. Nimoy said, "The miracle is this: the more we share the more we have."

Sounds simple, right? But we humans easily become fearful and start hoarding. Jesus had to come and do more than teach with his words how to connect in a giving way to others; he lived this way by giving himself out of love for all.

But as this passage describes, self-sacrifice was not what his disciples expected. They still imagined that the secret to life was wealth, strength and power rather than humility and love. And so they interpreted Jesus' miraculous acts as demonstrations of power rather than manifestations of love. So when Jesus described the greatest act of love, giving his life for them and the world, Peter objected. But Jesus was not deterred. He continued on the path of sacrificial love and continued to love his disciples even when they misunderstood him.

Think for a moment to a time in this past week when you experienced the blessing that comes from sacrificial love. Maybe it was when you stopped to help someone in need. Maybe you felt the blessing when you delayed some gratification in order to tend to another person, or when you listened to someone share their heartache. It's just a theory, but if everything you do in your life is in response to God's love, you are living out the purpose for which you were created.
Amen

Benediction:

We were created to prove God's theory of everything. That God is LOVE. And the secret to life is love, a love that is not self-preserving but self-sacrificing. So go out and save your life in the name of Jesus Christ.

**And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more.
Amen**



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