

Title: Inside Out, pt.2  
Text: Hebrews 13.13-14  
Theme: Embracing the reproach of Christ  
Series: Hebrews #58  
Prop Stmt. We follow a rejected, crucified Savior. Expect rejection  
Aim: I aim to call my people to embrace the rejection of the world because of the absolute and complete acceptance that is ours from God through Christ.

Read Text:

One of the finest books on preaching that I have ever read is called, *Between Two Worlds*. The title captures the essence of true preaching and that is to show the connection between the world of the Bible and the world in which we now live. But when we rightly understand the Scriptures, we realize that we live between this world and the one to come. In fact, we interpret the one world through the lens of the other. The problem is, we tend to do it backwards. For example, have you ever heard someone say, “I cannot think of God as Father because my dad was such a nasty person.”? What is that person doing? He/she is looking at the world to come through the lens of this world. Wrong lens! Have you ever been to a funeral where someone says of the deceased, “Well, he is golfing all day now!” Seriously!?! Do you really think that God made you to be satisfied with golf, or bowling, or playing pea-knuckle or doing crosswords, video games or fantasy football?

When you become a follower of Christ, instead of looking at the world to come through the lens of this world, you learn to look at this world through the lens of the world to come. You may hear of a person being accused of being, “so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good”, but quite honestly, I do not think that I have ever met anyone like that – have you? I do not think that it is possible.

On so many levels this text is devastating to contemporary, Americanized, culturally accommodating Christianity. Churches are falling all over themselves in an effort to be cool, hip, trendy and.... But there is a problem. The gospel is not cool. The gospel is offensive. Christ is not accommodating. He demands total surrender, total allegiance, total worship and accepts no compromise. Pick up your cross. Come and die. Sell all that you have. Have no other gods. Let the dead bury the dead. You cannot serve two masters. Christ was not misunderstood. His message was so clear He was killed because of it.

Please notice that Christ tells you the cost up front. (Satan never does.) If you want to be my disciple you need to know the price. Jesus did “evangelism” opposite of how people are told to do it today. Did you ever notice that? People would come to Christ and say, “I want to be your disciple” and he would basically tell them – “No you don’t.” It’s like he tried to talk them out of it. “Are you sure? Do you know what this means? Are you aware of the cost?” Why? He wants people to know up front that following him is the most costly and the most glorious calling in all of life, but few will really do it. Keep this in mind as we look at these two verses because, I am convinced that much of what is done

to reach people with the gospel is not really reaching people because what is being explained is not really the gospel. We are so enamored with size, success, budgets and numerical growth, that we think that if something is large it has to be because God is in it. Therefore, in order to attract more people, we think that we have to water down the message so that it is not as offensive, and not as demanding. Tell people what they want to hear and in turn they will tell you what you want to hear such as: “you are such a great leader, this is such a great church, you have a great way with people....” That stuff is intoxicating and addicting. So, in order to keep the accolades coming and keep people attractive, we now have “happy church.” Everything is happy. Have you noticed that? The problem is, everything is not happy. Life is tough. Life is brutal. Life is raw. But, tough, brutal and raw is not permitted inside of happy church. Therefore, we have to manage everything so that tough, brutal and raw is kept hidden and people only see happy and feel happy and leave happy so they come back to get happy again. It may be “happy” but it is a Disneyland happy, not real happy, not abiding joy.

Recently I was in a section of a hospital where there were mostly elderly people who were in a state of confinement and disability occasioned by the terminal nature of their disease. As I looked about I noticed that many of the personal TV’s were set on the religious broadcasting station that featured non-stop health and wealth “preachers.” It was so incredibly sad. These tired, vulnerable, hurting people are being sold a bill of goods in the promises of your best life now, getting the life that you deserve and unlocking the Bible’s secrets to wealth and success. To hear these people speak, you would think that to follow Christ is the way to getting all of your self-focused desires met. But that is NOT what the text says. Look at v.13

1. **Following Christ is costly.** (13)

“Therefore” – that is, since our Leader, suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify people through his own blood, what kind of life should his followers expect? Therefore...since our Leader’s defining achievement and most notable accomplishment was marked by shame, rejection, embarrassment, loss and ridicule, what should his followers expect? Expect to be cast out.

a. **It means being an outcast.** (13a)

There is probably no greater longing in the human soul, than the longing to be accepted. The longing for acceptance by people is actually rooted in our eternal and infinite need to be accepted by God. This is a weighty statement.

When God established the law in the Old Testament, he set up a system that was designed to warn of a greater need. People who broke God’s law, were at times expelled from the city and cast out from living in the presence of others, in the protection of the city walls and from being able to engage in the worship life of the tabernacle or temple. Being cast out from the people was intended to be a wake-up call that they were in danger of being cast out from God forever. It was also an illustration of our natural spiritual condition before God. Casting a person out was a very serious matter. If a person

committed a crime worthy of being cast out and they were not cast out, then it was obvious that the leaders were not serious about God's law and were guilty of usurping God's law by failing to enforce it. They were in a sense taking away from God's Word. If a leader abused his position and cast someone out simply because he had the power to do so, then the leader was also guilty of usurping God's law by adding to it.

Being cast out was designed to teach people how serious sin is and to protect the rest of the people from being unduly influenced by the sin. Therefore, one who was cast out, was one who was viewed as guilty, defiled and often condemned. Outside the gate or outside the camp was the place where lepers went, where the unclean lived, and where the condemned were executed.

Lev. 24.14, "*Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.*"

Numbers 15.35-36 (referring to a Sabbath-breaker) "*And the LORD said to Moses, 'The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.' And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses.*"

Capital punishment took place outside the camp. Those who were unclean were sentenced to live outside the camp. But, there were times when those who should have been outside the camp were inside the camp and those who were inside the camp were on the outside. Take for example, Exodus 33. The children of Israel had set up an idol in the form of a calf and said that this calf represented God. They did this inside the camp. Four things happened as a result of that idolatry.

- 1) Those loyal to God, (who did not participate in the idolatry) were called upon to discipline and purge from the camp, some of those who did.
- 2) God sent a plague upon the people.
- 3) God said that he would no longer accompany the people, because if he did, they would die.
- 4) God "went outside the camp" where Moses met with him in a tent.

When sin and rebellion defines a people, then the true people of God will find themselves on the outside, looking in. That is where Christ was. Following Christ is costly because....

**b. It means bearing the reproach of Christ. (13b)**

When was Christ popular? He was popular as long as he was feeding the hungry, helping the needy, and healing the sick. If that was all that he did, he would have been enamored, adored, and loved. Christ had a great thing going and had great crowds to prove it. But,

he “messed” the whole thing up when he began to preach about the gospel. Imagine Thaddeus and Bartholomew being in charge of Christ's PR and saying, "Hey Jesus, we test marketed your speech with our focus group and that one liner about hating your father and mother for the sake of following you didn't score real high and we're suggesting that you stop talking about eating your flesh and drinking your blood, 'cause it just complete freaks people out. I mean your polling numbers fell clear off the table on that one."

As long as Christ “lived the gospel” he was loved, but when Christ preached the gospel he was hated. That is critical to understand, because for years the evangelical church has been accused of preaching the gospel but not living the gospel. So, now it is trendy to “do the gospel” by participating in ministries of mercy – which we should do! But, doing the gospel is not a substitute for preaching the gospel, or sharing the gospel, or presenting the gospel.

St. Francis of Assisi famously said, “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.” To which I say, IT IS NECESSARY!!!! You have to preach the gospel. But, like Christ, as long as we do humanitarian things, we will be accepted and approved by others – and that feels good. We like that. We enjoy the accolades and pats on the back by our world. But, when you preach the gospel, then the accusations of narrow-mindedness, arrogance and judgmentalism start flying and quickly we will find ourselves outside the camp of public approval.

You know what I speak of. When you show compassion – which you should, you are appreciated. When you speak the gospel, you risk being scorned.

I was at a funeral home when the daughter of the deceased came up to me and overwhelmed with grief and in front of many others who were there said, “Tell me my daddy is in heaven.” In that moment, I would have loved nothing more than to have been able to assure her that her daddy was with Christ, but there was no evidence that he had ever embraced the gospel and treasured Christ above all. I had no authority to say that. I possess no authority to determine the eternal status of one’s soul. That is not my right. But yet, I wanted this young girl to have comfort. I wanted to be able to console her. I wanted her, in that moment to think of how nice, and compassionate and caring God was, and how nice, compassionate and caring I was. Yes, I wanted her to think well of me. In that moment I did not want to face the despair of this girl, nor the wrath of the people around me if I answered her question based on what I knew. You know what I am talking about. Our minds quickly make the calculations and we figure out in a split second what this is going to cost. But, there it is. “Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.” She wanted me to say “yes.” I was expected to say “yes.” Beliefs do not matter, only that we can make people feel good – right? Isn’t that how our culture thinks? I couldn’t say yes. I knew it. No matter how tempting it was to lie and “ask forgiveness later”, I would have been guilty of disbelieving the gospel. As difficult as it was, I could not throw the gospel under the bus and treat the death of Christ as being irrelevant and sin as being “no big deal.” There is no getting around it. Sin is serious. Life is important and death is final.

I think that God puts us into those situations to help us find out whether or not we really believe the gospel. It is easy to follow Christ as long as it doesn't cost us anything. But, when it doesn't cost us anything, I think many of us wonder whether or not we really get it. That is why we need to really let the message of Hebrews be massaged into the DNA of our church. Persecution is coming, don't run. Pressure is coming, don't be afraid. Prison may be on the horizon for the next generation, be prepared. What happens when you are squeezed? Whatever is on the inside comes out – right? Persecution and pressure reveals what you really are. When the church does not face persecution, she will become shallow and weak.

Several years ago a young man began to attend here with his wife. Over the course of time he came to understand the gospel, the question was, would he believe. It made sense to him, it was different than how he was raised, but he could see it clearly from the Bible. His parents did not like him attending Cornerstone, and made it clear that if he ever got baptized, he was out of the family. For months, he wrestled with it. He could get baptized and never tell them, which of course defeats one of the primary reasons of baptism. The situation was complicated when he and his wife were blessed with a child. Would he have his child baptized? What is it, that he really believed? The cost of identifying himself with the gospel meant that his parents would cut him off. At the time, there was considerable money in that family, so this decision had far-reaching implications. The day finally came, when he like Moses (11.26) “considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.” He publicly identified himself as a follower of Christ by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And, true to their word, he was cut off from the family. For him, it was at the same time the most difficult and most freeing decision that he ever made.

Let me ask you something. What would it be worth to you to know without any hesitation that you are a genuine follower of Christ? What would it be worth to you to know that Christ is yours and you are His and that you are a citizen of His kingdom forever and ever and ever and ever? What would it be worth to you to know that the infinite God of this universe whose promises are true and whose word is final, has declared you to be justified because he considered the death of his Son as the full and final payment for your sin and has credited you with the infinite righteousness of Christ and that nothing in all creation, no power of hell, no scheme of man, not even death itself can ever separate you from his hand? Would that not be the greatest treasure of all? Would that not be the most precious thing in the entire universe? Yes!!

Imagine this. Let's say that someone is selling a piece of land and the only way that you can afford to buy it, is to sell your house, your cars, every piece of furniture, and to cash in your 401K and anything else you may have. You may decide that this piece of land is not worth it, unless you discover that there is an oil deposit underneath the land that has at least 100,000,000,000 barrels of crude. And now, you sell everything that you have in order to get that land. Jesus said in Matthew 13, that the kingdom of heaven is like that. It is worth giving up everything for. If you have to give up the comforts of being accepted – so be it. If you have to give up the comforts of being spoken well of - so be it. If you have

to give up the comforts of being on the inside – so be it. Parents do not tell your children that they can follow Christ and still be cool. Do not raise your children to worship acceptance, respect and coolness. All of that burns up. Like dust in the wind it just blows away. Raise them to worship the only treasure that is worth selling your soul for – and that is Christ.

Some of you know this as an unexpected benefit to a serious diagnosis or to an otherwise distressing situation. You have found, to the delight of your soul, you have found the presence of God in your loneliness, his peace in the midst of your storm. You have found his strength in your weakness. You have found him to be sufficient for your soul. It is like that part of Pilgrim's Progress when Hopeful and Christian are crossing the river (death) to the Celestial City. Christian looks at the waves swirling around and begins to fear crossing, but Hopeful says, "Be of good cheer, I feel the bottom, and it is sound."

In my library are several books by Leon Wood, noted OT scholar who taught for years at Grand Rapids Seminary and whose daughter is Marilyn Kaynor. Dr. Wood was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease and said in the midst of that (and I am paraphrasing), "if the 3 Hebrew boys had never been thrown into the fiery furnace they would have never walked that close to God."

Following Christ is worth it.

## 2. **Following Christ is worth it.** (14)

This verse would have particular meaning to these believers. As Jews they would have a deep affinity for Jerusalem that, for hundreds of years stood as the place where God dwelt with his people. Now, they are not only away from Jerusalem physically, and cast out of Judaism because of their faith in the crucified Messiah, but this letter was probably written only a couple of years, maybe even a few months before the actual fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

### c. **This "city" will not last.**

The cities of this world will not last. The values of this world, the power-brokers, the leaders, the influencers, the money, the prestige, the image, the trends, the influence, the reputations, the records, the comforts, the pleasures, the dazzle, the lights, the toys, the gadgets, the buildings, the cars, and the stuff, is all going down. It will not last. You can sell all that you have in order to gain that which will never endure – and in the end – you will be the fool. But, those who are true followers of Christ are...

### d. **We are citizens of the city that has no end.**

Revelation 21.1-8

On that day, what will you wish that you had lived for on this day? He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.