

It's All About Him XI: An Anthology

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In case you are relatively new here, my first ever sermon here was a message on the centrality of Jesus Christ entitled *It's All About Him*. I remember being so excited the morning of August 3, 1997. That morning I was up early. I went out to breakfast. I went to the Radisson and walked the hallways praying. Then I got to the church around 7:30. Needless to say, I was excited. I spoke from Revelation 5 and the heavenly worship of Jesus because I wanted to make it clear from the beginning that I was going to try to lead our church in a Christ-centered, Christ-loving direction. The next year I gave a message with the same title and main point but different passage of Scripture. Anytime you do something in the church twice in a row it's a tradition, so every year I have given an *It's All About Him* message the first Sunday in August. Today this is *It's All About Him XI*.

Something new this year is these banners. We had them designed and I really like what they say. Do you get it? [There are four main symbols on the banners: The star of Bethlehem, representing Christ's birth; the crown of thorns representing Christ's death on the cross; a sunrise, representing Christ's resurrection; and a crown representing Christ's present and future reign.]

My passage today is the entire Bible. No, this is not going to be a really long message, but it is going to be an anthology message. I looked up *anthology* in the dictionary and it comes from the Latin which means "a gathering of flowers." Picture flowers brought together in a bouquet. That's what we are doing this morning. We are looking back over ten years of preaching ministry and gathering the flowers together in a kind of bouquet message.

This will only include books of the Bible we have studied and not many other series that have been done. Our normal diet here is working through books of the Bible, but we also have done teaching series on contemporary issues and important subjects including:

- *Worship* – A study of corporate worship in the church
- *Buried Treasure* – Stewardship and giving
- *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*
- *Called to Community* – Basis for our small group ministry
- *Christian Liberty* and related issues
- *Beyond These Walls* – Taking the church to the World
- *Theology of Beauty* – A personal favorite!

Today's anthology is a Bible anthology. I am not the first to do this. The most famous sermon ever is the "Sermon on the Mount." But the sermon that most Christians would most love to have heard even more is described in Luke 24:13ff:

At the beginning of this passage, two of the disciples are walking on the road to Emmaus talking about what everyone was talking about when Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them (though he kept them from recognizing Him) and asked them what they were talking about. They were dumbfounded at Jesus' question. It would have been much

like being in Minneapolis this past week and not knowing the I-35W bridge had collapsed! They “fill Him in” on Christ’s death and resurrection.

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

Can you imagine hearing Jesus exposit Himself out of the Old Testament Scriptures? The Incarnate Word explaining the written Word. We could wish the Holy Spirit would have recorded some of this for us, but He didn’t.

Notice that He explained what was said in “ALL” the Scriptures concerning Himself. This entire Bible is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. He only appears in person a few times in the Old Testament, known as *theophanies*. For example, He appeared to Joshua before the battle of Jericho and in Daniel with the three men in the fiery furnace. He is revealed in the Old Testament mostly through symbol, imagery, and prophecy.

The New Testament wasn’t written when Jesus walked this Emmaus road. The New Testament explains the symbol and imagery and prophecy of the Old Testament AND unveils Christ in His incarnation, death, resurrection, and present and future reign. (Remember the banners?)

The result of Jesus’ exposition on the road was this statement by the two disciples after Jesus had gone: *They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Verse 32)*

Their hearts were burning. That’s an interesting statement. Spiritual heartburn. What are they talking about? These were disciples who loved Christ. So as Jesus explained Himself in the Old Testament, their hearts began to warm and even burn with delight and joy and wonder. The teaching word about Christ spiritually worked within them to enflame love for Christ.

This is a model of what pastoral ministry should do. It should clearly teach Jesus (and the rest of the Godhead) from the Bible in order that spiritual love for Christ would be enflamed in the hearts of the congregation. If we love Jesus, teaching about Jesus WILL do this within us. Sadly, this kind of teaching is fairly rare in the church today. Much of what I hear or see in sermon titles is little more than spiritualized self-help messages that could just as easily be heard any day on Oprah. There’s little of Christ in them and if there’s not Christ in it, there’s no heartburn! But preaching about the person and work of our wonderful Savior does something in the heart of the Christian. It burns.

I have tried my best these ten years to make every Sunday an Emmaus road experience for you. Some weeks have been better than others for sure. Not every passage does it as clearly as others. But **all** the Scriptures testify to Christ, so that there isn’t anywhere that I can open this book and not see Him on display in some way.

So in this *It’s All About Him Anthology*, let’s walk through the books of the Bible and gather the flowers, describing where Jesus is found. When we get to a book that we have studied, that will be noted.

A 10 Year Anthology

The Old Testament

Genesis – He is the Ram at Abraham’s altar

Exodus – He is the Passover Lamb **Leviticus**

– He is our Faithful High Priest

Numbers – He is the Bronze Snake who heals

Deuteronomy – He is the City of our refuge

Joshua – He is the Scarlet thread in Rahab’s window (8/97-11/97)

This book is the first series I did here. I asked my ministry mentor Kimber Kauffman, what should I do? He said, “You are going to be overwhelmed with things getting going, so do an Old Testament narrative like Joshua.” So I did. For my first several months, I would secretly go to the church auditorium on Saturday nights and preach my entire message through to an empty room. I stopped doing it because I felt I was getting into the rhythm of preparation and preaching and because I was preaching so hard in my practices that I was losing my voice on Sundays (I still think some of my best messages were only heard by the church mice).

Key verse – *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.* (Joshua 1:8)

Judges – He is our Judge (4/06-7/06)

We studied this book last summer. What we saw was that when God blesses His people, His people over and over again get complacent and compromise with the world around them. It was helpful for us as a church because we have experienced so many blessings from God here at Bethel. What is the greatest danger for us at this stage in our journey? The same temptation - spiritual complacency and pride. What would a complacent church or Christian look like? Israel compromised the Sabbath for other pursuits. They lived for wealth. They served other gods. Judges made us ask, where are we at?

Ruth – He is our Kinsman Redeemer (8/98-9/98)

This is one of my favorite series ever. I have referred to it again and again when counseling people in distress. Chapter 1 ends in complete depression with widows living in poverty and without husbands. A family tree is about to end. But God is sovereign and we see how by chapter 4, the sorrow has turned to joy and from Ruth the Moabite came her grandson King David and eventually, Jesus Christ Himself. If you’re in chapter 1 today, don’t lose heart, God works everything together into chapter 4 good for those that love him.

Samuel – He is our trusted Prophet

Kings & Chronicles – He is our reigning King

Ezra – He is our Faithful Scribe

Nehemiah – He is the Rebuilder of everything that’s broken (4/99-8/99)

This book was important to us for two reasons. One was simply when we did it. You may not realize that we have not always been at this location. In 1998 we had a church that wanted to buy our church building in Merrillville. We had been there 30 years and this was a

major decision. I had only been at the church a year and so it was a major step for all of us to sell and build a new facility. It was one of many examples of Bethel being willing to step out of the comfort zone and walk by faith. We did. So while we built here, we met at Merrillville high school for 72 Sundays. It was while we were there that we studied Nehemiah. Nehemiah is the account of Israel rebuilding the walls and it was so great for us because we would look in Nehemiah and see the people pulling together to accomplish a great task and then we were doing the same - setting up and tearing down. There were all kinds of inconveniences doing church there. But it was so good for us! It got everybody out of our comfort zones and we all had to pitch in just like Israel of old.

The other thing Nehemiah did for us was to look at the expectation the Israelites had to hear God's Word explained in chapter 8. They stood for hours while it was preached. The next day they gathered wanting more. We imagined them chanting before it started, *Bring out the book! Bring out the book!* That became kind of a fun thing for us for a while as people would do that. The lasting thing is the desire to hear God's Word. May that live on.

Esther – He is Mordecai sitting faithful at the gate

Job – He is our Redeemer that ever liveth

Psalms – He is my shepherd, I shall not want

Proverbs & Ecclesiastes – He is Wisdom

Song of Solomon – He is our Beautiful Bridegroom

Isaiah – He is our Suffering Servant

Jeremiah & Lamentations – He is the Weeping Prophet

Ezekiel – He reveals His glory

Daniel – He is the fourth man in the fiery furnace

Hosea – He is my lover forever faithful

Joel – He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit

Amos – He is our Burden Bearer

Obadiah – He is our Savior

Jonah – He is the missionary to the world (1/02-2/02)

I have just a brief comment on this series. One of things that surprised me in moving to Northwest Indiana was the level of racial tension in the community. Jonah was a racist and he only wanted his kind of people to receive God's grace. What an important lesson for us as we minister in of the most diverse communities in the country. God doesn't discriminate with His grace and love and neither should we.

Micah – He is the Messenger with beautiful feet

Nahum – He is the Avenger

Habakkuk – He is the Watchman praying for revival

Zephaniah – He is the Lord mighty to save

Haggai – He is the Restorer of our lost heritage

Zechariah – He is our Fountain

Malachi – He is the Son of righteousness

The New Testament

Matthew – He is the Christ, son of living God

Mark – He is the Servant of the Lord (4/00-11/01)

This was the longest series I've done; 19 months. How great it was to just study Jesus. The key verse here is Mark 10:45, *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" Greatness in the kingdom is service. We studied how Christ died in graphic detail. And I made up a word that means a lot to me and has become a part of our vernacular at Bethel. *Oblitunity*. It's obligation and opportunity - when what I have to do is what I want to do. The Christian life is duty, but it must also be a delight. The greatest commandment (obligation) is our greatest opportunity to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Luke – He is the Son of Man

John – He is the Door through which we must enter

Acts – He is the shining light on Saul

Romans – He is our Justifier

1 Corinthians – He is our resurrection

2 Corinthians – He is our Sin Bearer

Galatians – He redeems us from the curse of the law

Ephesians – He is our unsearchable riches

Philippians – He is our joy (2/02-11/02)

This book is filled with *It's All About Him* theology. From Paul's statement in 1:21 that for him *to live is Christ and die is gain* to 3:8 saying that all he had in life he counted as rubbish in comparison to knowing Christ, we asked ourselves, can we say that? Is Jesus that valuable to me that all the other things in my life are, in comparison, rubbish to me? Then we marveled at chapter 2's description of His humiliation. Being in very nature God, but not viewing that as something to be held on to, He humbled Himself and became a man, and not just a man, but a servant, and not just a servant, but He died willingly on the cross. God exalted Him in the resurrection and gave Him the name above every name, *Jesus Christos Kyrios*. Jesus Christ is Lord. Wonderful!

Colossians – He is the fullness of Godhead in bodily form

Thessalonians – He is the soon coming King

Timothy – He is the Mediator between God and man (3/03-12/03)

Some very practical application came from 1 Timothy including the role of women in the church and the plurality of elders as shepherds over the flock as well as other teachings which we have tried to apply around here.

Titus – He is our Blessed Hope (8/98-12/98)

Philemon – He is the Friend that sticks closer than a brother

Hebrews – He is the blood of the everlasting covenant (8/04-1/06)

Hebrews may be my most difficult and favorite series of all. It is about Christ from the first verse to the last. We spent 17 months on it and much like Jesus' Emmaus road message, we learned through the Old Testament imagery the glory of the New Covenant that Jesus established as our prophet, priest, and king. We also learned that the Christian life is a journey that begins and ends in faith and that true saving faith will persevere because God has guaranteed that He will keep us saved.

James – He is the Lord who heals the sick (10/06-7/07)

Since we just finished this series last week, for the sake of time, we'll move on.

Peter – He is our Chief Shepherd

John – He is the tenderness of love

Jude – He is the Lord coming with 10,000 saints (1/00-3/00)

Revelation – He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

This whole book is about Jesus from cover to cover - even the maps. *It's All About Him* "so that in everything He might have the supremacy." (Colossians 1:18) As the centrality of Christ in Scripture is taught and proclaimed, God's people learn and apply Christ-centered truth in their lives and their lives become increasing Christ-focused and Christ-pleasing. That is the role of the teaching ministry of the church - to point you to Him.

We say it this way, *You are what you eat*. I desire our diet around here to be *All About Him*. *All About Him* preaching leads to *All About Him* churches filled with *All About Him* people living *All About Him* lives. We have come a long way and we have a long way to go. I am just thankful to have been on the journey with you. I wrote a love letter that is in today's bulletin. I can summarize all that I say there by just saying, I love you. Thanks for the privilege of doing ministry with you these 10 years. May our years ahead be even more *All About Him*.

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