

***The Five Great Truths of Life***  
***“I Am Selfish” \* December 7, 2008***

I. A review of last week’s talk

II. “Man, the world ain’t supposed to work like this.”

A. Examples of how messed up things are:

B. What does every religion, worldview and philosophy assume?

C. What are some of the explanations for why the world is screwed up?

1. Darwinists say human evolution hasn’t come \_\_\_\_\_ enough.

2. Freud, et al, says we’re dysfunctional and need \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Educators say the problem is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Existentialists say we need to grab hold of personal \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Socialists say we’re too free and need government to be \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Marxists say if only people had economic \_\_\_\_\_ utopia would arrive.

7. And what’s the Christmas story’s explanation?

III. A Quick Test: I believe that humans are basically...

GOOD \_\_\_\_\_

BAD \_\_\_\_\_

IV. The Truth of the Matter

A. There is \_\_\_\_\_ in us. In what way?

B. But God’s image in us is now like a broken mirror, meaning what?

C. What did Jesus say about us?

V. When confronted with the world’s badness, why shouldn’t I be too quick to say, “I would never do that. That’s not me.”?

MAYBE THE TRUTH IS THAT I’M NOT SO MUCH GOOD AS \_\_\_\_\_.

VI. The essence of selfishness

A. I make an idol out of \_\_\_\_\_.

B. Is there a difference between self-idolatry and self-love?

C. So how exactly does Jesus ‘save me from my sin’?

***"There Is A River"***  
***by Jars of Clay***

There is a river that washes you clean  
There is a tree that marks the places you've been  
Blood that was spilled, although not your own,  
For all of your tears, are the wages for things you have done  
And all of those nights  
Spent alone in the darkness of your mind  
Give it up, Let it go  
These are things you were never meant to shoulder

There is a river that washes you clean  
There is a tree that marks the places you've been  
Blood that was spilled, although not your own  
For all of those tears, love will atone

So, give up the right  
To control the waves that empty out your life  
Above wild skies  
Are the rays that break the shadows we design  
Give it up, let it go  
These are things you were never meant to shoulder  
Give it up, let it go

There is a river that washes you clean  
There is a tree that marks the places you've been  
Blood that was spilled, although not your own  
For all of those things, love will atone

I know the world can turn in different ways  
Most of the time, we're simply hanging on  
And under the signs of how we all behave  
We might find the place where we belong

There is a river that washes you clean  
There is a tree that marks the places you've been  
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For all of those nights, that you cried all alone  
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***The Five Great Truths of Life***  
***"I Am Selfish" \* December 7, 2008***

I. *A review of last week's talk*

II. *"Man, the world ain't supposed to work like this."*  
A. *Examples of how messed up things are:*

**The Bristol Historical Society sets out a hundred Christmas trees to sell for a fundraiser and some moron or morons comes along and clips the top off of most of the trees. *The world ain't supposed to work like this.* 2,000 idiots burst through the doors of a Walmart and trample to death an employee who just got the job for the holidays. Many of them just stepped over the man lying there on the ground in obvious distress, and then many more grumbled when officials closed the store because of it. *The world ain't supposed to work like this.* You're sitting in a luxury hotel in Mumbai, India one minute, the next minute you're on the floor hiding beneath tables as a bloodbath breaks out around you. *Everything's supposed to be different than what it is here.* You go on vacation, and it's not enough to make sure you've turned the thermostat down, and checked to see that the oven is off and the toilets aren't leaking; you also have to make sure you have your lights on timers, and outside motion tracker lights working, and the mail stopped and a neighbor keeping an eye on things. *Why does it have to be this way?***

B. *What does every religion, worldview and philosophy assume?*

**It's assumed that something is wrong with the world. And everyone agrees with that assumption. Nobody says, "This world is perfect. Nothing needs to change." Everyone knows it's screwed up somehow.**

C. What are some of the explanations for why the world is screwed up?

1. Darwinists say human evolution hasn't come **far** enough.
2. Freud, et al, says we're dysfunctional and need **therapy**.
3. Educators say the problem is **we're ignorant**.
4. Existentialists say we need to grab hold of personal **freedom**.
5. Socialists say we're too free and need government to be **stronger**.
6. Marxists say if only people had economic **security** utopia would arrive.

7. And what's the Christmas story's explanation?

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, and says to him – Verse 20 – “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to son, and you are to give him the name Jesus [which mean's by the way *The Lord saves*], because....” [listen up, everyone, pay close attention; the Christmas story is about to weigh in on what's wrong with the world] “...because he will save his people from their sins.” The Christmas story's explanation for why things are messed up? Great Truth of Life #2 – I am selfish. Sinful.

III. A Quick Test: I believe that humans are basically...

GOOD\_\_\_

BAD\_\_\_

IV. The Truth of the Matter

A. There is **goodness** in us. In what way?

We are created 'in the image of God' we Christians say. We're not mere animals. We can go far beyond animals in showing compassion and empathy and love. The best my cat can do is come up on my belly and go...I can do better than that. Ty Pennington brought his Home Improvement crew back into Connecticut this week, rebuilding a home for a woman whose husband and eldest son died a year ago. That's cool. That's human nature at its best. There is somewhat a reflection of God in us.

B. But God's image in us is now like a broken mirror, meaning what?

Looking at a human being now, it's usually not the reflection of God we see. It's usually something far uglier. And we are capable of going far beyond animals in the other direction. Animals kill, but only humans murder. Animals copulate, but only humans lust, and commit adultery. Animals fight for territory and pecking orders, but only humans take prideful pleasure in tearing down others so they look good. Animals steal, but only humans cheat. Animals commit acts of violence; only humans commit acts of evil. The goodness we are capable of is swallowed up by a greater tendency inside our hearts to do what is wrong. And that's what's diabolical about us.

C. What did Jesus say about us?

He said in Matthew 7:11 – “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him.” He says it without batting an eye. He said in Luke 18:19 – “No one is good but God alone.” As Jesus' popularity grew in the early days of his earthly ministry, John 2:24 said something interesting. “But Jesus would not entrust himself to them [to those who were so enthusiastic in singing his praises] for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.”

V. *When confronted with the world's badness, why shouldn't*

*I be too quick to say, "I would never do that. That's not me."?*

The Christmas story is here to say to us, "Are you so sure about that?" The Christmas story is here to remind us that the infection is in us all. Maybe the infection in you might not show itself in an act of vandalism or an act of terrorism, though I have to ask myself, "If I grew up in the same conditions, in the same homes, in the same environment as those who did this, what might I be capable of?" Just a mere sixty years ago, ordinary members of a western European Christian culture, not all that different from you and me – pharmacists and teachers and pastors and machinists and artists and store clerks – quickly learned to listen to the rantings of a madman in their midst, and they went along with it as he began rounding up Jews and minorities and the elderly and the handicapped, and they said nothing as sinister smokestacks began to belch out the ashen remnants of the millions he murdered. You would be different, you insist. How do you know? Who knows what might happen when you're supposed goodness has some heat applied to it.

MAYBE THE TRUTH IS THAT I'M NOT SO MUCH  
GOOD AS UNTESTED.

VI. *The essence of selfishness*

A. *I make an idol out of me.*

**I will do everything in my power to make sure that my *self* is safe, is secure, is happy, is well-liked, is never threatened, or thought ill of, or looks bad, or admits weakness, or is vulnerable, or needs help, especially from God. Self-idolatry is the epitome of sin, and rebellion against God its highest expression.**

B. *Is there a difference between self-idolatry and self-love?*

**Self-love is normal and necessary. We're to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies. We are to take care of ourselves, and nurture ourselves. Pete Scazzero points out that Jesus was not *self-less*. He had a very strong sense of self, and who he was and what he came to do, and what his boundaries were. He fed himself, he rested**

**properly, he allowed his self to express emotion freely, he could work hard, and play hard, he loved to be alone with God and loved being with people, going to parties, and all without compromising himself. Jesus was the most balanced, whole and healthy person who has ever walked the earth. He's the perfect model for how a human ought to live. Self-love is fine. Self-idolatry is the problem, and is what lies at the heart of sin.**

C. *So how exactly does Jesus 'save me from my sin'?*

**Jesus came to save us from our sins. Save us from the dictatorship of the self. How did he do that? What's the way out of this mess? There is a doorway to freedom, and to forgiveness, and to a new life. That doorway is the cross on which Jesus Christ died. It's the main reason Jesus was born into the earth in the first place. This *Jars of Clay* song spells out what difference this makes.**

*"There Is A River"*  
*by Jars of Clay*

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