

August 9, 2015

INTRO:

Ayn (eye-n (pine)) Rand

*Has a large and devoted following in America and continues to be a best seller in countries like India...some of her books have been made into movies...29 million copies have been sold.

*In 1992 a Library of Congress and Book of the month club survey showed that one of her books (Atlas Shrugged) was the second most influential book, after the Bible in the lives of the respondents.

*She was born in Russia in 1905 and died in NY in 1982.

*She was a determined, outspoken, atheist.

*If you love her work, that's okay...I want to simply make a point about her basic worldview and how it contrasts with that of Christ.

*I'm going to do that by contrasting some of her quotes with those of CS Lewis...a Christian she had a particular hatred for.

*She called him a "monstrosity", and a "cheap, awful, miserable, touchy, social-meta-physical mediocrity"

*Why?

*Maybe it bothered her that so many of his books have been sold (200 million)...just kidding.

*Probably because his writing, thinking, and life could not have been any different than hers.

*Rand invented a philosophical system she called: "Objectivism"

*"By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man--every man--is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose." Rand

*Contrast that with Lewis:

*"human history is....the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy." Lewis

*"Why is it good to make others happy, it is good to make others happy when and if those others mean something to you selfishly." Rand

*Contrast with Lewis

*"Nothing you have not given away will ever really be yours." Lewis

*Of course not everything Rand wrote or believed is wrong...anymore than everything Lewis wrote or believed was right.

*But her worldview was...upside down...it was based on herself, centered on herself.

*In her epistemology(how we know, basis for knowledge) she considered all knowledge to be based on sense perception.

*We can only know what we can validate with our senses.

*But her idea that all knowledge is based on sense perception is not based on sense perception...so she is self-refuting.

*I'll give you one more Lewis quote to demonstrate why Rand missed the larger picture of the world as it is.

*"As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man(woman) is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you."
Lewis

*Today we will look at how Jesus' view of the world was upside down (right side up) from most of the world he lived in...and from the world we live in.

*His is a view that sees God as the end (not man) and relationship with him our highest good and serving others, not self as the path to happiness.

Mark 9:30 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples.

*Jesus didn't go back into Galilee for more public ministry, those days were behind him.

*He went to Galilee to find privacy in order to focus his training on the twelve.

*His plan to change the world was to invest in a few people and then lay down his life.

He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

*Peter had argued with Jesus the first time he told them he would die.

*But no arguments this time, just continued confusion...they still don't get it.

*You might say "What's to get? Its not complicated... he said he's going to die and be raised from the dead...that's what happened...come on!"

*It's always humorous when we respond to a question with "Oh that's easy"

*Every question is easy if you know the answer...and hard if you don't.

*We likely grew up with at least some exposure to the facts of the gospel, so the concept is not surprising.

*In addition the events of Jesus' life on earth are in our past...so for us, the Lord's comments make sense.

*Not everyone agrees with them, but they are understandable.

*These guys grew up thinking something totally different about how God would choose to bring salvation and what that salvation would look like.

*So it's not entirely surprising that what Jesus said continued to be confusing.

*We should be patient with these guys...it's very likely we have also some ideas of how God operates that are incorrect.

*And these wrong ideas bring us confusion when life doesn't turn out like we expected it to...when God doesn't do things as we expected he would.

*How often when difficulty comes to our lives do we immediately wonder "What did I do wrong?" "How have I offended God?"

*As if the way the world works is, "Karma"

*"If I'm good God will keep trouble from me...therefore all trouble means, I've offended God."

*So we can give these guys a break for having a less than complete picture of how God operates.

*Jesus had been teaching in parables for a long time...

*So now they are probably looking for some hidden meaning in his straightforward talk.

*Most Jews of the time would have believed in a resurrection of the righteous at the end of the present age, but they didn't know what he was talking about when he said he "after three days he would rise."

*What in the world was that supposed to mean...is this another of his crazy parables...what is the hidden meaning in this?

*But no one had the courage to ask.

1. Perhaps they didn't even know what to ask...sometimes we don't even know what the questions are.

2. Perhaps they didn't want to look stupid (we can all empathize with that can't we?)

*Whatever the reason for their fear...it soon becomes clear why they were unable to understand the Lord's remarks.

*It's clear in the fact that they choose to occupy themselves with a question that was much more interesting to them than the death and resurrection of the Messiah...namely...

*Which one of them was the greatest?

33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

*No doubt Jesus knew what they are arguing about but he often brought truth to light with questions.

*Like God in the garden of Eden asking Adam and Eve "Where are you?"

*Of course God knew their geographic location...he was asking a question that would lead them to truth discovery.

*The disciples were immediately embarrassed by his question...so they kept quiet.

*Its not surprising they were unable to understand what the Lord was trying to say to them when they were consumed with themselves.

*Particularly when he was communicating...sacrifice.

*I can imagine it would be hard for the truth of the gospel (suffering, death, sacrifice for others) to sink into the heads of men arguing about their own greatness.

*In their minds they had hitched their wagons to the star of stars...the Messiah...they are on their way up.

*Now, he keeps talking about gloomy things...being betrayed, outcaste by the powers that be, suffering and death.

*They are thinking..."We don't want to hear this, we don't want to understand this...lets talk about something more interesting...I know, let's talk about **us**."

*This had to be exasperating...I would think Jesus would be ready to get rid of this bunch and start over.

*Not so, instead he assumed the position of a Jewish rabbi, he sat down and he declared "class in session."

*Because these men were his plan; his only plan...to change the world.

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” 36 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

*The master teacher begins his instruction with a revolutionary principle...what is to most of the world, an absurd idea.

"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and servant of all."

*"What? That doesn't even make sense, if you are the very last clearly you aren't first."

- *"And if you are first, you are the best...and if you are the best...you are **being** served, not doing the serving."
- *Not so Jesus says...in fact reality is the opposite of the norms of man.
- *Then Jesus uses a visual aid...he takes a little child into his arms.
- 37 "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."**
- *Sweet picture of Jesus holding this child and telling them what true greatness looks like.
- *I am quite sure Jesus didn't snatch this kid up, crying...and use him as a prop.
- *My well grounded assumption is this child was hanging out next to Jesus on his or her own volition...the pure in heart, drawn to the purest in heart.
- *They are likely back in Peter or Andrew's home...maybe this is one of their children.
- *Jesus may be the only adult who was paying attention to the child.
- *If he had been in the home before, which was likely...this child had already gotten a hug from Jesus, probably a story, maybe some play time with him.
- *There is no way Jesus was in a home with a child and did not show love to the child like a child wants to be loved.
- *However in that society apart from normal family affection...children were nobody, no prestige, no power, nothing to be gained from them...so adults would not pay attention to them.
- *You see how Mark has placed all this in context.
- *Jesus says he is going to suffer and die"
- *The disciple's response is "I don't get it."
- *"But let's talk about who is the greatest among us"
- *"Then Jesus teaches them about true greatness as he loves a small child."
- *This is about polar opposites...the most extreme form of **selflessness** (laying down his life for others) and his disciple's blatant selfishness.
- *Jesus says that putting others first, all others...starting with a mere child...means that we are putting Him first.
- *Its likely this child was forgotten by all except Jesus...they were all focused on their own greatness and then their embarrassment about having been discovered talking about their own greatness.

*Meanwhile, the great one, who is able to be aware of the child because he is not centered on himself...calls the child to himself and hugs them.

*It's hard to over estimate how profound of a reversal this was and is.

*Their world and our world is a world of jockeying for position...what can I get from you, how can you serve to my advantage.

*A world of convincing others of my own worth and brilliance, a world of self-marketing, and optics... how do I look?...rather than who am I'm becoming?

*I spent some time with a man who had not been a part of a church but had been very competitive in the business world.

*After several meetings together he said "I've finally figured out why you are asking questions about my life."

*"Oh?" I said, Surprised that he would need to figure that out, I thought it was self-evident.

*He said, "You want to get to know me."

*I admit; I was a bit surprised that he was saying this like it actually had some news value.

*I said, "Yes, that right, but why is that odd to you?"

*He said; "In my world there is only one reason to try and get personal information about someone and it's in order to be able to use that information to your own advantage, to gain some control over others."

*Sad, but in fact...that is a much more common approach in the world at large than is the approach of Jesus...to put the interests of others first.

*Here in the passage and in fact in all of his life...Jesus is clearly unconcerned with what anyone thinks of him...he is not playing for any crowd...ever.

*Jesus is always being Jesus...unconcerned with looking a certain way.

*Here in this narrative we see...

*Jesus, the truly great one, in a room full of self-proclaimed great ones paying attention to themselves...while he is paying attention to a child.

*Then he looks at them and says..."This is how you pay attention to God."

*This is not just about children being important (and they are)...it is about seeing the world as it really is, as God has designed it...as God has designed us.

Application:

*What are some implications/applications for us?

*Of course the obvious and ongoing application of Mark's gospel is the gospel itself...the necessity for and the reality of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sin.

*This is..."The" application of the gospel of Mark.

*It is the point of Mark's writing it...and the centerpiece of human history.

*Let's go back to Ayn (pine) Rand

*From a 1964 interview..."According to the Christian mythology, he (Christ) died on the cross not for his own sins but the sins of the non-ideal people. In other words, a man of perfect virtue was sacrificed for men who are vicious and who are expected or supposed to accept that sacrifice. **If I were a Christian, nothing could make me more indignant than that:** the notion of sacrificing the ideal to the non-ideal, or virtue to vice. And it is in the name of that symbol that men are asked to sacrifice themselves for their inferiors."

*No. Mrs Rand, if you were a Christian, a man of perfect virtue sacrificing for non-ideal men would not make you indignant...it would make you worship.

*Because you and I are those non-ideal people that the man of perfect virtue sacrificed for.

*Look at what Paul said about her and others who see as she did.

1Cor. 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

George Bernard Shaw (Irish playwright winner of a Nobel and an Oscar, no fan of Christianity)...in his will he wrote that no one should imply that he accepted the beliefs of any specific religious organization, and that no memorial to him should "take the form of a cross or any other instrument of torture or symbol of blood sacrifice."

*The cross of Christ is folly to many, but to us...nothing is more precious...it is the wisdom of God.

1Cor. 1:20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

*So the largest application of this passage today is the gospel itself.

*The life, death, resurrection of Jesus is the centerpiece of human history...to miss this is the miss the point not just of this passage, or Mark...but of life itself.

*What else can we take to heart from this passage?

1. People were (are) his plan.

*To quote Robert Coleman in his great book "Master Plan of Evangelism"... "Men were his method"

*Jesus gave the bulk of his life to training of twelve men.

*In addition he made some extra investment in three of these twelve.

*His plan then, his plan now, is to use us to impact the world.

*To be people who know and love God and make God's love known to others.

*We are to be people who do know God, who do love him...and then in a variety of ways...invest our lives in others for the gospel

*Yes, Mrs. Rand...we are called to sacrifice our lives for others...but here is where you are confused.

*"We do not sacrifice ourselves for our inferiors."

*Only Christ did that...we cannot.

*We have no inferiors...we are all inferior to Christ and equal in our need for him.

*This brings to our second thought for consideration.

2. People were his plan and yet his people are often the largest barrier to the gospel.

*"In truth there was only one Christian and he died upon the cross." Nietzsche

*Christianity might be a good thing," George Bernard Shaw used to say, "If anyone ever tried it."

*Os Guinness wrote that in his view hypocrisy is second only to the problem of evil and suffering in terms of reasons people "duck the challenge of the gospel."

*Here's my point...if we are his plan...he has a poor plan...because look at us!

*Of course he doesn't have a poor plan...he is brilliant...so how are we to look at this?

*First, the truth does not depend on our ability to defend it or live it.

*There is an important difference between the source of a truth claim and the standard by which that claim is measured.

*If the whole world proclaimed Christ and lived consistently in line with his teaching...that would not make the gospel true...just popular.

*If no one in the world believed or lived the Christian life that would not make the gospel false...just unpopular.

*Truth is truth independent of our own personal beliefs or actions.

*It's why Paul said in **2Cor. 4:5** **For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord"**

*Truth is independent of us.

*But wait, we are not off the hook because he went on to say...

"and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

*Jesus said, **John 13:35** **"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

*So clearly truth does not depend on us...however we can certainly make the truth appear more or less real and compelling by our lives.

***Let's get specific...**

1. To point people to Jesus, is to proclaim him not self.

*No one has ever seriously accused Jesus of hypocrisy...even if we are, he never was or is.

*So we must not, like the disciples, proclaim our own greatness.

*We must point to, and proclaim the greatness of Christ.

2. Aren't People going to look to us to measure the credibility of what we proclaim.

*Yes...truth does not depend on us...but we do make it appear more or less credible.

***We feel this tension acutely...**

*Like the 19th century author, pastor Robert Murray M'Cheyne (Mak shayn)...when he was being praised for his saintliness replied..."Madam if you could see in my heart you would spit in my face."

*This can be overdone...where ever compliment is deflected with a humility that starts looking like "I am very proud of how humble I am."

*But maybe for you it not just in your heart, but in your actions that you believe you have been a hypocrite.

*Jesus took the word used exclusively for actors in a play and turned it permanently into something negative...hypocrite.

*Pretending, acting like you are someone or something that you are not.

*What are we to do with this?

*We are his plan, yet we are often the greatest barrier for people.

1. Understand that imperfection is not hypocrisy.

*You are not announcing that you have "arrived" when you proclaim Christ to others; you are announcing your greatest need was met by Jesus.

*In addition you are announcing that your need for him continues.

*We are sharing our need when we share Christ...not our own greatness

*In our recent past in America culture it has often appeared that the gospel proclamation is an announcement of how...great my life is, my marriage is, children are, my morality is, my church is, my ideas are, my political party is AND...

*An announcement of how messed up the rest of you are.

*So...if you will only think, dress, talk, act, drive, live, vote...like I do...you will have as perfect of a life as I do.

*This approach has been discredited...rightly so.

*It is not the gospel.

*It has never been compelling.

*We proclaim the greatness of Christ...we must never be like his disciples were on that day ...When he was telling them of the gospel...his impending death and resurrection...they were busy arguing about who among them was the greatest.

2. Focus your attention on him, not self or "Playing for the crowd"

*In a real sense the pressure is off for us...we do need to perform, or pretend to be what we are not...Jesus has accepted us.

*We can come off the stage and enter into real life with real people.

*Jesus is changing us...we do not need to be hypocrites (pretenders)...even though we are still messes.

*** 2Cor. 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

*Our focus is not on how "we appear"...what "image" are we projecting...that's what's called "optics"...image management.

*Our attention is on Jesus and who we are becoming...we want to love him, to know him and to reflect him.

*When this is happening and we are growing, failing, confessing, growing...someone may accuse us of being hypocrites...but we are not.

*Because this is no religious game for us...we are not "play acting" for the watching world.

*The remedy for hypocrisy is not perfection in our hearts and actions...but to be people who remain imperfect and are learning to who care most about what Jesus thinks of us.

*Jesus, the perfect one showed us how its done.

*He did not perform for the crowds; he was too busy loving them.

SMALL GROUP NOTES August 9, 2015

Intro:

*Discuss the gospel. The life, death, resurrection of Jesus. The fact that this was the perfect man, God in flesh, dying for imperfect people.

*Then discuss why this has often looked foolish, silly, or even wicked to people.

Read:

Mark 9:30 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, **31** because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” **32** But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” **34** But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Mark 9:35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Mark 9:36 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, **37** “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Discuss:

1. Why did the disciples find it so hard to understand the Lord's straightforward instructions?
 2. What can you imagine the disciples discussion of their own greatness looked like? What would their arguments and comparisons have been composed of?
 3. Discuss the absurdity of this situation. God in human form was discussing his own impending suffering and his students were arguing over their greatness.
 4. What does it mean "If anyone wants to be first he must be last"?
- *For example it doesn't mean we shouldn't try to win at a card game. What does it mean?

5. Of course children were important to Jesus, but his main point in verse 37 was not to teach that children matter. What was his main point?

6. Jesus' strategy for reaching the world was: a. Invest in a small group of people. b. Die for the sins of the world.

*From what you know of the gospel and how change happens...discuss this strategy. Why is the only one that could work?

Apply:

1. Jesus' strategy for changing the world was to invest in the lives of others. What is your own investment strategy for the gospel?

-If you feel like you are not making key investments in others, what are the main barriers in your life?

-How can your small group help with this?

2. Do you feel like a hypocrite? Do you feel like you are sometimes or often "play-acting" in regards to your faith? Do you ever feel like your actions, attitudes, words are at odds with your faith?

-How can your group help you with a "life/confession alignment"?

-What are some ways you can shift your focus from "playing for the crowd" to "paying more attention to Jesus" and "loving others"?

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK

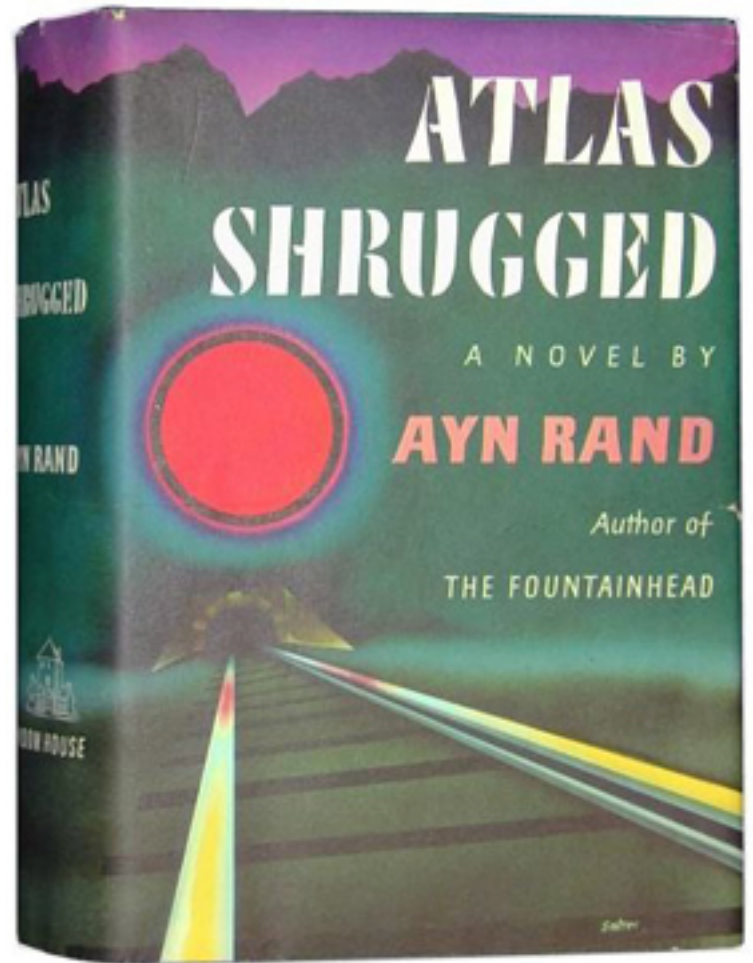


Mark 9:30-37

**“FOR EVEN THE
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MARK 10:45

J. STILL



"By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man--every man--is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose."

Rand

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**"All knowledge is based on sense
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**But this "knowledge" is not based on
sense perception.**

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37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

**Mark's main application of his Gospel is
"The Gospel"**

"According to the Christian mythology, he (Christ) died on the cross not for his own sins but the sins of the non-ideal people. In other words, a man of perfect virtue was sacrificed for men who are vicious and who are expected or supposed to accept that sacrifice. If I were a Christian, nothing could make me more indignant than that: the notion of sacrificing the ideal to the non-ideal, or virtue to vice. And it is in the name of that symbol that men are asked to sacrifice themselves for their inferiors."

Rand

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Shaw

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"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:35

**Point people to Jesus...we announce his
greatness not our own.**

In reality people will still look at us to measure the credibility of our claims.

"Imperfection is not hypocrisy"

"Continue to focus on him, not self."

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

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