

Why Preaching Judgment Is Wrong

In episode 10 of my new series, Questions With God, I ask the question, “What is the best way to preach the gospel?” (See attached video for a free clip) I was faced with his question while on tour with my movie, *Holy Ghost Reborn*. We were in Nashville for a showing at Rocketown, and I was sitting in the green room waiting for showtime when some friends came in and told me there were picketers outside. Well that sounded exciting! I’ve never had picketers before, so I decided to go meet them.

I walked outside and immediately heard them on the other side of the building. They were on their blowhorn and were shouting at everyone standing in line waiting go get in. They had signs announcing the fires of hell as well as pictures of aborted fetuses (there must be a picketer kit available, so you can have all your bases covered no matter what you’re picketing), and they were just causing all kinds of angst for the people still in line. So I walked up to the guy on the blowhorn and extended my hand.

“Hi, I’m Darren.”

He looked at me, then down at my hand, then back at me. His smile was not friendly. And he wouldn’t shake my hand.

“I know who you are. You’re lying to people.”

I was genuinely curious about this accusation, so I took the bait.

“How am I lying to them?” I asked.

“You’re not telling them that unless they turn from their sins they’re going to burn in hell.”

And right there, we found our impasse. Keep in mind the gulf between us isn't found in our theology—I wholeheartedly agree that Jesus is the only way to the Father, and if you don't follow Him you will spend eternity apart from Him, which, fires or not, will be a true hell. No, where we parted ways was in which approach we were choosing to introduce people to Jesus. He wanted to talk about consequences. I prefer to talk about acceptance. He wanted me to start using fear as a ministry tool, whereas I much prefer to use love.

My life was forever changed when I met Jesus face to face. It's not something I have ever shared publicly, and I don't know if I ever will to be honest. It was a moment between us, and some moments are so precious and so intimate that to invite others into them almost seems inappropriate. But while the details of that encounter will remain private for the time being, I can tell you one part of it. At one point, Jesus took my face and turned it to His. When I looked directly into the eyes of Jesus for the first time in my life, I did not see anger. I did not see wrath. I didn't see judgment or even an ounce of frustration. All I saw was love. Endless, rolling hills of love. You guys, it's all He is—pure, spotless love.

What's the best way to preach the gospel? I'm beginning to think that may be the wrong question. That question implies that there are different versions of the gospel, when in fact there is only one. Jesus loves you. Jesus died for you. Jesus wants to change you, make you into the person you were always intended to be. To focus on what's coming is to miss the point entirely. Jesus isn't fire insurance for some future event. He is now. He is present in your circumstances and your life right here. When asked to describe Himself in Exodus 3:14, God's answer was telling.

I Am.

He is indeed.