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Get Real

John 6:11-29

Peter Hiatt @ The Sanctuary Downtown

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[Justin plays “King Herod’s Song”]

That was “King Herod’s Song” from *Jesus Christ, Superstar*.

Herod was the King of the Jews. He didn’t know quite what to do with Jesus. People said Jesus was a King, but Jesus didn’t look like a king. Not a real king in the real world.

(Opening prayer)

For the first 10-12 years of my pastorate, I was a youth pastor. So, I’ve spent a lot of time taking kids on retreats ... away from the “real world,” as we would say.

At the end of each annual retreat at Ponderosa Lodge, in the hills above Santa Cruz, we always had a time for testimonies. It would start slow and then get amazing:

High School kids would stand up and talk about their new faith in Jesus.

Some would share thoughts of suicide, but how they now had hope.

One girl shared how she’d been abused, but now she knew God’s Love.

Crying, hugging, sobbing, laughing ... Faith, Hope, and Love.

Then, invariably, one of the middle-aged adult counselors would stand up and say, “Well, this is wonderful, but what difference will your faith make when you get back to the Real World?”

And we know well what that means:

“How will your faith enable you to do the work of God?” ... In the “real world” where they lived...

Middle-age is a coming to terms with this world.

1. What difference will your faith make when you have to feed your family? How is it relevant economically?
2. How is it relevant politically, to issues like foreign policy and war?
3. What difference does your faith make to the environment: global warming, hurricanes, the storms of this world?

“What’s your faith good for in the real world?”
“What works will your faith produce **in reality?**”

What’s reality?

[Movie Clip – ET]

I love that clip from ET. Elliot says, “This is reality, Gregg.”
How does he know?

Adults think they know what’s real. But ironically, only Elliot really knows what’s real ... the real ET. All the adults are so afraid of ET, and afraid of losing their grip on what’s real, that they can’t know what’s real. Only Elliot knows the **real** ET, because only Elliot trusts ET and then ET reveals reality.

So, the child knows reality better than all the politicians, scientists, and adults in the world who want to dissect ET in the lab.

Yet children do have trouble knowing what’s real.

When Jonathan was 4, Susan took him shopping with her. Jonathan used to fidget, and this day he fidgeted into a mannequin, and knocked her over. Jonathan looked, his eyes filled with terror, and he began screaming in the department store, “I killed her, I killed her, I killed her!”

Susan had to wrap her arms around him, and tell him what’s real:
“Jonathan, Jonathan ... look, look... she’s not real. She’s not real!”

Children have a hard time knowing what’s real, and so they have the most powerful dreams. When my uncle was a boy, he dreamed that he was swimming. So, he stood on his bed, dove into the corner, and broke his arm. You see, unreal dreams can have very real consequences.

Children have trouble knowing what’s real, and so they have the most powerful nightmares. When I was a child, there was a storm warning in Littleton. So I said to my dad, “We should go to the basement.” He said, “No, we have time... let’s watch!”

Terrified, I begged and begged; but he wouldn’t go. One last time, I ran to the family room to see my father looking through my telescope out of the window at a tornado. I have never been so terrified. The tornado was 4 feet from the window ... and it was Chinese. It was wearing a Chinaman’s hat, and a silk robe, and it was staring at us.

My mind overloaded with fear, and I woke up screaming, yelling, crying, shaking ... imprisoned in fear. It was the worst nightmare that I’ve ever experienced.

You think it’s silly, because you’re not 7 years old. But you see my child’s brain didn’t know that tornados don’t stare at you through windows wearing kimonos and pointy hats... at least not in the real world. But what if the real world is a dream and what seems unreal is reality, waking us from the dream?

Well, children have trouble knowing what’s real ... so they have the worst nightmares and the best dreams. Most adults pretty much give up on dreams, for they know what’s real.

What is real? And what difference does your faith make in the real world?

[John 6:11]

Jesus then took the loaves (they were given to him by a child), and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they fathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

We looked at this last week. Jesus makes a feast – “Real food in the real world.” That’s faith that has a real world economic impact, don’t you think? With faith like that, you could end world hunger. But this is the puzzler ... why didn’t Jesus do it more often? And why didn’t he do it in Jerusalem, before Herod or Pilate, rather than in a field in the redneck region of Galilee?

(next verse)

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him King, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

What’s wrong with Jesus? I mean, really... Talk about making a real difference in the real world! They want to make him King! They are all voting for Jesus as President.

One night at small group, we were debating politics and my friend Mark got frustrated with me and said, “Well, Peter ... what would Jesus do if he were President?” I thought for a moment and said, “He’d quit ... ‘cause that’s exactly what He did.”

We Americans put so much hope in stuff like a “Christian President,” and that’s a bit ironic, since Jesus refused to be President.

It seems to me that the American Church is almost desperate to make Jesus King ... and do it by force. Because after all, this is the real world. Have you seen the latest trailer for the next Gospel movie coming out of Hollywood?

[video clip – “Terminator Jesus” from Mad TV]

Isn’t that hilarious? “Stop killing people!” “Why?”
There is no “why” for Love ... God is Love.

Isn’t it hilarious ... and painful? ‘Cause you do realize it’s making fun of us?
We just don’t get it. We’re like robots from the future that have been programmed –by religion– to protect Jesus. But we just don’t get Jesus. So we really don’t protect Jesus. We protect the world from the revelation of Jesus, which is “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.” “Body broken and Blood shed”... the Love of God poured out, even through His Body.

We don’t have much faith in Love; like it’s not real; like He’s not real.

Technically, the Crusades ended in the Middle Ages. But do you realize that our government gives between 2 and 5 billion dollars per year to the nation-state of Israel? And most of that is military aid.

Now, you can make all kinds of arguments as to why that’s good... you really can. But what’s utterly bizarre to me is how we argue that military support for the geo-political nation of Israel is some kind of Christian

mandate, when Christ himself was crucified because he would not be King of the geo-political nation of Israel.

You realize, that instead of crucifying Romans, he arranged for the Romans to crucify him.

So now we do what Jesus refused to do, all in the name of Jesus and for the very reasons that got Jesus crucified. And ironically, we do that largely because of John's prophecy, **The Revelation**.

For most of history, the official position of the Christian Church has been what's termed "amillennialism." It's the idea that right now, the true church reigns on earth through "the power of God." But "the power of God" is not a worldly power, but a Holy power. It is the "Word of the cross," "Christ crucified," "both the Power of God and the Wisdom of God," wrote Paul in Col. 1:18 & 24.

It wasn't until the 20th Century in America that a new and very different idea took hold. It's the idea that Christians will be raptured before 7 years of tribulation, and then return to earth to rule the geopolitical nation of Israel with Jesus, from Jerusalem, for 1000 years, in space and time, here in what we call the "real world."

If that's true, perhaps it only stands to reason that we might bless Jesus and Israel with bombs, tanks, and guns; for His Kingdom is like ... "of this world."

Well, you can argue different views of the Millennium, and what Israel truly is, and how we are to bless her. But I don't think you can argue the fact that when we tried to make Jesus King, he refused; and that when he stood before Pontius Pilate, (John 18:36) He said, "*My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would [fight], that I may not be delivered over to the Jews.*"

So, if his servants do fight, they must believe that his Kingdom is of this world; that this world is the real world.

Well, Jesus had no interest in being a "real king" in our "real world," as if that kind of king is a king of anything but lies and illusions. When Herod the Great -father to the Herod who presided at Jesus' crucifixion, who had the power to murder all the babies in Bethlehem- died in 4 B.C., he left orders that all the notable Jews in Jerusalem be gathered in the Hippodrome, and then slaughtered, so that all the families of Israel should weep upon his death.

Fortunately, Salome (his sister) had those Jews released from the Hippodrome before the executions could take place. You see, King Herod was the King of all Judea, and yet he couldn't command one tear shed in Faith, Hope, or Love. King of all Judea, but not one heart. How do you become King of Hearts?

Well, if I could multiply bread and make a banquet, I'd do it all the time, and do it on TV. And if you chased me down and made me King of Denver, that would be cool with me. But not Jesus.

Verse 11 - Jesus could solve all economic issues. He can turn poverty into a banquet.

Verse 15 - Jesus could be King and have unlimited political power, but he runs away.

[verse 16]

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea (the sea is a picture of chaos and hell), got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea

became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

Frightened... not at the storm, but the **thing** walking in the storm.

You know, if I could walk on water, I'd do it in the middle of the day, and call a press conference, where I'd say, "Send your checks to The Sanctuary Downtown – 2215 West 30th Avenue, Denver, Colorado." And everybody would fear me and obey me – the man with power to calm storms and walk on the sea.

That's what I'd do ... but not Jesus.

It was the middle of the night, and only his disciples saw him walking on the sea. Well, is that even possible? How could it be real?

For most of the 20th century, we were told it couldn't be real, for matter, space, and time are what is truly real. Now, physicists argue that matter doesn't really matter... that space and time are relative to light, and that all things are, like, dependent on an observer, and his meaning ... his word.

Einstein said, "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one." That is, "The real world really isn't real!"

A clear implication of the most prevalent quantum physics is that every person creates their own reality with something like faith. And yet what's truly puzzling is that to some extent, we all exist in the same reality ... which would imply that someone is observing us all, and constantly creating or maintaining us with something like **his** faith –his faith, his meaning, his Word, his *Logos* (which is light).

Do you get it? The disciples look out into the storm and upon the raging sea, and what do they see? They see the Word of God, and

He is more real than the storm and more real than the sea;
He's more real than the powers of chaos and hell;
He's more real than this world;
He's more real than fish, bread, King Herod, Pontius Pilate, and Hurricane Katrina;
He's more real than your divorce, your addictions, and the crap you're going to face tomorrow at work.

He is the Word of God through whom all things are created and sustained, including you.

The storm is the real world, and yet he's more real than reality, and that's terrifying... for he controls all things. Because we're terrified of him, and truly don't trust him, perhaps he allows each of us to create our own reality for a time. That reality is sin and death; a world where I am King, so everything else dies. Eventually that world becomes hell.

That world is an illusion. Heaven is a reality. Heaven is what God wills, so to live in Heaven is to will what God wills. God wills his Word; God's will is Jesus; Jesus is God's judgment. So, trusting in Jesus is willing God's will. It is Heaven.

So, if you hate Jesus, you'll hate Heaven, and hide yourself in hell. Well, in hell, on the sea, the disciples see Jesus, and are terrified.

[verse 19]

They saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, "Ego Eimi."

Now, that should make them catatonic with fear. In John 18, Jesus says these exact words to the soldiers who have come to arrest him, and they recoiled in fear and fell to the ground. In the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, "*Ego Eimi*" is the name of Yahweh, the Lord God, the Observer, the Ground of all being, the Creator. His name is "I AM."

Jesus said, "*Ego Eimi*" – "I AM". Yet it also implies, "I am me." Common parlance would be *Eimi*, and yet *Ego Eimi* does mean "I am me," or "I, myself am," or "It is I." And you see, that's the Gospel: I AM is Jesus. Jesus is God suffering for you, and coming to get you.

Can you trust Jesus?

In other words, are you tired of sin, death, and hell?

In other words, will you let him into your heart?

He is infinitely more real than your little boat, and he has the power to blow your little boat to smithereens. But will you trust him?

You know, he couldn't easily terrify Pilate, Herod, and all Judea into submission. But He only appeared to his disciples, walking on the sea. Only they were ready to let him into their boat.

Understand? Jesus didn't want fear ... but faith. He wanted to be King of their hearts. You know, for Jesus – King of bread and fish, King of kings and kingdoms, King of storms and the sea – that's no biggy. But to be King of your heart? He was crucified, dead, buried, and descended into hell.

[verse 19]

... they saw Jesus walking on the sea (chaos) and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

Well, if they ate their fill of the loaves, then, at least to our way of thinking, they saw the sign. They saw the sign, but didn't read the sign. They saw the broken bread, but didn't understand its meaning. They did not understand the "abundance of shared poverty," nor the "power of shared poverty." They didn't trust Love, and that's why they tried to make him King by force.

In verse 27 Jesus says, "Do not labor for the food that perishes." Literally: "Do not work for the food that is lost." *Apollumi*. The barley loaves are lost. To put it bluntly, they're down the toilet in a day or two. Yet

Jesus had the disciples pick up the fragments of broken bread, that none would be lost. It's like there's temporal bread that contains eternal realities.

[verse 27]

"Do not labor (work) for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

"Work for that bread that endures," which the Son of Man will give to you.

"Work for that bread," and yet you can't earn that bread. It's a gift from the Son of Man. Weird.

Maybe you don't work this bread ... but this bread works you.

It's free, and yet receiving it may cost you everything: every temporal, transient, corruptible thing, including your life. This Bread works you. It makes you work. You don't work it... it works you.

"Work for that bread that endures – remains unto eternal life."

Well, then? There is unreal bread and there is really real bread ... eternal Bread.

There is an unreal world of economics, politics, and environmental disaster;
An unreal world that is perishing and passing away;
There is an unreal world, and a really real world.

And now, remember the question:

"What difference does your faith make in the real world?"

Jesus says, "work for the food that is real."

[verse 28]

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing (working) the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

"This is the work of God: that you believe (that's the verb) that you have Faith (that's the noun). It's all from one root in Greek. It means **trust**. This is the work of God.

So we asked the kids at camp, "What works do your faith produce?"
Yet faith **is** the work that God wants produced. Faith. Trust.

Now, faith will manifest in all sorts of good works, but faith(trust) is the work the Father desires.

See? Trust isn't good for some other reason; it's just good. I don't want my kids to trust me for some other reason. Trust is the reason. And if it's for some other reason, it's not trust.

And we asked the kids at camp: "What difference will your faith make in the real world." And yet their faith **is** the real world. Faith, Hope, and Love abide. Their tears, hugs, laughter, and testimonies **are** the real world; and the economy, politics, and global environmental disasters are the illusion – the unreal world... which we adults think **is** real, because we are far more invested in and seduced by this world than children. But children are less likely to take this world seriously.

Jesus said, "You must become like a child to enter my world."

"What difference does faith make in the real world? That's entirely backwards!
Faith **is** the real world, and the difference that reveals the entire real world.

“You must become like children to enter my world,” said Jesus.
“This is the victory that conquers this world,” wrote John ... Faith.

And that’s what the whole Revelation is about – that this world (the kings of the earth, the beasts, the harlot, and the dragon) is conquered by a slaughtered Lamb (the revelation of Love) and those who are “with him” (Rev. 7:14) – who trust him; who have faith in Love.

Faith in Jesus is the real world invading this false world.
Hebrews 11:1 – “Now Faith is the (*hupostasis*) ... the substance of things hoped for.”
And what do we hope for? The real world.
To be more specific, we hope for Jesus.
“Now Faith is the substance of Jesus.”
So faith in Jesus is Jesus in me... like food.

In John 4, Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and accomplish his work.”
In John 6, Jesus will tell us: “Your food is me.”
He is the food and he is the faith. He is the will and work of God in you.

Now listen to this sentence once again:
“This is the work of God – that you believe (“*eis*”) [in, on, inside, within, through, or by means of] the one whom he has sent.”

This is the work of God: creating faith, belief, and trust within You.

See? We tend to think that faith is a tool we use to build our world and “accomplish the works of God.” But this entire world is a tool that God uses to build our faith. And this is “the work of God.”

We think we’re supposed to trust in order to get things done, and yet all things are done so that we would trust God. God is Love, and Jesus is the Faithful One who gives his faith to us.

See? Faith in Love – body broken and blood shed, bread and wine ... that is the harvest of this earth. (Rev. 14). The harvest of the earth, and my friends, it is eternal ... it’s **real**.

So what am I saying? I’m saying:

The economy doesn’t really matter;
The world food supply doesn’t even really matter;
Who’s President doesn’t really matter;
Global politics doesn’t even matter;
Worldwide environmental collapse doesn’t matter;
Storms, earthquakes, volcanoes – they really don’t matter;
All the crap you’ll face at work tomorrow doesn’t matter.

At least, not in the way you think it matters.

Only one thing matters – Faith. Your trust in God’s heart, Jesus.

Faith. It seems so small, so weak, so unreal.
It seems so small ... that’s because now it’s a seed.
Yet within that seed is an entire new creation – the harvest of this earth.

See? This entire world is passing away. It's unreal.
Yet that seed is eternal and indestructible, and incorruptible.
That seed is Jesus.

[Communion: Words of Institution]

So, I woke from my nightmare – screaming, crying, and shaking... shaking because of the Chinese tornado in my stormy dream.

I woke and soon found myself on my father's lap, held tightly in his arms, as he said:

“Come on, Peter ... don't be afraid. I love you.”

And I knew his arms were more real than my dream, and better than my dream. He held me and I clung to him. I clung all the more tightly because of my stormy dream. I clung to him and trust grew in me. I “believed his word,” and his word was truth, love, and life.

Soon you'll awake, and your Father's arms will be more real than this entire world.

Yet, even now, you can hear His Word, and know His Love as Faith.

Faith is His Word taking root in you... Christ in you ... the work of God in you... the really real world growing in you.

So come to the table, and get real.

So, do you ever ask this question: “God, what do you want?”

“God, what do you want me to do!?”

“What do you want from me?!?”

Well, I have the answer. Are you taking notes? 'Cause you might want to write this down.

Whether you're hanging on the cross, or whether you just won the lottery, this is the answer:

Trust. Period.

Do you ever ask this question: “God, what the rip are you doing?”

“What is this all about?!?”

“What are you **doing**, God?!?”

Do you want the answer?

Trust. Period.

He's building trust in you.

Trust is a Person in you.

It's Jesus.

Trust ... it's frustrating.

Trust who? GOD!

Who's God? God is revealed in Jesus, the revelation of Love. Trust God in Jesus.

Where is He? Everywhere! The entire universe is upheld by the Word of His power that is Jesus.

Trust. That's what He wants. That's what He gives ... Trust.

And one day, you will turn around and realize,
"Oh my gosh ... I was walking on the sea! I was walking on chaos!"

The other gospels record that that night Peter walked on the sea, as long as he looked at Jesus. But as soon as he looked away from at Jesus – stopped trusting Jesus – he sank.

Trust

And one day, you'll turn around and you'll realize,
"Oh my gosh ... I was ruling and reigning with Jesus!"

Scripture says