

Bridgeway Community Church
Guest Series 2022
Pastor Erwin McManus
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The Genius of Jesus

I have been studying the topic of genius over 40 years ago and it wasn't really focused on Jesus, I was interested in human capacity and potential.

Erwin's favorite/classic historic genius was Leonardo DaVinci

"I slowly began to realize that every list of genius I had ever seen omitted Jesus."

Question: Was Jesus of Nazareth a genius? Did he qualify as a historic genius?

"I'm going to look at Jesus as a human being...I am more of a cultural anthropologist. I really try to understand who we are as human beings."

"What was fascinating was that it was very hard to identify whether Jesus was a genius and what his genius was. But more than that, it was a curiosity to me how someone could be the greatest genius who ever lived and be so overlooked for all this time."

Question: How does Jesus' genius affect us?

For much of Christianity, Jesus boils down to him moving us from bad people to good people.

Question: Does Jesus do more than move us from bad to good? Can he move us from stupid to smart?

"The dumbest decisions we ever make do not cost us money, they cost us people."

"Those traumatic moments in our life, they're usually not about external circumstance that we have no control over. The things that really devastate us are how we destroy each other in relationship to one another because of the incredibly dumb choices we make in life."

Question: Does Jesus' genius have any effect on us at all?

The frustrating thing about genius is that while it maybe inspirational it is not transferable.

You can spend your entire life with Mozart and never compose.

You can spend your entire life with Picasso and never paint.

You can spend your entire life with Bobby Fischer and never master chess.

“Not only does Jesus have an identifiable genius, but that the genius of Jesus is completely transferable and this is why we need to understand it.”

Romans 12:2 NIV

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

I think the word “mind” there is very important. If you are going to have transferable genius, it has to go from mind to mind.

Colossians 3:1-2 NIV

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

“Elevate your mind, elevate your thinking.”

1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV

for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

“In other words, who can get into God's head? Who can understand God's mind? How are we supposed to think like God? How are we supposed to make decisions like God? In fact, you can't really live your life and reflect God if you can't even think like God.”

“Jesus, the greatest genius who has ever lived, has a genius that is transferable and it is offered to us in relationship to him and we can ‘have the mind of Christ.’ ”

Question: Is the idea of us being geniuses too much to put on us?

“All human beings carry within them the essence of genius and that genius is lost as we mature in life. In our infancy, there is genius placed within us that is reflective of the image of God.”

“The facts might be against me, but the future is for me.”

Only 2% of the human population is in the category of genius.

“Genius isn’t something that’s rare, it’s something that’s fragile.”

“Genius actually exists inside of all of us. The question is not whether you were born with genius, the question is did you lose it. Was it nurtured, developed, awakened and unleashed as a gift to the world.”

“...there is a creative essence of genius within you and the tragedy is that most likely by the time you were 5, all those characteristics that were so clearly you were lost at the age of 12.”

“98% of us live our lives as if there is no genius within us and that is a tragedy.”

“I think we’ve over focused on what Jesus does to move us from being bad to being good and we need to begin to focus on moving us being ordinary to being extraordinary, from being average to unlocking the genius within us.”

When you hear discussions of different animal species or plants you learn why they are valuable, but that does not seem to be true about the human species, why human beings are important. Overwhelmingly it felt like the human species is the one species that shouldn’t be here. We were destroying everything and intrusive into nature.

Question: What is it that makes humans unique from every other species?

“Human beings have this unique capacity to materialize the invisible. No other species can do this. Human beings can actually take an idea and actually translate it into reality...the equipment, the lights, the table, the iPad, the cameras...all of these things first existed in someone’s imagination and then were translated into reality.”

Hebrews 11:3 CSB

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

“When the Bible says that God created everything that is visible out of that which is invisible, what’s the invisible material from which God created? The invisible material from which God created was the imagination of God.”

“Creation is an expression of the genius of God and when God expresses his genius beauty happens. When God creates, it becomes beautiful and good and true because he is beautiful and good and true.”

“The beautiful thing about being human, being created in the image and likeness of God, is that you have this same characteristic. You can materialize out of the invisible and translate it into the visible and that is the work of genius.”

“I started wondering...are we a shadow of ourselves? Is humanity everything God imagined or are we somehow a lesser version of the ideal?”

Genesis 2:19-20 NIV

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

Adam was so creative he never ran out of names for the animals! He never ran out of creative juice and remembered them!

“Is it possible that somewhere along the way you were told, even if you’re a person of faith, what God wants from you is standardization. What God wants from you is just don’t create any problems. What God wants from you is to not to cause any crisis. What God wants from you is to be average and ordinary. What God wants from you is to fit in. God wants you to be like everyone else. Isn’t that what discipleship is? To squeeze the uniqueness out of you to make you just like everyone else? That’s what we’ve been convinced of.”

“What if your uniqueness was actually slowly extricated out of your soul because you were told to be like Jesus is to be like everyone else and that’s never what God intended. That what Jesus came to do was to place in you the mind of Christ, to give you a higher mind, to transform you by the renewing of your mind so that you would actually have not only your own genius once again awakened but the genius of Jesus available to you.”

“How would that change your life if you could wake up everyday knowing ‘I can see the world, not just through God’s eyes, but I can see the world through the mind of Christ. I can see the world through the genius of the God who created all things that are good and true and beautiful.”

“The facts are against me. I travel the world and I’m in rooms with people everywhere who have been convinced that they’re average and ordinary, there’s nothing unique, nothing special in them. Conversation after conversation after conversation with people who have become convinced that somehow God was less generous with them. All they can do, all their life is envy someone else’s life or long for someone else’s talent or try to pretend to be someone they’re not. But I want you to know that if you are breathing right now that there is genius in you. And it may take some work, it may take some courage, it may take some discipline, it may take some time but that genius is not lost it is just dormant, it is just hidden under the rubble of your failures and under the rubble of your fears and under the rubble of your shame and under the rubble of your mediocrity and what God wants you to do is to disrupt everything within you and unlock that genius so that you can be his gift to the world.”

“As long as you’re talking about the journey from being bad to good, you’re really dealing with the world of minimums. You’re just trying to raise the minimum standard of what faith looks like. It’s time that we actually start raising the roof and expecting that each person who has a life changing encounter with Jesus begins to have it expanded universe within their soul, to be able to see a future that does not exist, to see a person that they are not yet, to see a life they never could have imagined but now it is all they can see.”

“I think human ideals are the ‘phantom pain’ of the soul. We talk about a world without violence, a world without racism, a world with peace, a world where each person respects each other and treats each other with dignity. We talk about a world with grace and no racism, but that’s not a world we’ve ever known. When we talk about a world where everyone respects each other, we’ve never known a world like that. When we talk about a world without slavery, we’ve never known a world like that. When we talk about a world where there is no war and no violence, we have never known a world like that.”

“When we talk about these ideals you need to realize that we have never, not ever in human history experienced the reality of these ideals as a species. So where do these ideals come from? When people say, ‘I just can’t believe in God because there’s no proof of him’ then how do you believe in peace?! How do you believe in a world where there’s no poverty? How can you believe in a world where no child is abandoned and orphaned? How in the world can you believe in a world where no one is homeless? It’s because you have the phantom pain of your soul. Your soul knows that somehow your humanity has been lost...our souls know we were created for more.”

“That phantom pain of your soul is the best proof of God.”

“That you’re created in the image and likeness of God and as long as your life doesn’t reflect that image, you experience the phantom pain of being less than human.”

“We somehow know that humans are not measured by the same measure as nature. That we are not like creation. We are more like the creator.”

“The genius of Jesus was to make us human again...the reason the genius of Jesus has been ignored and overlooked for centuries is that every act of genius needs a canvas...where do you see the genius of Jesus materialized? The genius of Jesus can only be seen on the canvas of the human soul. It's you that is the work of art of the greatest genius who ever lived. It's you where Jesus expresses his genius most and best. It's you that becomes the proof of the genius of Jesus when you begin to live the life that God created you to live.”

Question from pastor David: you talk about the genius squeezed out of children...can we change the way we raise our children so it is not squeezed out so early?

Erwin: “Education has a greater influence [than parenting]...all of our institutions are created for conformity. Our political institutions, our religious institutions, our educational institutions - they're not created to unlock imagination and creativity. I think the great problem is that your child will be measured by how well it does conforming to everyone else's standard and will actually be taken off if they're actually inventive and creative.”