

I'm glad Jesus isn't naïve. I'm glad Jesus sees life through Father's eyes, and doesn't try and take control, but amazingly places his life into Father's hands. Jesus on the cross isn't deceived, and doesn't simply respond to the surface pain, but he trusts his Dad; and his final words one the cross were, 'Father, into your hands I give myself.' And then he died.

The devil missed what Jesus was doing. The devil was too full of himself, no doubt believing he's won. But Jesus has struck at the heart of sin. Jesus had opened the way back into Father's heart. What beautiful cunning; we were set free from sin, death and the

devil, and the devil condemned himself a murderer, a fool!

I'm glad Jesus is cunning; so that I can invite him to reveal to me the heart of what is going on. Sometimes he'll use a story, or an image, or another person to help me find my way into life in all his fullness.

If Jesus could only confront me head on, sometimes I don't think we'd make much head-way because I can be stubborn at times. And I've discovered if two people simply clash heads together all you get is a headache. Thank God Jesus isn't naïve, but able to lead us through stories, through questions to discover the truth

about life in a way where we are free to take hold of what he is saying and then live it.

Let us pray. Jesus, I invite you to use your cunning in my life that I might come to know you more and more. I invite you to use your cunning to outwit the devil's cunning, so that I might be living life in all your fullness. I don't want to clash heads with you but come to know you more and more. Jesus, help me to be cunning in the way I talk with other people so that we together navigate to the heart of what is going on following your will. Amen.

30 April 2017

## CUNNING

### Beautiful Outlaw



'Cunning' do you think of Jesus as cunning?

My first reaction is no. Jesus isn't cunning; that's because I equate cunning with being dishonest. Obviously Jesus isn't dishonest. But if cunning is the opposite of naïve, then Jesus certainly is cunning. He's not naïve, sucked-in by the devil's lies. Jesus is cunning, he sees through the lies, and is able to give an answer that cuts to the heart of the matter; to our heart.

In the book; 'Beautiful Outlaw' I read; 'We don't appreciate Jesus' cunning because we insist on clinging to our naïve view of the world. We just want life to be easy; we

just want life to be good. We don't want to deal with evil, so we pretend we don't have to. We don't want to navigate sin either. We prefer our coffeehouse chitchat, our Twitter-level engagement. We play at church. It's as though we think our mission and our context is something other than what it was for Jesus. Even though he said; "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

I must admit that at times I do have a naïve view of the word. At times I think all you need to do is show people the clear word of God in a logical manner and then all our ducks will fall into a nice row. Why might this be a naïve view?

First, logic isn't our problem. The heart of the matter is our heart.

Have you noticed how cunning the devil has been in equating sin to bad actions, which equates you to being a bad person? I wonder if this idea would be the dominate one you'd find if you went and asked a random selection of people about their understanding of sin. Sin is the bad things we do, which means we are bad people, therefore we deserve God's punishment.

If people hold this view, do you see the cunning of the devil, God becomes the one who punishes. God becomes the condemning judge, to

---

**Christ Church Lutheran**

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am  
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Jesus' disciples multiplying disciples

be feared. What a cunning move of the devil; because who'd want a relationship with such a monster.

The problem isn't that the devil is cunning, but that so many times he is received naively. What is presented isn't probed and questioned, just swallowed whole.

Jesus isn't naïve, he sees through the lies and deception, and is also aware of the environment in which he lives. Because Jesus sees through the lies and deceptions his responses go to the heart of what is going on.

So when the devil tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread, Jesus doesn't debate whether he can or the how. Jesus sees through to the heart of the discussion, and doesn't lose trust in his Father, but

affirms his trust in his Father by not turning the stones into bread.

Jesus isn't naïve, but cunning, aware of what is going on, so he speaks to the real issue not the surface issue. That's why Jesus speaks so often using stories, because he wants to take

---

**Jesus isn't naïve but cunning.**

---

people deeper, and he knows how defensive we can be when we feel threatened. Jesus knows our propensity to hide; to hide from ourselves. So Jesus uses stories so we can get to the heart of the issue.

Often I find myself talking to the presenting issue and so miss what is really going on. I'm sure if I'd been asked about paying taxes to the government or not,

that's where my focus would have been.

And naively I'd have totally missed the mark. Instead Jesus asks for a coin. Then asks whose image is on the coin. He goes to the heart of the issue, which was his opponents desire to discredit him so that they could take control.

---

And whenever I want to take control the real issue is, who's God?

---

If Jesus were to ask me that question bluntly; who's God, what do you recon my answer would be? I know the right answer, so that's what I'd give you, the right answer. And I'd be right, just deceiving myself, because it wouldn't be what I was wanting to do.

Many times growing up I simply did what I wanted, because I

wanted. My life showed that I was living as the one who determined what was right or wrong. I was playing at being God.

So Jesus cunningly let me find myself in situations where I was out of control, where I needed him. I was exposed, and given the wonderful doorway of repentance.

The devil uses cunning to deceive. Jesus uses cunning, to free, to draw us further into the truth, closer to him. Jesus sees through the surface issues and takes us skilfully to the heart issue. That's what he came to change; our hearts, my heart. From hearts of stone to hearts that beat to his rhythm of life.

It is a real skill to be able to navigate your way to the real issue and not be distracted

by the presenting situation. Thankfully Jesus understands people, and he understands God. Jesus understands the world in which we live, and he knows the way to Father's heart. Thankfully Jesus is cunning, so that he can masterfully navigate

---

**Navigate your way to the real issue.**

---

us through life that we too discover Father's heart, and in the process discover our new hearts in him.

For sin isn't the bad things we do; sin is me playing God. Sin is me thinking I'm in control and know what is going on. That's when I'm a sitting duck for the devil's cunning; his way of making the truth look like a lie and a lie look like the

best thing for me to do.

And if I asked the devil direct; are you out to deceive me, he'd probably say, 'no; but Jesus might be. Did Jesus really say you can't do that? Does Jesus really know the fun you can have doing that?' The devil's cunning always leads me to doubt Jesus, to doubt Dad, and forget to ask the Spirit.

Sin isn't doing bad things or being a bad person, sin is losing trust in Jesus, in Dad, in Spirit. Sin ultimately has me playing god, and oh what a mess we have when millions of people are playing god. Millions of deceived people, totally convinced they are right and frightened to death that they may be wrong.