

Bubbles

Living Inside The Bubble

January 2, 2011

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The interesting thing about living inside a bubble, is you don't even know you are in one until you get outside of it and look around. Listen to this tweet I picked up over the internet. From a teenager who lives in the Silicon Valley

It's hard to realize how isolated your life can be, how different you are than the rest of the world, until you experience what it's like to live on the other side. The Silicon Valley, the place I call home, is an incredibly atypical community. .. I have internet wherever I go. I am never disconnected.

But there is a whole world out there, waiting to be explored. There are thousands and thousands of species of trees and plants and animals that don't use an ounce of electricity. There are even people out there that don't own a computer and their lives seem to be going great.

Inside the bubble, life is so predictable. So boring. So ordinary. So planned. So stressful. I feel pressured to tweet about what I'm doing at all times. I feel obligated to stay up to date. I feel like my friendships are defined by Facebook. I feel like knowledge of startups and new gadgets equates to importance in life. I feel pressured to always buy the newest things when they come out. I sometimes mistake the internet for the universe and I can't possibly imagine life without access to the internet.

Before we move too quick to say this kid needs to get a life, let's look at our own lives. And let's do that by looking at a couple of stories that Jesus tells his listeners.

*“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”
Luke 18:10-13*

Congregational Participation: Describe the bubble that you hear these men living in.
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The Nature of Bubbles

Bubble: A Protected, Exempt or Unique area

The nature of bubbles is, well they are natural. Most of us are born into bubbles. If we are fortunate we are born into a family that has a Mother and Father. It is a protected, exempt and unique area.

We move onto school years, where again we find ourselves in an education bubble. It is again that protected and unique space designed for learning. We do not want these areas to be anything but safe. All of us can still remember April 20, 1999 when Eric Harris & Dylan Kiebold walked into Columbine H.S. and in 49 mins. Busted that bubble for the neither 2000 students that day and all the rest of us.

The problem with bubbles is that they were not meant to last, and if they last too long then things can start to get a little weird.

Who ever heard of 4 or 5 or 8 year old still nursing or a 27 year old still walking the halls of a High School.

The issue however is, we grow up in these natural bubbles which are designed to meet our needs and we continue, once we reach adulthood, to look for those kind of environments that meet only our needs.

Jesus was constantly engaging people about this tendency of the human condition. He would confront religious leaders about, he would turn over tables in the temple, he would illustrate it by telling parables.

One parable he used to illustrate the point went like this:

*“And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. **He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’** “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”” Luke 12:16-19*

This story is pretty clear. A man runs into good fortune. His fields produced in abundance. The equivalent today might be a person whose

- stock investments took a huge turn up
- a sizable bonus,
- X amount of crops coming in and 3X came in.

Then, because the bubble that he has lived in has pretty much always had the headlights pointed at his needs, he comes to the conclusion that, What God must want him to do is build a bigger bubble.

The sentence that Jesus wanted his listeners to rest on, however, was not the seeming greediness of the man, but on the line, *He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do?’* For Jesus who was a professional bubble buster, it was never really about the subject of the

parable, whether it was a 1. Lost Sheep; 2. Prodigal Son; 3. Good Samaritan or any other people in his stories. It was always about, *‘What shall I do?’*

Given the same circumstances, of wealth and/or opportunity, What would you do? Jesus, in fact, like all master teachers goes on to say, “Don’t worry about it all, consider the ravens, consider the lilies of the field. He sets up a dilemma inside of us.

1. Some will be convicted and take a long hard look at their life and lifestyle and begin to change their behaviors
2. Others, will dismiss it, usually by says something like, “What are you saying, maybe I should just give away everything I own and live in poverty for God?” People who respond that way, have no real interest in what truth may be in the scripture and will eventually turn the scriptures into whatever they want to justify there own selves.
3. But there was a 3rd group that Jesus was trying to stir by stories like this. That was those who were really seeking to know how life works. How God set up life in order for it to work and work well. It would mean there was need for further investigation.

So today as we begin this series on Bubble Living, we are going to address primarily those of us in the 3rd category. Those who are still asking, How does Jesus say that life works? And if it works that way, **what, like the parable of the Rich Fool, are you going to do about it?**

So let’s tear this concept of living inside a bubble apart using the parable we started the sermon with. Two men came to the temple to pray. One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector and sinner. Both men living inside their own bubbles.

Let’s break it down this way. The advantages of bubble living and the dangers

B. The Advantage of Living inside the Bubble

“The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you.....’ Luke 18:11a

Coming from the mouth of this Pharisee is that he is acknowledging that there is a God and that he is thankful. While each of those are positives, from the feel of the story we can tell that they represent a very limited understanding of a right relationship with God.

It however, is obvious that this man is experiencing a good life, for which he is thankful. Whatever bubble he is living in has it’s advantages. Let me suggest 2 advantages of living inside a bubble.

1. It produces Protection— Bubbles give us opportunities to move and think freely within a certain parameter and we are safe. Whether it is as a new born, or

in school. We are provided protection. It is one of the things that is so attractive about bubbles. (Keith & Kenny – Basement pool table)

2. It produces Comfort – with fear reduced people can experiment and act on dreams. Living inside a bubble is predictable, and we like predictable. There are reasons why living inside a bubble is so attractive. (Story: about the Lord's Prayer)

But just as there are advantages, there are also dangers. It is the dangers that Jesus would never let his listeners get too far from.

C. The Danger of Living inside the Bubble

“..... that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” Luke 18:11b-12

The rest of what this man says with his mouth identifies the dangers

1. It produces Self-Righteousness – It gives a false sense of security, as if everything everywhere is exactly like it is in my bubble. Like the teenager from Silicon Valley. In some of its worst forms it creates in people a “Better than” attitude, all the while they would vehemently disagree. This side of bubble living produces signs that read:
 1. No-Guns, Jews or Blacks
 2. Help Wanted – Irish need not apply
 3. Public Swimming Pool – White's Only
 4. No Mexican's or Spanish Allowed

Jesus's teachings were like a battering ram to those who did not want anyone messing with their bubbles. There is a reason they killed him. The danger of self-righteousness is that it starts with all the right intentions. A person starts a ministry for all the right reasons, then they begin to own that ministry as if they are the sole protector of it. It becomes the bubble that they maintain. Anything different than what they know becomes suspect.

2. It reduces our Natural Sensitivities – People can become desensitized to life outside their sphere. (9-11 3000 people killed – 30,000 children die every day since 911 from starvation, disease and being killed)

“I much preferred living in my bubble, the one that, until that moment had safely contained my life, family and career. It kept difficult things out, insulating me from anything too raw or upsetting. When such things intruded, as they rarely did, a channel

could be changed, a newspaper page turned, or a check written to keep the poor at a safe distance.”

Richard Stearns, President of World Vision

Jesus gave his life for us to see something. That the kingdom of God was bigger than our perspective. That there is more to life than just what we see. That is what He wanted us to see, and Just like in the parable of the Rich Fool, once we see, ‘What are you going to do?’

Send out: Church – Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone.