

“What Would Jesus Say to Bono?”
Matthew 25:14-46

6/28-29/08

6 pm; 9 & 10:45 am

INTRODUCTION

This new series we're in, “What Would Jesus Say To...?” is a series about some of the major influences and influencers in our society. Last week we looked at Oprah. This week, it's Bono.

Bono. You may be a fan, or you may be asking, “*Who's Bono?*”

Let's bring up a short clip to help all of us have at least a feel for this Irish-born rock star of the band U2.

(show 30 second video) First 30 sec. of <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrP30XjYJa4>

When we think of rock stars, we often think of multi-millionaires, illegal drugs, groupies and blatant sexual immorality, extreme self-indulgence, and maybe an occasional appearance for a social concern like hunger or saving baby seals.

Bono is a different kind of rock star ...

The lead singer of Irish rock band “U2,” was born Paul David Hewson on May 10, 1960, in Dublin, Ireland.

His father Bobby, a postal worker, was Catholic, while his mother, Iris, was Protestant. Young Bono was raised in a spiritual atmosphere, but because of his parents' differing religions, he was never fully welcomed by the people in either the Catholic or Protestant churches.

His personal experience with the religious-political strife in Ireland, along with the sudden death of his mother when he was 14, were major influences on his songwriting in U2's early years.

What would become U2 began in October 1976 with the same four artists that currently make up the band. Although he really couldn't sing, Bono's commanding personality landed him the job as frontman. He picked up his nickname from the Latin, “Bono Vox,” meaning, “good voice,” but it was initially his charismatic stage presence that helped U2 gain a reputation for live performance.

However, U2's relentless touring schedule quickly boosted Bono's vocal abilities, and by the time of the band's groundbreaking 1983 album entitled “War,” Bono had developed a

soaring tenor. Within four years it would become one of the most recognizable voices in popular music.

U2 has been one of the most popular acts in the world since the mid-1980s. Their success in live concerts was greater than their success in record selling until their 1987 album, *The Joshua Tree*, brought them mega-stardom.

The band has sold more than 170 million albums worldwide, and, to date, U2 is tied with Stevie Wonder in having won the most Grammy Awards of any artist of contemporary music, with a total of 22 awards. They have won Best Rock Duo or Group seven times, Album of the Year, Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best Rock Album all twice.

They have won a total of 67 awards from various sources such as MTV, Q Awards, American Music Awards, Golden Globe, and People's Choice. In 2005 the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. (Wikipedia.org)

Bono was named, along with Bill and Melinda Gates, as TIME magazine's people of the year in 2005.

And this brings us to one of the things that makes Bono unique ...

... he has leveraged the influence of his super-stardom and his personal fortune to stand up for some of the world's most desperate and hopeless people.

He describes it like this:

“A number of years ago, I met a wise man who changed my life. In countless ways, large and small, I was always seeking the Lord's blessing. I was saying, you know, I have a new song, look after it ... I have a family, please look after them ... I have this crazy idea ...

“And this wise man said, ‘Stop.’ He said, ‘Stop asking God to bless what you're doing. Get involved in what God is doing — because it's already blessed.’

Well, God ... is with the poor. That, I believe, is what God is doing.”

“Then, in 1997, a couple of eccentric, septuagenarian British Christians ... (described) the Millennium, the year 2000, as a Jubilee year, as an opportunity to cancel the chronic debts of the world's poorest people. They had the audacity to renew the Lord's call — and were joined by Pope John Paul II, who, from an Irish half-Catholic's point of view, may have had a more direct line to the Almighty.

“What was this year of Jubilee, this year of our Lords favor?

“I'd always read the Scriptures, even the obscure stuff. There it was in Leviticus 25:35, ‘If your brother becomes poor,’ the Scriptures say, ‘and cannot maintain himself ... you

shall maintain him ... You shall not lend him your money at interest, not give him your food for profit.’

“It is such an important idea, Jubilee, that Jesus begins His ministry with this ... He hasn’t spoken in public before. ...

“When He does, His first words are from Isaiah: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,’ He says, ‘because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor.’ And Jesus proclaims the year of the Lord’s favor, the year of Jubilee. (Luke 4:18)

“What he was really talking about was an era of grace — and we’re still in it.”
(excerpted from Bono’s key note address at the National Prayer Breakfast, Washington, D.C., Feb. 2, 2006)

Bono's most extensive social campaign was Jubilee 2000, a project orchestrated to cancel third world debts. During the Jubilee 2000 campaign, Bono spoke before the United Nations and the United States Congress and met with key figures such as Pope John Paul II and President Bill Clinton.

Not only did he invest months of his life in Jubilee 2000, he dramatically cut back on concerts and recording albums and continuing to grow his personal fortune. He needed time to become educated on the world bank and the intricacies of different kinds of world and national debt. He met with leading minds in the international finance world, and when he was ready, he met with the financial leaders of the top eight industrialized nations (the G-8) and demonstrated a mastery of the topic that amazed the financial decision-makers of these nations.

But, more importantly, he positively influenced these nations to enter the Millennium Project, which made commitments to eliminate the debt of chronically poor countries, provide medical necessities, attack the spread and treatment of HIV/AIDS, eliminate diseases such as malaria and polio, and provide public education for all children. The focus of this work is in Africa.

He also demonstrated his understanding of politics and human nature. With the help of Bill and Melinda Gates, he set up an organization known as “DATA.” DATA is an acronym that stands for Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa. This is an accountability organization that keeps before the G-8 nations and the world how the G-8 is following through on their latest commitments from 2005. Each year a report is issued on their Web site that is available for the world to read. (www.data.org)

It also holds the African nations accountable for how they utilize the resources entrusted to them.

Bono is a different kind of rock star!

I'd like for you to hear him yourself. Here's a few excerpts from his key note address at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast in February, 2006: (Selected excerpts from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEeAnPTqwZg>)

(SHOW second DVD)

It may seem obvious at this point that Bono is a Christian, but because Bono's language gets, um, colorful at times, there are some who have wondered if he has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, or is simply an extraordinary man driven to action by the desperate situation of some of the world's neediest people.

Let me read to you a few excerpts from an article that appeared in World Magazine, August 6, 2005. (World Magazine writes from an evangelical/conservative Christian perspective).

“Salty dogma” (by *Gene Edward Veith*)

“Is Bono, the lead singer and songwriter for the rock group U2, a Christian?”

“He says he is and writes about Christianity in his lyrics. Yet many people question whether Bono is ‘really’ a Christian, due to his notoriously bad language, liberal politics, and rock star antics (though he has been faithfully married for 23 years). But in a new book of interviews entitled, Bono in Conversation by Michka Assayas, Bono, though using some salty language, makes an explicit confession of faith.

“The interviewer, Mr. Assayas, begins by asking Bono, Doesn't he think ‘appalling things’ happen when people become religious?”

Bono counters, ‘It's a mind-blowing concept that the God Who created the Universe might be looking for company, a real relationship with people, but the thing that keeps me on my knees is the difference between Grace and Karma.’

The interviewer asks, ‘What's that?’

‘At the center of all religions is the idea of Karma. You know, what you put out comes back to you: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or in physics — in physical laws — every action is met by an equal or an opposite one,’ explains Bono. ‘And yet, along comes this idea called Grace to upend all that. ... Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I've done a lot of stupid stuff.’

The interviewer asks, ‘Like what?’

‘That's between me and God. But I'd be in big trouble if Karma was going to finally be my judge,’ says Bono. ‘It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for Grace. I'm

holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity.'

Then the interviewer marvels, 'The Son of God Who takes away the sins of the world. I wish I could believe in that.'

'The point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the world, so that what we put out did not come back to us, and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death,' replies Bono. 'It's not our own good works that get us through the gates of Heaven.'

The interviewer marvels some more: 'That's a great idea, no denying it. Such great hope is wonderful, even though it's close to lunacy, in my view. Christ has His rank among the world's great thinkers. But Son of God, isn't that *farfetched*?'

Bono comes back, 'Look, the secular response to the Christ story always goes like this: He was a great prophet, obviously a very interesting guy, had a lot to say along the lines of other great prophets, be they Elijah, Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius. But actually Christ doesn't allow you that. He doesn't let you off that hook. Christ says, 'No. I'm not saying I'm a teacher, don't call Me teacher. I'm not saying I'm a prophet. I'm saying: "I'm the Messiah." I'm saying: "I am God incarnate." ... So what you're left with is either Christ was Who He said He was — the Messiah — or a complete nutcase... The idea that the entire course of civilization for over half of the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside-down by a nutcase, for me *that's farfetched*.'" (Copyright © 2005 WORLD Magazine, August 6, 2005, Vol. 20, No. 30)

So, "*What Would Jesus Say to Bono?*"

Here's a few things I think He might say:

1. "You're doing a great job at investing the gifts I have entrusted to you. Keep it up!"

READ (and explain) Matthew 25:14-30 (**PAGE** 1541)

God entrusts to each of us gifts ... those gifts are different t... that is, we don't all get exactly the same gifts.

In the story we just read, money is used as the example of all gifts.

God expects us to manage, to invest, the gifts He has entrusted to us, AND to end up with more than what He gave us in the end, when we give an account to Him.

We don't all have the same gifts that the Lord entrusted to Bono to invest, but let's take a look at his story so far...

1. God made him an artist... musically... he developed his singing, his song-writing, his performance. And he did it in God-honoring ways. He wrote songs about God, about searching spiritually, about calling out to Jesus, about the resurrection.

He worked very hard at developing this deposit that God made in him.

2. As a result, God gave him two additional gifts:

- a. extraordinary finances
- b. extraordinary influence

Bono saw these two additional gifts the way he saw the first gift ... as resources God gave him to invest and manage for God's purposes.

3. God made clear that He wanted Bono to tackle a project that would stretch his financial resources and influence to accomplish something that was supernatural ... to end "stupid poverty" in this generation.

4. Bono has invested finances and influence in a way to move towards accomplishing this goal.

His own finances could not meet the gigantic needs in Africa. His own personal influence could not change Africa.

So, he invested in others who could join with him to accomplish his God-given mission ... presidents, kings, prime ministers, movie stars, music stars, politicians ... ANYONE who would or could help him move towards the singular goal of wiping out stupid poverty in this generation, he sought and seeks to influence.

God gave him one gift that he invested with great energy, concentration and passion.

As a result, God gave him two more to accomplish a God-sized mission.

He accepted that mission and continues to invest the gifts God has given him.

It is a living example of what God wants each of us to do ... regardless of what gift He has entrusted to us.

1 Peter 4:10-11 “**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.**

11 **If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.”**

2. “Thank you for taking My words seriously.”

READ (and explain) Matthew 25:31-46 (**PAGE** 1542)

Jesus takes the poor, needy, and disenfranchised seriously. And He expects us to do the same.

CONCLUSION

Those are two things I think Jesus might want to say to Bono.

What would Jesus say to you?

- Are you living by *karma* or by *grace*?
- Are you wisely and passionately managing / investing the gifts God has given you by serving others?
- Are you taking Jesus’ words seriously?

“Father in Heaven, I want to invest my life, and the gifts and talents You have entrusted to me, to serve others. I want to be faithful. Please bless me as I move ahead! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”