

Sermon- The Worldview That Frees You From Death

Scripture: John 8:21-31

Sunday, August 12, 2018

Today we are once again at the feet of Jesus, not too far from the temple in Jerusalem, somewhere at the end of the festival of Booths. Jesus has over the last few months been gradually revealing who he is. In John first he performed a few signs and through that he reveals some things about Himself. He declared that He is the Son of God and presented four witnesses you can examine to judge whether Jesus is saying is true or not. The Testimony of John the Baptist, His miracles, His teachings and all the rest of Scripture. Then we come to the Festival of Tabernacles and he further amplifies His self revelation with His I AM sayings. First, in chapter 7, He declared, “I AM the Water of Life”. Then earlier in chapter 8 he declared, “I AM the Light of the World”. Now you will remember that these sayings were also followed by promises. For example, following the Light of the world declaration he had said, “and whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but have light that leads to life”, meaning, eternal life.

But here is the problem. Every time Jesus reveals who He is, many people and especially the religious leaders close their mind to what he was saying. That has made for some interesting back and forth between Jesus and the religious leaders. At first it was pretty mild. But with every chapter the back and forth becomes more and more intense. Because Jesus raises the stakes every time he reveals something more about himself. And that brings us to today’s dialog between Jesus and the religious leaders from verse 21 to 31.

First, let’s examine the dialog. After that I am going to point out some patterns in this conversation. And from the patterns we are going to look at the principles being communicated. So first the dialog itself.

Jesus starts by telling the religious leaders, “you cannot go where I am going.” And he adds for even greater emphasis, “because you will die in your sin”. Ouch. That sounds like quite a stinging comment. But wait till you see the entire dialogue play out before you make your judgments.

The Pharisees actually are really clueless and don't get what Jesus is talking about when he says “you cannot go where I am going”? They wonder if Jesus thinking of committing suicide. Now suicide was not accepted at all in Jewish culture. But when people are this clueless it is the spiritual equivalent of a person who has passed out. To revive them you have to slap them in the face or put some really strong-smelling substance near their nose right? That is what Jesus is doing when he uses really strong language with these Pharisees.

Ok let's get back to Jesus' words. Jesus continues by stating, there are two worlds. The world above and the world below. Then he says, he is from the world above and the religious leaders are from the world below. And because they come from two different worlds, they are not able to get what Jesus is talking about. “Therefore”, Jesus says, “you will die in your sins”.

To that the Pharisees respond, “who are you?” Now remember at this point Jesus has performed 5 miracles, He has taught many things to the people and he has revealed many things about Himself and answered questions from all kinds of people including the religious leaders. So after all that, the Pharisees are still asking the question, “who are you?” Pretty dumb isn't it? It is like you watch the movie Braveheart and when you walk out the theater someone asks, “who's Braveheart?”.

And Jesus at this point, is understandably exasperated, because he knows that these people have heard him explaining who he is many times, and repeating his explanations is not going to change anything with them. So he simply says, “he is who he has always claimed to be”. He also adds that, if he wanted, he could say many things to condemn

them but that he is not going to because his Father in heaven who is pure truth, has not given him the green light to say anything more at this time.

The religious leaders as you may have guesses continue to remain as clueless as ever.

Then Jesus says something very interesting. He says, when you have crucified the Son of Man, then you will understand that I Am he. Jesus also adds that he does not say or do anything that he has not been taught by his Father to do and he only does things that please His Heavenly Father.

What Jesus is doing here is acknowledging that there are some critical pieces of His ministry that are not done yet. They lie in the future. But Jesus is also hinting at something very interesting. By using this direct language, “when you crucify the Son of Man”, he is hinting that all people everywhere will only fully understand who Jesus is when something miraculous happens that enables an individual to realize that their own personal sins put Jesus on the cross. This is a big revelation of Jesus’ part and of course at that point nobody would have fully understood it.

But even at this stage, some people believe Jesus to the extent that it was humanly possible. And in our passage we are first informed of their existence only in verse 30.

As Jesus speaks to them, the content of His words changes dramatically. It is like looking at a landscape in the day as opposed to looking at it at night. He tells them, “you are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Earlier if you remember he had told the Pharisees who refuse to believe, “I am who I always claimed to be” and “you cannot go where I am going because you will die in your sins” or “I am from above and you are from below”.

I want to point out a pattern here. The pattern is this. When Jesus has revealed something about himself and people don’t make an effort to examine what he is saying and don’t believe, the light of his revelation moves a few steps away from them and his

words become more cryptic and difficult to understand. On the other hand, those who do believe him, to them he begins to increase his revelation. They are given more details and insight into deep spiritual mysteries.

So let's examine what Jesus told those who were willing to believe. He tells them that, "you are truly my disciples when you fulfill this condition, that you remain faithful to my teachings. And when you are faithful to my teachings, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free". This is verse 31.

There are three parts to this teaching that is important to understand. The First part. The term "disciple". Who is a disciple of Jesus? Well a disciple is simply someone who wants to become a little bit more like Jesus. Who qualifies to be a disciple of Jesus? Do you have to be baptized to be a disciple of Jesus? Do you have to fully understand the Bible before you can become a disciple? No, no and no. It does not say that anywhere. If you look at Jesus' first disciples, when they became disciples, all they did was, they saw something special in Jesus that they saw with nobody else. And they decided that he was special enough that they would allow this unique person to teach them whatever He wanted to teach them. That is what made Jesus' disciples "disciples". They did not have any special qualifications or even any great understanding of scripture or spiritual things. But they did recognize something unique and powerful about Jesus and made a commitment to follow Him and learn from Him on his terms. That is all it takes to be a disciple.

Now you will say, come on, does that truly make you a disciple? Ok, so let me add one clarification. If Jesus was physically here, it would not work if you followed him one day and did not do that the next day right? It is the same as enrolling in a school. If you show up the first day and don't show up on day two it is not going to be acceptable right? So like any successful learning experience, you have to make a consistent commitment. If you sense God calling you to read the Bible, read it regularly, if you sense God calling

you to have a prayer time do it consistently. That's it. That's all you need to start off as a disciple of Jesus. Nothing big or dramatic. No announcements required. Just a simple consistent commitment to learn what Jesus wants to teach you either on your own or taking the help of someone who is already a disciple of Jesus. So for example, as a disciple you may read the Bible and the verse you may be reading is Matt chapter 6 which says, "don't worry about what you will eat and drink and wear, but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." Ok when you read that, you reflect on that verse. You should discuss it with someone, meditate on it. Do what that verse is telling you to do. If it says, don't worry about tomorrow, then take your worry about tomorrow and give it to God and tell Him, you told me not to worry so I am not going to worry. Tomorrow is your problem God. Today, I need to do what then? It says, seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. Now righteousness means "the right way of living". So tell God, you want me to focus on the right way of living today, so show me how I should do that today. That's all! It is that simple. Anyone can do it. Young, old, male, female, rich, poor, white, black, brown, no matter who you are, you have the capacity to learn something about Jesus and start following it a little tiny bit every day. That is all. You become a disciple of Jesus.

Ok so what next. That can't be the end of the story right? You are right. That is not the end. Because if you read the Bible and start talking to Jesus, Jesus promises you this. You will start "knowing the truth". Now what does "knowing the truth" mean? This is a very important. The truth here refers to two levels of information. On one level you have general information coming at you. Information like the sun is 93 million from the earth or person A is a nice person. These are general pieces of information and you need to have good ways to validate such information. If you know how to validate information, then validated information is "truth". Now this is general truth. In the Bible when truth is mentioned often it means specific truth. This relates to the person of Jesus. This is a whole category of truth because if you have the validated information

about Jesus, it is extremely important and it changes your understanding of the whole world. So when the Bible refers to The truth, it is referring to Truth about who Jesus really is. So when Jesus says, as a disciple, you will know the truth, he is saying, when you take the simple steps to learn from Jesus, you will get the internal capacity to validate the information about Jesus and help you decide for yourself if everything that he is saying is real or not. As a disciple, you will “know the truth”. And this truth about Jesus is a life and death issue.

Let me explain. You see, some information like the distance from the earth to the sun for instance, for you and me is just trivia. It is not trivia for the scientists working on the Parker Solar Probe, but for you and me it is because even if we have a wrong figure in our mind is it not going to make a difference to us or anybody else. But there is some information that if you don't know how to validate properly, it is going to make a life and death difference. Like if we are driving and if we misjudge the speed of vehicles around you, that is enough to have a fatal crash, right? Jesus is saying, if you misjudge Him, you cannot be free it will result in your spiritual death.

How? The Bible says that this world that you and I live in, is ruled by Satan who is the Father of lies. So we are surrounded by false information. Lies about what is good for you, lies about how this country works, lies about which products to buy and lies about your own self, like what makes you a beautiful person. But because we are surrounded by these lies all the time, we buy into the lies. And the thing about lies is that, once you are on the track, you have to keep telling bigger and bigger lies to justify the previous lies. As a result, we get stuck in our own web of lies, till one day we die like an insect in a spider's web.

What Jesus is saying is that, when you know the truth, about Jesus, you will know the truth about yourself, and then you will be able to talk the truth to the world. Suddenly, the world that Satan has control over does not have any control over you. And you

become free. And when you become free my friends it is not a temporary freedom it is a freedom that lasts forever. Because the truth that Jesus came to share with you and me is that, he has provided the solution to us being caught in the web of lies of this world. And he has come to give us freedom now and for eternity.

Friends this is a very big truth that Jesus revealed to those who believed. A simple act of wanting to learn at the feet of Jesus and obey His teachings, makes you a disciple. When you are a disciple, you get the capacity to know the truth about all kinds of things including about Jesus. And when you know the truth, you will acquire a worldview that is so powerful that it will help you to be liberated from the web of lies of this world but also free your soul to experience eternal life. Know the truth and the Truth will set you free. May pray for you is that each of you my friends will be truly free indeed. Let us pray.