

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

June 21, 2020

Sermon Title: Only Jesus Has the Words of Eternal Life

Today's Scripture: See insert

Introduction: Our cancel culture

Main point: Only the Spirit of God can open closed hearts

Context

1. The hard sayings of the Bible keep many professing believers from following Christ all the way. **Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"**
 - Why didn't Jesus make it easier for people to believe? Why did he have to say eat my flesh and drink my blood? Why couldn't he have said "Someday I am going to be crucified and blood will flow from my head. That act will pay for all your sins if you just believe that I am God and am giving my life for you."
 - The answer seems to be the same as when he taught in parables that only the hungry people pushed for answers. Jesus was thinning the crowds. If his disciples and others wanted an explanation for a parable, he would give it to them but to others its meaning remained hidden. Why?
 - Imagine a professor in college who is teaching history and he tells the class "Everyone who would like to hear more about the Providences of God in the life of Pocahontas and Squanto meet me tomorrow morning at 5:30 a.m." Out of a class of 100, ten show up for the extra session. The next day the professor tells 90 of them they can go home and get a refund for the history class because obviously they don't want to learn history. What's the point of teaching them?
 - Jesus uses the same procedures in all of his teachings. He thins the crowds. As we have studied before the purpose of the parables and here the hard sayings of Jesus is to reveal the truth to the soft of heart and conceal the truth to the hard of heart.
 - This is true in churches today. If a church dares to teach the hard truths you can be certain it will be small (or almost always so). Professing believers will not stick around to hear that they have to be willing to lay down their lives for Jesus or that they have to speak up against abortion, or that they have to open their homes for sacrificial hospitality, or that God has chosen those who are his and he leaves those who are not in their rebellious unbelief. These are hard truths yet all of them biblical.
 - And it is also true of the most important doctrine of all, at least here in this passage. You must trust in the cross of Jesus only for your salvation. How many churches imply today, "Trust in Christ's death and then make sure you earn it the rest of the way. Your salvation is

dependent on asking for forgiveness every night at bedtime or else you may lose your salvation if Christ should come during the night. No! There is no merit in salvation. Being born again means delighting in his work for you on the cross and the depending on the Spirit to give you the desire to follow Him in obedience.

- The tense of the verb in this passage is an aorist which argues against the idea that I can have salvation and then lose salvation and then get it back ad infinitum. When Jesus said whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. It is an aorist meaning it is a onetime action, something not repeated over and over again.
- In this setting, it would have been impossible for the people not to think of the Passover. Already John had called Jesus “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. So when Jesus said eat my flesh, aorist tense, would they not think back to eating the Passover Lamb on the night of the Exodus? When he says drink my blood, would they not reflect on taking the blood and smearing it on the doorposts and lintels so that the death angel would pass over? By that connection, they should have come to the conclusion Jesus wanted them to come to which was, you did nothing to keep from dying that night. The Lamb’s blood did it all. All you had to do was believe what God said through Moses to be alive.

2. Unbelievers proudly expect God to act within their paradigms. **But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.**

- Last week we spoke of the futility of depending on our own logic as a measure of truth. We return to that same concept this week as Jesus tells the people that their own prejudices about what can be true and what can’t be true are getting in the way of seeing reality. They simply cannot imagine a Messiah who would have to die in order to save them from their sins. Even today, liberal theologians like Brian McLaren and Rob Bell cannot comprehend this mystery calling the crucifixion divine cosmic child abuse. Their logic has gotten in the way of the greatest act of love ever displayed by the Father on all of mankind.
- In this passage Jesus is asking them if they are offended by the concept of trusting in Him alone for their salvation, since He is the One who came down from Heaven to give them salvation, will they not be equally offended when they see with their own eyes him returning to heaven where he was before? How will they be offended? They are offended already that he claims to be God. They will be even more offended when he proves to be God by ascending back the throne of glory. Jesus knows men’s hearts. Pride is a controlling emotion. Pride could not get them to believe He was who he said he was and pride was going to be even more irate when he does prove he is who he says he is. People do not like to be proven wrong.
- Jesus then explains why they are going to be so upset. It is because they are not listening to the Spirit. We have already gone over the doctrine of election briefly in this chapter when Jesus said no one can come to me unless the father draw them. Here we see just a little different slant. It is my belief that the Spirit speaks to everyone. Without the Spirit’s help no one can believe Jesus says because the Spirit gives life to a dead heart. But what about on

Judgment Day. No one can then say, well God you didn't try hard enough. No, the Lord will respond, I sent you the Spirit many times but you refused to believe. Whose fault is that?

3. The reason people refuse to believe in Jesus (as God and Savior and Lord) and die in their unbelief is that they are not predestined by God to believe. **But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”**
 - With Jesus' supernatural knowledge provided to Him by the Spirit, he knew that those in front of him that day in the synagogue were not among the elect.
 - Notice here that the greatest preacher in the world who had the greatest love for all people, who could elucidate the greatest mysteries and perform the greatest miracles still could not bring people to faith. Sounds crazy, no?
 - On the other side of the theological spectrum from ours are those who believe that God chooses those who first chose Him. Therefore preachers and Christians must work very hard to be convincing and persuasive otherwise the people they are talking to will not come to faith in Christ. If you are still of that persuasion, then consider that even Jesus could not manipulate anyone into the Kingdom of God by His speech, His life nor His power.
 - Once again, this is a hard doctrine to hear. Most pastors won't touch it with a 20 foot pole. I have to because I preach expositionally and when it comes up in a passage I can't exactly skip over it. If you want to discuss this in more detail – later.

4. Half-hearted followers mean little to Jesus. He looks for fully devoted followers who are willing to die for Him and make disciples who are also willing to die for Christ. **After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”**
 - If this was the outcome of an evangelistic crusade today in a modern mega church, Jesus would have been fired. From 15,000 happy people to 12 minus 1.
 - But Peter and the eleven got it. They had already come to the conclusion via the Holy Spirit that there is no other source in all the world where one might find out how to get to heaven.
 - If Jesus was content with discipling only 12 (Paul later) because that was all that the Father had given Him (we're not talking the rest of the believers like Mary Magdalene and others) then I think we ought to be content as well to know that only those the Father has brought to us whom we are going to bring to Christ is His will.
 - But, Peter's observation is enlightening. To whom shall we go? Should we go to the Pharisees? They've been a real disappointment. Shall we go to the High Priest for answers? He's totally corrupt. Shall we go to the philosophers? Maybe Socrates and Plato can lead us to heaven. Not. Shall we go to science? Or materialism. Neither scientific discoveries or material things can give anyone the words to eternal life. Only Jesus.

5. The Lord lovingly corrects even doctrine that is close to the truth. **Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him. (ESV)**
- Peter was implying that each one of the twelve on their own had placed their trust in Jesus as Lord, and God and Savior. Two things were wrong with that conclusion.
 1. First of all, they did not choose Him, He chose them. He had already told them that no one comes unless the Father draws them and it was the Father through the Spirit who had told Jesus who would be His 12.
 2. Not all twelve were chosen. And that was no surprise to Jesus either. He knew Scripture had to be fulfilled which said **Zechariah 11:12–13 Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter. (ESV)**

Application

Do not fear that the Lord has not chosen you or your children unto salvation. Teach them to ask for a spirit of repentance. Instruct them how to cry out to God for mercy and plead for forgiveness to bring them to that moment of full surrender. God will show you his merciful compassion and reach downward into your child’s heart to bring them to full and eternal salvation.