

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

July 5, 2020

Sermon Title: “Jesus Tells us the Source of Sin (and it Ain’t Pretty).”

Today’s Scripture: See insert

Prayer

Introduction:

Main point: Jesus redefines the definition of holiness and pathway to heaven.

Context:

1. Jesus boldly redefines spirituality as an inward righteousness not an outward and meaningless ritual. *And when he had summoned all the people, he said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without a man that going into his mouth can defile him; but the things that come out of his mouth, it is they that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”*
 - All of their lives every Jew had to be cautious about what they ate. Their rabbis had taught them that it was a huge insult to God that they eat anything condemned in Leviticus 11. The only mammals they could eat are those that chew the cud and have split hooves. The only fish they could eat are those that have fins. Shrimp is out of the question. So please do not offer your Orthodox Jewish friends a Shrimp cocktail. What an insult. The only birds they may eat are those that seem not to be scavengers or parasite carriers.
 - Many of these restrictions were for health reasons since modern day agencies like the FDA did not exist back then and many diseases could be transmitted from animal to human if the food wasn’t prepared properly.
 - But the main reason Leviticus 11 is in the Bible is to keep Israel separated from its evil and influential neighbors. Many God’s laws were designed for that purpose.
 - So, when these Jews, who had been indoctrinated all of their lives and was now part of their mental DNA to avoid “unclean” foods and animals, heard Jesus say this, it really had to be one of the most startling things Jesus had told the crowds up to this point.
 - This is hard to relate in our context. I’ll try. Growing up we were taught that in order to be good Christians. The kind that made God happy, we had to go to church on Sunday morning early for Sunday School and keep good attendance records so that we could get our attendance pins, then we would stay for Junior Church or if we were older adult church, then we would come back on Sunday night for evening church when the songs would be different and the sermons just as hard to listen to, then on Monday nights it was Boys club for boys Tuesday nights was girl clubs for girls, Wednesday nights was prayer meeting and Youth Group and so it went week after week. How would it have been for a church congregation to hear Jesus speak as a guest speaker and say to one and all, “If you want to please God from your heart, come to Sunday worship because

you want to and can't live without it and the rest of the week do your job and meet in homes as families living Christianity together". That would blow gaskets of every sort and Jesus would not have been invited back again to speak.

- Or, in the day I grew up in, we were not allowed to party with our neighbors who drink. It was forbidden. Even the ones right next door. If Jesus was speaking again and he said in church, "Listen up people, your neighbors are going to hell because you are so up-tight about appearances that you don't want to be seen at their table where some other Christian might think you are drinking a Budweiser. Well, watch me", and from the pulpit Jesus takes a Bud, pops the lid and slugs the whole can in one drink. What do you think would be the response of the people in the pews? Oh, you say, Jesus would never do that? Jesus would never offend people by such an action? He certainly blew gaskets here in this passage.
- As hard as this was for people to hear, it should have come as no surprise to them. We speak of how cultures drift. Well this particular culture of the Pharisees and their tight-fisted control of all Jewish lives by their stupid regulations had drifted from what God had told them in the Scriptures. For example:

1. 1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." (ESV)

2. Jeremiah 9:25–26 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart." (ESV)

- But in that day and our day, thousands would have loved to hear just such a message. There had to be more to life than being afraid of the Pharisees who might catch you not washing your hands or tasting a shrimp cocktail. And, in our day, thousands have been turned off by the legalism of our churches and the tight-fisted control the church has over its members and the hypocrisy of its leaders. Example, Tim and Alison Juba.

2. We need to choose eternal life over the approval of men. *Then came his disciples and said to him, "Do you know the Pharisees were offended by that statement?" But he answering them said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind, and if blind men lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."*

- As much as the Pharisees were despised by the general population for their arrogance, yet in the minds of the disciples they were esteemed. They were still struggling to understand the Kingdom and how it looked. In their minds they must have thought that eventually Jesus and the ruling class would merge and work together. If the Kingdom was to be an earthly kingdom then it had to have political connections therefore in their minds it was a mistake to alienate them as Jesus was constantly doing.
- I am totally amazed at how much shaming is going on in our culture today. You can read about it everywhere. There are those who feel wearing masks to avoid the virus is

absolute, so much so that governors are now requiring it. If you don't wear a mask in Hennepin county at a store expect to feel shamed. It's PC all the way.

- Here, Jesus tells them and us in very certain terms, "FORGET them. Don't worry about what they think. They are a lost cause. Can you imagine Jesus saying that about anybody? He did. Right here in this passage. What exactly did he say about these men:

1. They are not chosen. That's right. They are not among the elect. Can't be more clear. He says every plant that my father did not plant will be uprooted. Now Jesus sounds like God is a farmer or a gardener. Every gardener knows about weeds and how they get in the way of our tomatoes and potatoes and every other plant we plant. We know that some of those weeds actually look like our plants but they are not. They can easily be mistaken and that is exactly what the Pharisees were doing to themselves and to others. They looked like the real thing but they were weeds in God's garden. If you want to know more about God's process of election I encourage you to read Ephesians 1. It will tell you all you need to know. Or Romans chapter 9. Or just look up the word elect in a Bible concordance.

2. Jesus says these men are obviously deceived. They are blind leaders of the blind. In other words they think they know the path to heaven is through legalism and keeping the law and all the new additions to the law but cannot see that they missed a minute or an hour or a day or a week or a month of keeping the laws purely. One slip and they were done and on their way to hell. You cannot tell a blind man who thinks he can see that he is blind. Imagine a child blind from birth and trying to tell that child that he is blind. Try telling that child what blue looks like or a sunset looks like. It is impossible. So Jesus says, don't even try to correct them. Their pride will refuse correction.

3. They are taking others who refuse to listen to the truth into the pit of hell with them. Therefore their pride is enhanced because they have a following. Take that away from them and you will get nothing but hostility. Our modern day legalists are all those I mentioned last week. Churches that demand obedience to their rituals whether Catholic, Lutheran, Baptists, Mormons or Jehovah Witnesses. Any church in these groups and many others who teach directly or indirectly that you must do whatever they tell you to do to get to heaven are operating under Satan's control. Go back to last week's sermon if you want examples.

3. Holiness is not a matter of externals or rituals. *Now when he went into a house from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable, and Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And Jesus said to them, "Are you also thus still without understanding? Do you not yet perceive, that whatever from without goes into the mouth, it cannot defile a man? For it enters not into his heart but his body, and so goes on out" (he thereby making all foods clean).*

- This was mind-blowing for the disciples to hear. You mean I can eat bacon and not go to hell Jesus? Yes. You mean I can have lobster and I won't have to spend 100 years in purgatory. Yes, and there is no such place as purgatory. You mean I can go to my

Gentile neighbor's house and have dinner and not ask what kind of meat I'm eating? Yes and you can drink his wine and beer if you want to!!!!

- What Jesus is doing here is cutting a separation between the Old Covenant and the New. It is a process and will take a while perhaps a few years even after his death but the completion of that separation was the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. For example, Peter did not get this message until he was called to go to Cornelius's house and it took God three visions while Peter was in a trance on top of a roof before he "got it". The Old Covenant is over the New Covenant is here. You have heard me say this before, the Ten Commandments are part of the Old Covenant and are mistakenly thought to be in effect today. They are not. IN the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said not one jot or tittle of the law will pass away for he has come to fulfill or complete the Law. What that means is that every commandment in the Ten are expanded by Jesus to a much higher level such as you have said, You shall not murder but I say to you if you hate a man you are guilty of murder. Notice that Jesus did not command us to keep worshiping on Saturday. Why? Because the Sabbath was always meant to be a sign between God and Israel of their Covenant. It was not meant to outlast the Old Covenant into the New. That is why the Early Church made a clean break and worshiped on Sunday which they called the "Lord's Day".

4. Instead Holiness comes from a pure heart that only God can change. **And he said, "But the things which go forth from the mouth of a man come from the heart, and these defile a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, come forth the evil purposes – murders, adulteries, sex vices (sexual immoralities –ESV), thefts, false testifying, blasphemies, envyings, malicious deeds, deceit, licentiousness, a sinful eye, conceit, foolishness, - all of these corruptions come forth from within, and these are the things that defile a man. But eating with unpurified hands does not defile a man."**

- The OT laws of purification were designed to picture something much larger. It was not a sin to have a baby. It was not a sin to touch a dead animal. It was not a sin to touch a dead person or to have a bodily emission. Those laws in Leviticus were designed to picture something far bigger. Just as children learn to read by starting out with picture books so did God's people learn the story of redemption with pictures. Their being ceremonially unclean by having a baby, touching a dead animal or dead body and would remain unclean until going through the purification process was meant to show them that they needed to be purified internally through the blood of Jesus Christ.
- If they didn't get the full picture back then Jesus is helping his disciples and anyone else who would listen the reality of what was only pictured in the OT. Where does sin lie. IN the heart of man. What needs to be cleansed? The heart of man. Who can do the cleansing? Only the blood of Jesus on the cross. The song is right. "Nothing but the Blood".
- The washing of our hearts is a one-time deal and a continuing process. When Jesus was washing Peter's feet, Peter asked for a whole bath. Jesus said, "No, only your feet are dirty". What that meant was Peter had already gone through the conversion process and all his sins had been forgiven and his heart had changed and he now had a new nature. His heart no longer desired to do everything in this list, such as murder,

adulteries, sexual immoralities and so on. His new heart was pushing him towards obedience. But, his flesh on the other hand was reminding him of how good those sins use to make him feel and was pulling him in the other direction. That is why John wrote *1 John 1:6–10* *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (ESV)*

Final words:

How do you know you are a Christian? You know if your heart is being drawn ever closer to Him daily and you are despising more and more the ugliness of sins your flesh incites you to do.