

Sunday Morning Message

July 24, 2016

Looking unto Jesus and His Parable of the People Pleasers

Topic – Remaining Faithful

Text – Matthew 11:1 – 19; Luke 7:1 - 35

Congregational Reading – Luke 7:31 - 35

Our theme for the year is *Looking unto Jesus*

Our theme verses are Hebrews 12:1 – 2

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

This year, we will be preaching messages from the 4 gospel accounts in the New Testament and we will be closely examining the life of our Lord Jesus Christ while He walked the earth, learning the principles that He teaches us, specifically looking for ways to apply His life to our own.

Introduction

Read Luke 7:31 - 35

In our Scripture reading this morning Jesus teaches His disciples and us an important principle through the medium of a parable. You will remember that a parable is defined as an earthly story that illustrates a spiritual truth. In this Parable of the Children in the Marketplace, Jesus compares the people of His generation to children who are hanging out in a market who are expected to conform to the dictates of the culture around them. (Luke 7:31 – 32)

The illustration He used was given to teach that there were two men within their generation who refused to conform to the wishes and whims of the world – Himself and John the Baptist. They didn't dance because the world said they were supposed to and they didn't mourn solely because it was expected of them by the people around them. However, in this passage we learn that John and Jesus were not only unlike the rest of the world, they were (humanly speaking) not like each other. They had different personalities, different methods, different mannerisms. Yet, they were both highly effective in fulfilling the will of God. They were each unique. They weren't cut out of the exact same mold.

Illustration – In my younger days in the ministry, and especially in the years just prior to Bible college, I tried to fit into the stereotypical independent, fundamental Baptist mold. I became

enamored with men like Bob Gray and Jack Hyles. I wanted to be like them. I wanted to dress like them, comb my hair like them, preach like them, etc.

Somewhere along the line I figured out that God didn't want me to be exactly like Bob Gray or anybody else for that matter. He wanted me to be me. We are all supposed to be like Jesus in that we are supposed to love people and live our lives representing the Lord through the principles we learn from the Word of God, but that doesn't mean that we are supposed to be "cookie-cutter" copies of His earthly appearance, or any other person's for that matter. I can be me. You can be you. We are each uniquely designed and equipped by God to fulfill a certain part of His overall plan. We don't have to be exactly like each other, and that is OK.

Let's back up a little in Luke 7, and see the context surrounding this parable, and understand how the events that preceded it brought about this teaching in the first place.

I The Confusion of John the Baptist (Luke 7:18 – 20)

In v. 18, the disciples of John the Baptist had just brought news to John in the prison about what Jesus was doing. John had been placed in prison by Herod because he had preached against his adulterous relationship with Herod's brother's wife. In a short time, he would be put to death at the request of Herod's wife and daughter.

Anyway, John learned from his disciples that Jesus had just preached His famous Sermon on the Mount, and even more recently, He had healed a Roman centurion's son (Luke 7:1 – 10), and had actually raised a man from the dead. (Luke 7:11 – 17)

In v. 19 - 20, John sends the two disciples back to Jesus because apparently there were some things that he was confused about and he wants to know if there is somebody else besides Jesus who was going to come from God to deliver the people of Israel (and him) from the hands of the corrupt Roman government. John was in prison. Things were going exactly as he envisioned them. In his discouragement, his faith in the Lord had faltered a bit.

Note – it is natural for us to doubt the Lord when we are discouraged. That is why it is so important to come to God, to the Bible, and to the Church when we get discouraged so that our faith can be strengthened.

II The Confirmation for John (vs. 21 – 22)

Jesus confirms to the disciples of John that He is doing exactly what He is supposed to be doing, and exactly what the Old Testament prophesied that He would do.

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 29:18-19)

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isaiah 35:4-6)

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;" (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Perhaps John was confused because Isaiah promised that the Lord would open the doors of the prison, and he had not yet been released. Jesus would soon release John from prison, but probably not in the way that John had imagined.

III The Correction of John (v. 23)

Notice that Jesus sends back to John a subtle warning. Don't be offended if God doesn't do things exactly the way you think He ought to do them. Jesus was doing exactly what the Bible said He would do, but He wasn't doing exactly what John thought He should be doing. Be careful. God has a big plan, involving billions of people in a big world. He knows what He is doing. He is going to fix the mess that we have made of this world because of our sin. But don't be offended if His plans and purposes don't conform to your pleasures.

IV The Commendation of John (vs. 24 – 30)

Privately, Jesus tells his disciples that John the Baptist was the greatest of all of God's prophets. But he also tells them that John was very unique in what he was called to do, and very different from others in the Kingdom that God had also greatly used.

V The Conclusion with a Parable (vs. 31 – 35)

Jesus concludes the discussion of John with this Parable of the Children on the Marketplace who were expected to conform to the wishes of the people around them. When the world said it was time to dance, they were expected to dance, and when the world said it was time to cry, they were expected to cry.

Concluding Thoughts

1 Don't Conform to the World's Expectations of You.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the

eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world:..." (Romans 12:1-2)

2 Transform into What God Expects from You.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

If you and I fall in love with Jesus and learn to love and apply His Word to our lives, we will gradually change into what God wants us to be. We will love people and we will want to see them saved. We will love righteousness and hate the iniquity that is rampant in our world.

3 Don't Try to Be a Carbon Copy of Other Christians

I can't be you and you can't be me. God has uniquely designed His creation. There are no two trees exactly alike. The beauty of Creation is in its diversity and variation. And, even within the church there ought to be much diversity.

We have different personalities.

We have different strengths and weaknesses.

We have different purposes and callings.

We are uniquely equipped and gifted.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:3-8)