

LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part twenty - Sunday, June 30th, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

JOHN - From Temper to Tenderness (the work of God in changing fallen temperaments)

- 1) **SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION** - Something of the character of James and his brother John is summed up by Jesus in **Mark 3:17** where Jesus is the one who gives them the name "***Sons of thunder***". We will see more of their ***proud ambition***, their ***impulsive anger***, and their ***blind narrowmindedness*** in later points.

Peter, James and John seem to form a special inner circle of closeness with Jesus. John stresses the importance of sheer "***belief***" more than any other writer (98 times in 21 chapters). Some things have to be ***believed*** in order to be fully ***known***.

As far as we know, John was the only disciple to be with Jesus at the foot of the cross. Jesus entrusted His mother to John's care - **John 19:26-27** - "**When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" [27] Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.**"

John spent his last years in ***Ephesus***, writing his last three Epistles from there. We know he was well known by several early church leaders (***Polycarp, Papias and Ignatius***). The Emperor ***Domitian*** banished John to the Island of Patmos where John received the Revelation (**Revelation 1:9**). In **96 A.D.** he was released by ***Emperor Nerva*** and ***returned to Ephesus***. He died a natural death at an old age, probably the last Apostle to die.

- 2) **THE MANIFESTATION OF EGO AND PRIDE IN THE HEART OF JOHN - Mark 9:38-41** - “John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” [39] But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. [40] For the one who is not against us is for us. [41] For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.”

What disturbed the twelve was the apparently *unauthorized use of the Name and power of Jesus*. Perhaps their feelings were even more assaulted because they themselves had been powerless in such a case of demonization just a few verses earlier (9:14-18).

Jesus is quick to point out *how careful they needed to be in speaking out for Him when He had not called them to do so*. They were being unduly narrow and sectarian in their refusal of an unnamed servant who a) *understood Jesus' mission as a confrontation with the powers of Satan*; and b) *understood Jesus had both and power and the desire to deliver*.

Please do not miss the point of this passage. Whether or not the man was exercising this ministry properly or not (we have no reason to assume that he wasn't) is *not* the point of the passage. What Jesus was saying to His disciples was *He had not called upon them to judge and certify every minister they encountered to meet their standards*.

And right at this point we need to note an important distinction. This wasn't an issue of **false doctrine** being propagated. There is no tolerance in the Scriptures for false doctrine. There are two principles that must be embraced **together** if we're to catch the tone of the New Testament on where tolerance should be exercised and where it shouldn't. This is made clear when you compare these two important Scriptures:

Philippians 1:15-18 - "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. [16] The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. [17] The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. [18] What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice...."

Here are some people who try to rival Paul for an audience. He lists one group who have no deep love for Christ. They preach Christ only to get recognition and prestige. But Paul was OK with them. He had no desire to shut them down because the message they were proclaiming was a true message, even if their motives were rotten to the core.

But Paul wasn't **blindly** tolerant. **Galatians 1:6-8 - "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— [7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."**

No tolerance here. Just a bold cursing from our beloved Apostle. Why? Because this wasn't like the situation in Philippi. Here the **message itself** was being tampered with. Never tolerate the bending of absolute truth. Not for one second.

Back to our account in Mark chapter 9. This individual wasn't teaching anything false. But he wasn't one of the original twelve. Also, he was casting out demons when, just a few verses earlier, Jesus' disciples had been powerless to do so. And it hurt their pride. And Jesus didn't like the pride He saw in His disciples' hearts. That's not a bad reminder for any of us.

See **Acts 19:11-20** - **“And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, [12] so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. [13] Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus, whom Paul proclaims." [14] Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. [15] But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" [16] And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. [17] And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. [18] Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. [19] And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. [20] So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.”**

This passage has great relevance to our topic. The Holy Spirit has His own way of sifting and separating the genuine from the counterfeit. We do not have to feel we are the only safeguards God has in place to protect His power.

3) **THE IMPULSIVENESS AND ANGER OF JOHN - Luke 9:51-56 -**

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. [52] And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. [53] But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. [54] And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" [55] But he turned and rebuked them. [56] And they went on to another village.”

John considered the Samaritan rejection of Jesus was best responded to with immediate judgment. Jesus should call fire down on these ungrateful, unbelieving people. Jesus is quick to point out that ***even though they have been following Him for some time now, they were still operating with a deeply flawed attitude.*** Should none of these people be given another chance to respond to Jesus' love? Would any of the disciples have fared well if Jesus turned them into lepers at the first sign of sin. Obviously, Jesus was right. They didn't know what they were talking about.

How hard it seems to be to learn the ***character*** of Christ's kingdom. It's easier to desire the ***power*** of the kingdom more than to reveal the ***nature*** of Christ's kingdom. Also, we learn here that one can actually ***experience*** the power of Christ's kingdom more easily than actually loving and modelling the humble servant nature of it. That's because when we crave the ***power*** of the kingdom of God in our lives we're usually thinking of ***receiving*** that power ourselves. When we discover the servant ***nature*** of Christ's kingdom it pushes us to ***give away*** our lives for God's glory rather than our own.

This is instructive. It seems the last area of our hearts to be totally converted is the ***spirit of vengeance and retaliation***. How often we can respond like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. Once you blow it, you blow it. How different from Jesus who said "...I **did not come to judge the world but to save the world.**" Sinners aren't the ***enemy***. They're ***victims*** of the enemy. Most of our anger isn't as righteous as it seems to us.

- 4) **THE SELFISH AMBITION OF JOHN - Mark 10:35-39 - "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." [36] And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" [37] And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." [38] Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" [39] And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,**

How sad it must have been for Jesus that immediately after reminding them of His death and resurrection (**10:33-34**) the disciples are still seeking power and greatness on earthly terms rather than Kingdom terms. The fact that the other disciples were upset with James and John shows that ***they too were probably worried that the other two might get some advantage over them in the Kingdom***. If they were totally secure and confident as to how Jesus' Kingdom worked they might have felt pity for James and John, being so misinformed. But they probably would not have been so threatened and angry.

Mark 10:42-45 - “And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [43] But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- 5) **LESSONS FOR US** - *First*, it should be heartening for all of us to see that even in Jesus' closest followers there was much room for growth long after they had been following Him intimately for some time. We should all kneel by our beds tonight and thank God that He doesn't respond to our rebellious hearts like the disciples wanted to casting down fire on stubborn rebels.

Second, the particular sins that seem to hold on to our hearts the longest deal with areas of ***temper, intolerance to the fallen, and pride***. These are the inward sins that only those closest to us will probably notice. We will only root them out when we come to love Jesus more than we love ourselves. That makes them the ultimate litmus test for devotion to our Lord.

Third, Jesus loved John dearly with all of his faults. This comes out so clearly in **John 13:23** - “**One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus....**” This doesn't mean He wanted John just to remain the way he was. But He will keep working with us as we follow Him and strive to obey His voice.