

February 14, 2021

Come and See: The God of Freedom

Well, we're at the end of the Epiphany season and we've been working under the theme of Come and See. We've come, we've seen some biblical greats, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, Anna, Simeon, Wiseman, Daniel. All of them great believers who obeyed our Lord.

Last week we took a little bit of a turn and we saw how Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit comes to us with pal teaches us all things brings to our remembrance that which we've been taught also gives us the very words to speak. We also learned last week that it is the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead and will raise us from the dead as well.

Today we again come and see, but you might not like the first part of the sermon. It's come and see yourself, look in the spiritual mirror. We ended last week with Paul and Romans 8:11 telling us that we will be raised, quote "through His spirit who dwells in you," so let me ask the obvious question. Why do you deserve this? What have you done to deserve the Holy Spirit dwelling within you? And let's take a look at what the Bible says about us and our deserving. If we look in Romans 3 verse 10, Paul quotes Psalm 14:3 and Psalm 51:3 where both of them say "none is righteous, no not one." Paul uses that then also to build on the concept of Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The result of that, we all know that one Roman 6:23 "the wages of sin is death."

In other words, as we start to look in this spiritual mirror, it leads us to say 'we're all going to die.' Which almost sounds like something you'd hear and some horror movie. "We're all gonna die!" But it is truth because of sin; we are sinners, we're all going to die. But it's more than that. I know the news just keeps getting better, right? Hebrews 9:27 tells us it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgement. So when our eyes close in death, they open to standing before God, Almighty and judgment.

What does the Bible tell us about that judgment? Listen very carefully to what was revealed to John in the Book of Revelation. Revelation 21:8 “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars; their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death.” So we have the first death which is physical death our bodies cease to function, and there is the second death. It's both physical and spiritual, it is condemnation to hell. And when we look at that passage from revelation chapter 21, it's easy to understand the second part of it which leads with murderers. When we think of murderers, we think well yeah that person deserves to be judged they took the life of another. And yet as we think of that sin of commission, that you commit you choose to do it. Jesus takes it that step further in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, where He tells us that if you are angry with your brother you've committed murder; if you insult your brother, you commit murder; and if you call him you fool, you commit murder. You are, according to Him, and I quote “subject to the hell of fire.”

But murder can also be not a sin of commission, it can be a sin of omission. As we move on to Matthew chapter 25, we see Jesus speaking: “As you did not do it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did not do it to me.” And this one is what takes us back to the first part of revelation 21. This is what deals with the sin of omission; not doing what we should do. But as for the cowardly; in the Greek, the word cowardly means fearful, scared, timid, *faithless*. Now think about that as we go to the very next thing. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, wait if a coward is one who is scared, fearful, timid, or faithless. Why do we have faithless there? And this is where we struggle with Greek and trying to put it accurately into English. The Greek word that is there is actually a compound word it literally means no trust; and it speaks to the condition of our heart, our spirituality. It is what leads to the cowardice. There's no trust in God, in His Word, or in His Spirit; and as a result that leads to us being the detestable. Again, the Greek word there means to render foul, or to cause to be abhorred. Notice a three-step progression, we could be trinitarian. It escalates from cowardly to faithless or not trusting God, to detestable in God's sight. These are the people that Jesus speaks about who on the last day will cry to Him and say Lord, Lord, and He'll say depart from me I never knew you.

This is the Christian with lowercase c, who doesn't trust or do anything to enable the Holy Spirit to teach him, give him power, bring to his remembrance what Jesus has said, or give him the words to speak. Instead, it's the person who is scared to death of speaking the truth to someone for fear that they might offend them; or let's be very honest for fear for themselves that they might lose that friend, neighbor, family member. In reality, it's number one on the next list. As for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers. You see the person who is cowardly, who was faithless, who is detestable, is seen by God as a murderer because they will not confront or correct the sexually immoral. They hide behind it and say 'I can't say that, that's hate speech.' When in reality it is loving speech. To lovingly point out to someone that the path they are going on is the wrong path that leads to the fires of hell.

They are the ones who will not confront or correct the sorcerers. And we probably think that of someone with a pointy hat, and you know casting spells. Again, we have to look at the Greek word for this to see what it's really saying. The word for sorcerer literally is the exact same word that we get pharmacy or pharmaceutical from. It's a negative sense, it is the person who is literally a poisoner, who gives bad medicine. And how do they give this bad medicine? Well, they teach or they tell people to trust in the incantations, the trinkets, the charms, or the things that they are willing to offer or sell to you for your salvation or for your well-being. It's also those who poison the minds with false teaching, as if what they say or what they teach will give you wellness, when in reality it leads to death.

This is followed by idolatry, and the cowardly will not confront idolatry. Again, here in the Greek, what does it literally mean? Well it has two meanings to it, to worship an image or to worship a servant or person. In the Old Testament we see Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego being told to bow down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar. They would not do it. It was wrong, but at the same time, we see today people not bowing down to images, but literally worshipping people. And we've seen it really grow over the last 12 years. There are people who worship Donald J. Trump as if he is the savior. But he is not. He had some good policies, but as a person, he had many faults. Consider his Twitter and what the Bible tells us; "Let no unwholesome word come out of your

mouth only that which is be fitting for the upbuilding of the Saints.” It was wrong, but at the same time, you have people who literally like worshipping Joe Biden and when you look at his policies, many of them fit into this category of dealing with sexual immorality and at what all. It's wrong! Yes, he's a nice guy and people voted for a guy that seems like a nice guy, but again if we put our hope in the people, we are putting our hope in sinners; and neither is the answer.

Why? Well again, it comes to the last thing the cowardly do not confront the liars. It's the pastors who will not stay true to God's word. They're cowardly so they're not willing to say gay marriage is wrong, they're not willing to say abortion is wrong, they're not willing to say alcoholism is wrong, they're not willing to say a foul mouth is wrong. It's the teachers, who teach the children that well, you don't really know if your boy or girl till you make that decision. It's the politicians, who direct the teachers, who direct the people in this 'wokeness' or whatever you want to call it. It's just not biblical. It is the professors who are training the teachers and training the Journalists. It's the scientist who tell us that we came from a big explosion. This is that judgment part and it is very sobering because when you look in the mirror you see that we are sinners. We also see that we oftentimes fit the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable.

But that's where we get to shift gears a little bit. You see, when we think about that we've done nothing to earn our resurrection by the Spirit. Therefore, if we are going to be raised, it makes us debtors to God. We owe Him for what He has done, for what He is going to do. That is where we can now say, 'Come and see the God of freedom.'

In our gospel this morning, Jesus says, "If the son sets you free you will be free indeed." And when we look at the whole context, He is talking about the relationship between Him and His Father. He is the Heir and so when the Father passes on to Him, whatever He passes on, Jesus can do with it whatever He wants. He was given all mankind and He died for all mankind, and He is saying; "If I set you free, you will be set free because you are mine. I bought you at a price." It's like the son setting free a slave that his father gave him. The son can do that and so he sets us free from sin. He sets us free from death, the first death the physical

death. We will be raised on the last day through the power of the Holy Spirit. And the second death, condemnation to hell. We have been set free from that because our sin has been atoned for by Jesus Christ.

but here is the part where Paul now takes it and gives us a little bit of a metaphor. And he talks about the creation itself and he personifies it; the creation all of it around us that God created is bound to sin because of man sinned, we sinned. Try to imagine if you were creation personified. Personify creation in your mind, that your creation. You were created to sustain life. But now because of the sin of a man in creation, you become cursed now you hinder life. Instead of the ground just growing up with grapevines or with corn or whatever, it now brings forth thistles and thorns. It brings about virus and bacteria and cancer. In fact, the creation has become a barometer. A barometer that can tell us of a coming storm. How does it do it? It does it through birth pains, it groans and what are those things that are birth pains, that hurt, but end up giving life? Famines, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunami's, natural disasters. This is what the Bible describes nature as doing under the effects of sin because it is no longer sustaining life. It's taking life, it's hindering life, and it's groaning under it because it knows what it was created for.

But most of all the thing that hurts creation the most, is that it has become a vault for the dead. Instead of sustaining life, it now receives the dead bodies, whether buried or ashes poured out, or whatever. And now you were creation, created to sustain life and now you've become the vault holding death and bringing about death. How would you feel?

And that's where Paul now speaks about the freedom that comes through the Holy Spirit. On judgment day, we the adopted, will be raised. What is the significance of this? Because adoption comes in two stages, the first stage is the signing of the paper. That's when Jesus rose from the dead. He atoned for our sin and He said you are mine. But adoption is not complete until you were placed in the home. And that is what will happen when the Holy Spirit raises us from the dead. We will experience the glory of being the adopted children placed with God. And creation is looking forward to that because the vault of death is opened, and life comes. The vault of death is open, and judgment comes. No longer is the

earth the holder of death. When death has been taken away from it, it will be freed, and it will be made new. The new heaven and the new earth. Try to imagine again the idea of a personified creation and how joyous that must be. And Paul shares that with us because that's how we are supposed to be feeling. Because we're just like that. We are sinners who have been set free, raised to the level of being the children of God, and we will be placed in His home with Him forever with no more of the pain or anything. Let me ask you what will your response be to that? I can't help but think it is going to be 'Hallelujah, praise the Lord!'

Now let's backtrack just a moment to right here, right now. Where are you? You're here in God's house, or you are in your house worshipping God there because of the pandemic. But it is symbolic. It is a foretaste of us being placed in our Father's house in heaven for all eternity. We come here, it is foretaste of what is to come. Just as on that day, when we are finally raised from the dead, we are restored, there's a new heaven and new earth and we are with God Himself. We look forward to that knowing that it's a promise and we now we basically are practicing praising God for what He has done. He has taken a sinner and made us the children of God. He has taken death and erased it, and given us life. We thank Him because He has done it all at no cost to us; but at total cost for Him, the death of His Son.

And this is how we transition from Epiphany, that time of the Lord being made known to us as our Savior and Redeemer and transitioning to Lent and seeing what it cost. It is my hope and my prayer that as we head into Lent, we don't stop coming and seeing; that we look forward to coming, to seeing the glories of our Lord, for Salvation, of His unbelievable love for us. He has called us, then as we come and we see and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are empowered as He teaches us all things, as He brings to our remembrance that which we've long it gives us the words to share with others and gives us the very words to sing His praises and to give Him thanks. For being right here in church today is a gift, a foretaste of what awaits us in heaven and being with our Father in our Father's house. To Him be glory forever and ever, Amen.