

05/22/11

Friend of God #4 – God Ruling Us

- Let me ask you to consider a series of questions this morning as we begin our time together...
- what defines you?...what makes you the person you are today?...what makes you tick?...
- what determined the decisions you made last week, last month...last year?...
- what determines the choices you are going to make today, and in the days ahead?...
 - how do you tell your story?...how do you explain the person you saw when you looked in the mirror this morning?...
- here's another way to think about that...
 - complete the sentence...I am _____
 - if you were going to use as few words as possible to define your existence, your identity, to tell/explain your story – in one sentence or less...what would it be?...
 - I am _____.
- please set that over to the side for a moment and ask yourself this...how does our world typically encourage us to answer these questions?...
- in broad terms, there are two options...two broad classes of answers...here's the first one...
- 1. A biological/physiological explanation.....**
 - the idea is – I am the product of my brain chemistry...(or perhaps the hormones in my body...)
 - on the other hand, I am the product of my genes...
 - which are two very different answers, but both of which fall under the heading of...I am what my body is making me to be...
 - so, men and women who subscribe to this particular cluster of answers would answer our question like this...
 - I'm depressed...if you are looking for a shorthand way for me to describe/explain my existence---that's it...
 - Summarize myself?...I'm depressed...or I'm bi-polar...or my child has ADHD...or Oppositional defiant disorder...
 - but many people in our culture have been taught to define themselves by their diagnosis, or their label...
 - at the very core issue of my being is some kind of problem with my body...
 - there's nothing deeper than that...there's nothing more influential than that...
 - and there's no real cure...at best it's a matter of managing the beast...
 - I am a product of my body chemistry or my genetic makeup...
 - now, let's make a couple of observations before we move on...
 - at this point, I'm not talking about proven medical diseases...
 - people don't generally say, what defines me is my cancer....what defines me is my diabetes...they may have those diseases which have been scientifically diagnosed and they are undergoing standard medical treatment...but people don't generally say that diseases like that define them...are the most important aspect of their story...powerful, yes – determinative – not usually...
- but setting objective medical diagnoses aside for a moment, there are literally hundreds and hundreds of psychological labels available to people in our culture, which frequently are

spoken of in ways that indicate that the label is the core issue...it is the defining characteristic...it answers all the questions we're posing this a.m....

- now, where do those labels come from?...everyone would agree on that answer...**Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV** - the lead editor was this man, **Allen Frances**...
- the reason that there is a IV, and technically, IVr (revised) is because there was a I published in 1952, a II in 1968, a III in 1980, a IIIr in 1987, a IV in 1994, and IVr in 2000...
- Frances was the editor of the current edition...but a new one is in the works...it was supposed to be published this year but the project has been postponed because, according to the publishers, there are some difficulties with the various theorists "coalescing"...that's a nice way of saying there's a lot of fighting going on...
- **Gary Greenberg**, who himself is a practicing psychotherapist, recently published an article entitled **The Book of Woe—Inside the Battle to Define Mental Illness**
- here's what Greenberg says about the importance of this DSM... **The book is the basis of psychiatrists' authority to pronounce upon our mental health, to command health care dollars from insurance companies for treatment and from government agencies for research. It is as important to psychiatrists as the Constitution is to the US government or the Bible is to Christians. Outside the profession, too, the DSM rules, serving as the authoritative text for psychologists, social workers, and other mental health workers; it is invoked by lawyers in arguing over the culpability of criminal defendants and by parents seeking school services for their children.**
- now, here's the problem...Allen Frances, the lead editor of the current edition, believes they made monumental errors in the version he oversaw, and he believes that the 5th version is going to be even worse...
- He told Gary Greenberg, **"There is no definition of a mental disorder. It's \$%#*. I mean, you just can't define it."**...he also said – **"These concepts are virtually impossible to define precisely with bright lights at the boundaries."**
- so the lead editor of the book that has given people in our culture hundreds of labels that in their minds are something they have...[it is a disease just like cancer...and it becomes the essential aspect of their story]...refers to the work he oversaw with words that a pastor can't even use on Sunday in the pulpit (or, at any other time for that matter...)...
- now, why is this important?...
- **Some of this disputatiousness is the hazard of any professional specialty. But when psychiatrists say, as they have during each of these fights, that the success or failure of their efforts could sink the whole profession, they aren't just scoring rhetorical points. The authority of any doctor depends on their ability to name a patient's suffering. For patients to accept a diagnosis, they must believe that doctors know—in the same way that physicists know about gravity or biologists about mitosis—that their disease exists and that they have it. But this kind of certainty has eluded psychiatry, and every fight over nomenclature threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the profession by revealing its dirty secret: that for all their confident pronouncements, psychiatrists can't rigorously differentiate illness from everyday suffering. This is why, as one psychiatrist wrote after the APA voted homosexuality out of the DSM, "there is a terrible sense of shame among psychiatrists, always wanting to show that our diagnoses are as good as the scientific ones used in real medicine."**
- so what have we said so far...we have many people in our culture, and sometimes in the church...who define themselves at the very core of their being with terms that the experts

know do not possess the kind of scientific authority and certainty as other academic disciplines...

- in other words...these labels aren't the result of blood being drawn...or X-rays being taken...
- so how are the diagnoses made?...
- **Since 1980, when the *DSM-III* was published, psychiatrists have tried to solve this problem by using what is called descriptive diagnosis: a checklist approach, whereby illnesses are defined wholly by the symptoms patients present. The main virtue of descriptive psychiatry is that it doesn't rely on unprovable notions about the nature and causes of mental illness, as the Freudian theories behind all those "neuroses" had done. Two doctors who observe a patient carefully and consult the *DSM's* criteria lists usually won't disagree on the diagnosis—something that was embarrassingly common before 1980. But descriptive psychiatry also has a major problem: Its diagnoses are nothing more than groupings of symptoms. If, during a two-week period, you have five of the nine symptoms of depression listed in the *DSM*, then you have "major depression," no matter your circumstances or your own perception of your troubles. "No one should be proud that we have a descriptive system," Frances tells me. "The fact that we do only reveals our limitations." Instead of curing the profession's own malady, descriptive psychiatry has just covered it up.**
- so we have people talking as if they have a proven medical problem in their physical body which becomes the definitive way of explaining who they are...when truthfully the label was simply given to describe – not blood work or objective test results – but to describe or classify observed behavioral characteristics...
- so what do we do with that?...
 - we know that there are legitimate medical problems...diseases are real because our bodies are cursed by sin...
 - and there are all sorts of things about our bodies that we don't yet understand and new discoveries being made every day...
 - but when we are talking about ultimate explanations...does anyone want to peg their hope and future on a book whose editors use profanity when discussing its merits and a system that simply observes and classifies external behaviors?...
 - here's the summary – we have bodies...and they can be diseased in way we do or don't understand...but most of us want a deeper ultimate explanation of our story than...I'm the product of my chemistry, or my genes, or a combination of both...
- so what is the other explanation our world offers?...

2. An environmental answer

- not air pollution or too many pesticides....
- they say – you are the way you are today because of what other people have done to you in the past...or what they are doing to you today...
- you act the way you act because you're Irish...
- you make the choices you make today because you came from a dysfunctional home or were abused in some way...
- or you are angry or depressed because your company doesn't pay you well or reduced your benefits plan...
- so who are you?...what defines you?...
 - I was abused as a child...I'm in a dead-end job...I'm in a bad marriage...I have dysfunctional parents...I am a passive victim...I am the product of my environment...
- so what defines me in this system is what other people did to me...
- and if people did certain things to me, my choices are preprogrammed...
 - disappointed people have to act a particular way...

- abused people have to respond in a particular fashion...
 - you can't expect me to trust women if my first wife cheated on me...
 - you can't expect me to like men if I was physically abused by a man...
 - someone else wound me up – I'm just walking out the natural course someone else set me on...
- so what do we do with that?...
 - we all agree that some men and women have grown up in horrible situations...
 - and that some people are suffering terribly today...
 - but is that the final word?...
- and comparing these two options, who's right?...is it nature (the way I was born)...or nurture (the way I was treated)?...
- is the most important thing about me the condition of my body?...or the way I have/am being treated by others?...
- what's our answer?...it's twofold...
 - one—there's something far deeper and more fundamental to who you are than either your body or your environment...
 - that is...the condition and direction of your heart...your soul...your inner person...not your blood pumper, but the way Scripture defines it...your control center...the "hidden person of the heart..."
 - not everybody who grows up in similar environment responds in the exact same way...
 - not everybody who struggles with depression or any of the hundreds of possible psychological labels responds in the exact same way...
 - because of the centrality of the heart...
 - the challenges we have with our body, diagnosed or not, understood or not...simply become the playing field on which the nature of your heart is exposed...
 - and the aspects of your environment (what people around you do)...they're not the final say...
 - they too become the playing field...the context in which the affections and desires and thoughts and intentions of your heart are manifested...
- so is what's going on in your body important? – yes, but not of ultimate importance...
- and is what's happening around you (in your environment) important? – yes, but not of ultimate importance...
- now, what's the other missing piece from our world's way of defining themselves...
- all of this is walked out under the tender gaze of the God of heaven...
- our omnipresent God...
 - as one theologian said – He's our true environment...
- therefore, the most important thing about you is not what's happening in your body physiologically, or what is happening in your circumstances environmentally...
 - important?...yes....of ultimate importance...no...
 - what's most important is the condition/direction of your heart...
 - and the identity of your God...
- that is why it is so important to understand what it means to be **a Friend of God**...
- with that in mind, please open your Bible to Romans 10:9...
- this spring we're doing a series entitled Friend of God...
 - in the first message we just looked at what we called an Outrageous Possibility...

- we studied what James said about Abraham...and were amazed that Scripture refers to him as a friend of God...
- what an incredible privilege to contemplate that position because of Jesus Christ has done for us...
- now we're looking at various aspects of what that really means...
- so Pastor Dutton examined the issue of God Reaching Out to Us...friends certainly do that...stand at the door and knock...
- and then last Sunday we looked at God Dwelling With Us...His Spirit takes up residence in us...He'll never leave us or forsake us...
- this morning – we're talking about...**God Ruling Us—Coming to Grips with Jesus as Our Benevolent King**
- read Romans 10:9-13
- here's the point this morning...one of the best ways to answer the question Who Am I is, **I'm a joyful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I'm responding to whatever challenges I might be facing in my body, or in my circumstances, in a way that recognizes and celebrates God's sovereign control over my life and provision for my growth and well-being...**
- and that comes from understanding the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ...
- with the time we have remaining, let's think about **3 truths about the Lordship of Christ that help us properly define ourselves.**

I. Jesus is the Benevolent King of Each of Those Who Truly Know Him.

- this may or may not be a debate with which you're familiar, but one of the issues that pastors and theologians and men and women in local churches have to come to grips with is...what actually is involved in becoming a follower of Christ?...
- are you simply believing the facts of what Jesus did on the cross and asking Him to be your Savior...
 - or is repentance involved...a turning from your sin and a commitment to follow Him as one's Lord?...
 - theologically that's been called the Lordship Salvation controversy...do you have to accept Jesus as Lord in order to be saved, or is that non-essential, or perhaps a decision you make somewhere down the line, subsequent to being saved?...
 - what did Paul mean in Romans 10:9 when – if thou shalt confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord?...

A. The confusion on this issue historically.

- there are two trends in fundamental Christianity, and evangelical Christianity that got us to the point where some people would suggest that you don't have to accept Jesus as Lord to be saved...
 - 1. Revivalism**
 - I want to be careful here to not be unfair or paint things with an overly broad brush...
- but it hasn't been that long ago that churches, and sometimes entire communities frequently had revival meetings...
- they would be held in tents, or big tabernacles that were constructed just for that purpose...
 - and I'm not talking about in California somewhere...this was right here in Indiana...

- where some itinerant preacher would come to town and there would be a big crusade or revival meeting...
- and I'm sure a lot of good was accomplished in those meetings...
- but there was also tremendous pressure to see people raise their hands, or walk the aisle (or walk the sawdust trail as it used to be called because many of these meeting places didn't even have floors)...
- well, in that setting, it would be very hard for a person to fully understand the nature of the commitment they were making...
- and there could also be so much emphasis on the blessings and benefits of becoming a Christian, along with all sorts of heart wrenching stories and sensationalism that played on ones emotions...that there wasn't as much time to emphasize exactly what the person was actually committing themselves to in terms of turning from sin and submitting to Christ as one's Lord and king...
- that's why you have all sorts of people in towns all over Indiana and many other places in our country where their hope of heaven is the day they walked the aisle at some meeting like that but that was literally the end of any legitimate relationship with Christ...
- no ongoing discipleship, Bible study, church involvement...they just received their fire insurance from hell by walking an aisle or raising their hand and that's the end of that...
- and the point is – that is not the biblical gospel...

- then there's the issue of:

2. Second blessing theology

- many churches teach that you accept Christ as savior...and then at some subsequent time you have a crisis experience where you submit to His Lordship...
- so you are waiting for the second blessing...but that is not essential for salvation...it is for the super-saint or the especially pious person...

- all of that fails to recognize...

B. The centrality of repentance and Lordship to the gospel message.

- Peter made this doctrine abundantly clear in the very first message he preached on the day of Pentecost...
- **Acts 2:36** - **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”**
- the apostles said the same thing to the Philippian jailer...
- **Acts 16:31** - **They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”**
- **“The Lord will not save those whom He cannot command. He will not divide His offices. You cannot believe on a half-Christ. We take Him for what He is—the anointed Savior and Lord who is King of Kings and Lord of all lords. He would not be who He is if He saved us and called us and chose us without the understanding that He can also guide and control our lives” (A.W. Tozer, I Call it Heresy, pp. 18-19).**

C. Lordship was emphasized repeatedly in Jesus' ministry.

- **Matthew 16:24** - **Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.**
- **Matthew 10:37** - **He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**

- and we could multiply references like that from the teaching of Jesus from all sorts of perspectives...no one could accuse Jesus of not practicing full disclosure...
- **This is a common defect in times of prosperity. In days of hardship, particularly persecution, those who are in the process of becoming Christians count the cost of discipleship carefully before taking up the cross of the Nazarene. Preachers do not beguile them with false promises of an easy life or indulgence of sins. But in good times, the cost does not seem so high, and people take the name of Christ without undergoing the radical transformation of life that true conversion implies (James Montgomery Boice, Christ's Call to Discipleship, p. 14).**

D. Lordship was emphasized repeatedly in the apostles' ministry.

- **2 Corinthians 4:5 - For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.**
- how could it be any clearer than that?...so...

E. It is essential that we choose to view ourselves as living in joyful submission to a marvelous king.

- **The call to Calvary must be recognized for what it is: a call to discipleship under the lordship of Jesus Christ. To respond to that call is to become a believer. Anything less is simply unbelief (John MacArthur, The Gospel According to Jesus, p. 30).**

II. Jesus' Lordship Helps You Exercise Dominion Over Your Environment (Circumstances).

- another crucial passage we need to bring into this discussion is...
- **Genesis 1:26 - Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."**
- one theologian referred to that as God creating us to be dominion havers...to submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ in a way that in turn, helps us rule over our circumstances and over our bodies in joyful obedience to Him...
- the view that I'm a victim of my circumstances, or I'm a victim of my body – those are the most important aspects of my identity and there is nothing I (or God) can do about it is the polar opposite of the way we were designed...
- Christ's Lordship puts your circumstances in the back of the bus...
 - sorry circumstances...but you're not driving the bus of my life...
 - Jesus is the King...and I am cooperating with His work
 - so circumstances—you have a place, but it's in the back of the bus not the front...

A. Jesus allows and directs our circumstances

- **Ephesians 1:11 - also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,**
- you can't possibly be a helpless, passive victim if you have a sovereign Lord who is control of this universe...

B. Jesus uses our circumstances for our good and His glory.

- **Romans 8:28 - And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**

- many times that is to reveal the nuances of our hearts that need to change, grow, and be drawn closer to Him...

III. Jesus' Lordship Helps You Exercise Dominion Over Your Body.

- I certainly don't want to minimize physical disease...and I repeat, there is a lot about our bodies that we do not know...
- but it is incredibly reductionistic to suggest that the defining issue for any of us is what is happening with our bodies...
- that denies the existence of our worshipping hearts, and the sovereignty of our Lord...
- and he has allowed us to face all sorts of challenges with our sin cursed bodies so that His redemptive purposes can be revealed in us

A. He can help you overcome sin in your physical body.

- **Romans 6:6-7 - knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.**

B. He can use disease as an opportunity to mold you into the image of Christ.

- **Psalm 119:71 - It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.**

