

The Gospel According to Luke
September 16, 2018
Reading: Matthew 9:14-17

Sermon #18
Luke 5:33-39
(Mt. 9:14-17 & Mk. 2:18-22)

Gospel Truth

Eternal

We live in an age where everything is jumbled up; right can be wrong and wrong can be right. White is grey and black is grey. There are few boundaries. In the midst of our society's chaos stands the Gospel of Christ with its absolute truth that is eternal. The word or label "Christian" in America and in the world for that matter has come to mean many things because of syncretism. Syncretism means merging many concepts, schools of thought and religious ideas into Christianity resulting in the corruption of the Gospel of Christ. After John the Baptist was arrested Jesus said, **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."** (Mark 1:15) The Gospel of Christ cannot be mixed in or up with any other belief systems or philosophies and remain the Gospel of Christ. Jesus made this quite clear, saying, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** (John 14:6) Jesus says there is absolute truth and it is only found in the Word of God – there is right and wrong, and there is black and white, and this absolute truth is found in God, not man.

When Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin for trial they testified, **"there is salvation in no one else (*speaking of Jesus Christ*), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12) Peter did not say it is the Gospel of Christ plus what man-made religions and philosophies add over the centuries until Jesus returns. Paul

said the same thing in his letter to the believers in Corinth, “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11) If one’s faith is not built upon Christ as their Lord and Savior, well then, their faith is false and founded in a foundation of sinking sand. If the foundation is not solid the whole gospel or building will fail and collapse – look at the Leaning Tower of Pisa built in the 12th century. Because the foundation was not solid and stable the tower began to lean and if the foundation had not be shored-up and made solid it would have continued leaning until it fell. It took 11 years and a great deal of money to stabilize the foundation. If the foundation is not set right and is not solid to begin with, the cost is always considerably more to remedy the problem later on. This is true in people’s lives as well. Those who add to or mix in other man-made philosophies to the Gospel of Christ take God’s solid foundation and make it unstable. As Jesus said, “everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” (Matthew 7:26) These people will lack the solid foundation of true faith, they are believing in a false Christ and will be separated from God forever.

Our postmodern world no longer believes in absolute truth and all one has to do is observe the result – chaos. As the chaos worsens man attempts to bring in more philosophies in an effort to find solutions, but the foundation becomes more unstable. The world then becomes more tolerant in an effort to find something that works – anything except God’s truth – because if they came to God’s truth they would have to confront their sin. In an attempt to prove themselves good unbelievers do good works, but their approach to social needs fails because they are not based on God’s truth. Long-term studies of secular drug rehab programs when compared to Christian faith-based programs shows the secular programs have a much - much higher failure and recidivism rates.

Failing to believe in God's truth is the mark of unbelievers and their unbelief condemns them. Reading from 2 Thessalonians, "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because **they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) This is the age man has lived in since the resurrection of Jesus and it grows worst with time and our time is chaos. The Gospel is the only light of truth shining into the darkness of the world.

You may be thinking, pastor what does this have to do with our passage in Luke 5, verses 33 to 39? Let share my reasoning. When Jesus confronted the Jewish religious leaders over the question of fasting, Jesus is showing the exclusivity of the gospel. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament but was incompatible with the religion men had made God's Word into. Judaism was concerned with self-righteousness but Jesus saw into their hearts saying, "**You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**" (Luke 16:15) The Gospel is concerned about a heart that is righteous. Jesus said clearly "**everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.**" (Luke 18:14) Judaism at the time Christ was concerned with what men thought, but the Gospel is concerned with what God thinks. Jesus taught,² "**Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. ...³ when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ...⁵ when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.**" (Matthew 6:2-3, 5) Jesus was teaching and was concerned about creating a relationship for believers with God and not the ritual of man-made religion. The

above words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 6, shows that Judaism was worried about external behavior and the Gospel was concerned about the attitude of one's heart. Jesus insisted the Gospel was exclusive, it was of God and not of man and it was this that was the foundation of the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. The Pharisees had already shown their hostility towards Jesus in his healing the paralytic and the confrontation at Matthew's home. Now the conflict between what is of God and of man intensifies.

Confronting

Reading at Luke 5:33, “[And they said to him meaning Jesus, ‘The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.’](#)” Who are they? This is where the other gospel accounts help, Matthew records that the “[they](#)” of Luke 5:33 are “[the disciples of John](#)” the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees in Matthew 9:14. The Pharisees do not surprise me, but John's disciples confronting Jesus are a little surprising to me. But we must remember not all of John disciples may have been present at Jesus' baptism. Not all of John disciples were necessarily true, just as Judas was not true to Jesus. Finally, people have times of doubt, even John the Baptist had doubt; when he was in prison he called “[two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’](#)” (Luke 7:19) Whatever, the circumstances John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees confront Jesus because the disciples of Jesus were violating Jewish religious custom and ritual by not publicly fasting and offering prayer. The disciples of John and the Pharisees were outward righteous and were not inwardly humble before God. Jesus told a parable that addressed this very problem later in Luke.

The parable of the Pharisees and tax collector in Luke 18, “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.’ ” *Don’t you just hate it when someone uses prayer as a weapon against others as this Pharisee did against the tax collector? The Pharisee continues in his prayer for men and not for God,* ¹² “ ‘I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ” Now listen to the prayer of a humble broken sinner. ¹³ “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 18:10-14) The Pharisees made a showing of fasting in public twice a week. However, there is only one fast mandated in the scriptures. Can anyone name this event? **Yom** - Hebrew meaning “day” **Kippur** meaning “to atone”. It is the holiest day of the Jewish year. It is a day for atonement and repentance. It is a day to be spent in fasting and prayer. The word **Kippur** is closely related to **Kapporet** or Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant where they thought God would appear to atone. This is why on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat of the Ark to atone for their sins. They should have known by this very act of going to where they felt God was that it is act of God’s mercy that sins are forgiven. Leviticus spoke of Yom Kippur and makes this clear, reading from chapter 16, beginning in verse 29, “And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves (*this phrase “afflict yourselves” means to fast and go without*) and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. ³⁰ For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall

be clean before the LORD from all your sins.” (Leviticus 16:29-30) Jesus was the final atonement, so that all who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior has their sins forgiven. The writer of Hebrews wrote, **“For this reason he (*Jesus*) had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”** (Hebrews 2:17) **Jesus is the Kapporet or Mercy Seat or final atonement and this is why the Ark is no longer needed.**

Jesus answers the disciples of John and the Pharisees condemning question with a question. What is the meaning of Jesus’ question?

Relevant

Jesus defends his disciple’s failure to fast in its true light. **“Jesus said to them, ‘Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?’ ”** Using a familiar experience for all Jews and we can think back to reading about the wedding at Cana. Weddings were a time of feasting not fasting, and a time of celebration not mourning, it was a time of laughing not weeping! Even though the Old Testament does not call the Messiah the Bridegroom it does say Israel is the bride of the Lord. Jesus wanted them to go back to the prophets of the Old Testament who spoke of Israel when it would be restored as the prophet Joel spoke of in chapter 3. Let me quickly build Jesus’ case from the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea. Speaking of Israel the prophet Isaiah said, **“As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.”** (Isaiah 62:5) The Lord said to Jerusalem through the prophet Jeremiah, **“I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me.”** (Jeremiah 2:2) Hosea speaks of the time that the Prophet Joel (3:18) referred to when Israel would be restored by God at the end of time as Joel said the restoration would be “in that day”, Hosea wrote, **“In that**

day”, declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’ ” (Hosea 2:16) Jesus’ use of the illustration of the bridegroom to lay the foundational concept from the Old Testament for the answer to the question asked by the disciples of John and the Pharisees.

Jesus answers his own question and the question of the disciples of John and the Pharisees in verse 35 saying, “The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” The joy, laughter, dancing and feasting of the wedding and celebrating the bridegroom will end when he is suddenly taken away. This is the first time Jesus refers to his death in the Gospel According to Luke. What Isaiah had predicted would come to pass, “By oppression and judgment he was taken away.” (Isaiah 53:8) Jesus would be oppressed and judged by the religious leadership who believed in outward ritual and feared what men thought. These religious would strike the Son of God and they would not go before the Kapporet or Mercy Seat of God but rather they would stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment for their actions.

Jesus’ disciples, after the bridegroom was removed, would indeed mourn and fast. One example of the disciples fasting is found in Acts chapter 13, verses 2 and 3, “While they (*the disciples*) were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” Fasting became a regular part of the life of Christians after Jesus, the bridegroom, departed and ascended to heaven. Fasting gives up or removes both the enjoyment and nourishment of food, and it frees time, so one may focus on who they are in Christ and what their Lord desires from them.

Jesus closes with a parable to illustrate the uniqueness of the gospel, which

is where I started this morning and now end.

Unique

Reading from verse 36, Jesus “also told them a parable: ‘No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’ ” Jesus’ point is that the gospel cannot be patched into Judaism. I did not say it was not compatible with the Old Testament; Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament. But the Gospel of Christ was and is at odds with Judaism that had become a religious system of ritual and works. The Gospel of Christ was at complete odds with the Jewish religious leaders and today it is at odds with any intrusion of man-made doctrine. No system of works can be patched into the Gospel of God’s grace through Christ.

Likewise, when wine ferments it expands and creates gas – placing new wine in an old wineskin will cause the old skin to rupture. New wine is placed in new skins that are supple and will expand with the fermenting process. The Lord’s illustration describes the tragedy of those who cannot let go of their old lives, of the world and yes, let go of the old system of salvation by works. People become complacent with the old wine they have been drinking all their lives – whether it is the lies of the world or the salvation by works of the false “Christian” religions. At the wedding in Cana people were enjoying the average wine of the world and Jesus at the end introduced the miracle of the best wine the steward had tasted. Nothing compares with the pure, sweet and eternally true Gospel of Christ.

There is no room in the Gospel of Christ for syncretism. Therefore we must hold fast to the Word of God. We must be concerned with what God thinks and not what man thinks.

Here is what I hope you leave with this morning. First, it is all about a relationship with God through Jesus Christ – it is by grace not works. Second, that we must strive to keep the Word of God pure and not let man-made philosophies or religion come into our church or our lives. Third, without your heart belonging to God all else is meaningless for eternity. Fourth, live life for the glory of God and do not be concerned with what people think of you.