

Who Are We?

Scripture Text: Luke 8:16-21

Introduction

Who are we? I may receive many different answers to that question. We are Americans. We are North Carolinians. We are people of the Pocomoke Community. A good answer would be we are disciples of Jesus Christ. Oftentimes, who we say we are does not match what we say or do. Our actions often tell a different story of who we are. Last week, we looked at being teachable. It is important to listen and to obey God when He tells us to do something. We need to be a people who *live out the gospel of Jesus Christ*, who are so changed by the blood of Christ that it shows. What shows others we truly follow Christ? What shows others we have been changed by God's grace? It is our love for one another. It is our faithfulness to God. It is also our obedience to His Word. Faithfulness is not easy, though. Obedience is hard, particularly when we want to do what we want to do. We come up with all sorts of reasons for not following God's Word:

*I know I should forgive him/her for what he/she did to me, but it hurts too much.
 I know I should call or visit my church family, but I am too busy.
 I know I should read my Bible and pray more, but there is not enough time.
 I know I should share what God has given me, but it is mine; I want it for myself.*

What we really mean by saying those things is "I hear what you are saying, God, but I think my way is better." We often know what we should do, but we just do not want to do it. What we want to do gets in the way of what God desires to do. When that happens, it clouds who we say we are. When we think we know better than God, or we think what God has said is wrong, it shows the world that we are not *really* following Christ, but rather ourselves. We forget who He is, who we are, and what we should be doing. So, who are we and what should we be doing? This passage answers those questions. It is broken into two main sections. The first is a parable about what we should do with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The second reveals who the true followers of Jesus is.

What Are We Showing Others?

Just before this passage, Jesus told a crowd of people a parable about the sower and the seed. If you recall, only the good soil, those who hear God's Word and hold fast to it, will bear fruit in life. That parable emphasizes the importance of how listeners are to respond to hearing God's Word. Then Jesus mentioned another parable about what we should do with the seed that was planted within us. Look at the verses below.

Luke 8:16-18 ¹⁶ "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

It is interesting that Jesus used the image of a lamp to make His point here. What is the purpose of a lamp? What is the purpose of lights in a room or building? The whole purpose of lighting a lamp is so it will give light to a dark area. We turn the lights on to illuminate the room we are using. Who, then, lights a lamp and then covers it up? It defeats the purpose of doing it. This reminds me of a fun song that children will sing.

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
 This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
 This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
 Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine.*

*Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine
 Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine
 Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine
 Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine.*

Are you letting your light shine in your life? Are you covering it up? You may wonder what this little light, or lamp, is. The lamp in Jesus' parable is the gospel message of Christ. Lighting the lamp and letting it shine refers to those who hear the Word of God that He planted within them, who then let the light of the gospel shine so that others can see Christ. If we are the good soil that receives the seed of God's Word, we will bear fruit by speaking the good news of Jesus throughout the world (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). The message of hope we receive from God, the gospel, illuminates and drives away the darkness of sin, guilt, and death. How a person responds to God's revelation of Jesus Christ determines whether he or she will receive more revelation, more light. The one who receives God's Word, whose soil is good where the seed will grow, will understand the gospel better, and more revelation will be given. However, the one who does not listen, who does not receive and believe the gospel, will lose even what he has heard.

If we are disciples of Christ, we must not hide the message of Jesus Christ from the world. Our main mission is to make disciples. That is the Church's mission. Therefore, why would Jesus give you His light just for you to cover it up? Why would Jesus give us the message of hope, just so we can remain silent and never share that hope with others? Why would God save us, sanctify us, and empower us with His Holy Spirit just so we can sit comfortably each Sunday morning to sing songs and to hear His Word while the rest of the world goes to hell? Why? The answer is God would not give the lamp of the gospel for you to hide it. How will people "turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18) unless those who know the message of hope, the Church, let their light shine? Once we receive the gospel, we have a responsibility to share it and to live it. So, are you showing the lamp of Christ or are you hiding your little light? Let it shine!

Who Are We...Really?

It is a tremendous blessing to live in a relatively free country. God has blessed the United States of America with enormous freedom. Whatever freedom we have as

Americans, which can and may be taken away, does not compare to our freedom in Christ. We are more free in Christ than we are in our American liberty. We were once slaves to sin, but now, Jesus has set us free. Christian liberty is freedom *from sin*. It is not freedom to do whatever we want. Peter Marshall once said, “May we think of freedom, not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right.” Do you think of freedom that way? We may be free people, but we are not free to thank God for His grace and then live like the devil. Those who are in Christ are the people of God who are adopted into His family with certain expectations. In fact, Jesus referred to us as His family in this passage, but with a qualification. Look at the next few verses.

Luke 8:19–21 ¹⁹ *Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd.* ²⁰ *And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.”* ²¹ *But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”*

Did you see the qualification in that passage. Jesus said a shocking statement. If I had said it to my mother, I might have gotten an earful. Think about what Jesus was saying, though. He was teaching a crowd of people and then His mother and brothers came desiring to see Him. When someone told Him that they wanted to see Him, He told the crowd that His mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God. What do you think Mary thought of that? That's my son, again! But, was that what Jesus said? Did He say that those who *hear* God's Word were His mother and brothers? No! Jesus said, “My mother and my brothers are those who *hear* the Word of God and *do it*.” Jesus was not disregarding His earthly family or telling us to do the same. He was saying that the service of God and following Him was more important than any natural relation.

For Jesus, spiritual relationships were more important than physical ones. His real family is made up of those who hear the Word of God and do it. Obedience to the will of the Father is the defining characteristic of the family of God. The true family of God consists of those who hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, believe it, and then obey it. To hear God's Word is of no value unless it is accompanied by faith, as the seed that is planted in good soil represents. Yet, that faith is of no value unless it is a faith that puts God's Word into practice (Luke 8:21). We must not only hear God's Word, but we must also put it into practice. We must do it! Jesus said something similar in Luke chapter eleven where He said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:27–28). We are blessed to not only hear the Word of God, but to obey it. This sounds very similar to something James wrote. The key to true blessedness is doing, not just hearing, the Word of God. We must be *doers* of the Word.

James 1:22–25 ²² *But be **doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.* ²⁴ *For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.* ²⁵ *But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

There is a difference between the hearer and the doer. There are people who will tell you they will do something, but then they will turn around and not do it. There are people who will make you a promise, but they will not do it. There are people who claim to follow Christ, but their lives do not shine the gospel. What does your faith really say about you? Or better yet, what do your actions really say about your faith? Are you deceiving yourself and others? Are you forgetting who you should be? Are you missing the blessing of following Christ and doing His Word? The *doer* of God's Word allows "the perfect law of freedom" (the gospel) to shape his or her life. The person who hears and does the Word of God puts faith into action and is blessed by doing it. The gospel is not something that just impacts our lives at one moment. It is also not something that impacts our lives only one day of the week. The gospel permeates our entire life. The gospel impacts every thing and every decision we make. Being a doer of the Word allows it to take root in our lives and bear much fruit.

Thus, there is a practical aspect of our faith. It is not just saying you believe in Jesus. It is not just showing up for church on Sunday morning. It is not just having one's name on the membership roll or participating in various church events. The practical aspect of our faith in Jesus Christ is showing Jesus to others. It is letting the light of the gospel shine on this dark world. It is using your faith to help other people. Use the Word of God as a mirror to your soul. Look into the Bible and see what it reveals about you, who you are, what you should do, and then do it. To read God's Word, hear what He says, and then go on our way not doing what He says, is like looking into a mirror, seeing an imperfection and then forgetting what we looked like. If we are in the family of God, then we will hear the Word of God and then do the Word of God. What area of your life do you need to submit to God's will today? Where are you failing to do His Word? How can you shine the gospel a little brighter in this dark world?

Conclusion

In closing, who are we, really? Are we a people who say we follow Christ but do not really follow Him? Are we a people who cover the lamp of Christ and the gospel that is within us? Are we a people who hear God's Word, we know what it says, but do not do God's Word? Or, are we a people who by faith will let the light of Christ shine? Are we a people who will faithfully do God's Word, who will practice what we say we believe, no matter how difficult it is, or how much it conflicts with what we want, or how much it just does not make sense? Is that the people we are? May it be so! Therefore, do not be just a hearer of God's Word. Do not be someone who has dead faith. Faith that is not represented by good works is useless (James 2:14-17). Faith must be active and living for it to be of any use. So, let us be a doer! Let us shine the gospel of Jesus Christ in this dark, sinful, and lost world. Thanks be to God. Amen!