

Title: Think Jesus!! pt.1
Text: 1 Corinthians 6.9-11
Theme: The Call to a Holy Community
Series: 1 Corinthians #22
Prop Stmt.

Yesterday morning we left our son at college to begin his freshman year. Before we left, we prayed together and I reminded him that he is a follower of Jesus Christ, a member of Cornerstone Baptist Church and a Johnson. Who are you and how are you living?

You have to admit that in the fog of political correctness and the intentional vagueness of the way people even craft words today, this passage is like the fog horn on the Queen Mary. It is very, very clear. There are two extremes that this text demands that we avoid. The one extreme is to pretend that there really is no such thing as sin, and that every person's opinion about lifestyle is just as valid as another's. The other extreme to avoid is to pick out one sin in others that you do not like and focus exclusively on that, while you ignore the sin that is in your own life.

Because it is such a hotly contested issue, I might as well address it here at the beginning because it is often the issue in both extremes.

There is no way that a person can take the Bible seriously and at the same time try to justify homosexuality. Why do certain people live like that? Is it a choice, and therefore a sin, or is it because they are hardwired that way? The age old debate is, is it nature that makes them like this or is it nurture? On the nurture side of the argument as far as men are concerned is the overwhelmingly statistical evidence that, the lack of a positive male role model cannot be ignored. But what if a genetic predisposition toward homosexuality is discovered? Wouldn't that change everything? No, not at all. Even if that unlikely scenario were to take place it would be as a result of the fall of the creation into sin, not of the original design of the Creator. Besides, how could genes be the source when homosexuality is unable to procreate? Granted, there have been some fear-mongering and hate-mongering people who in seeking to address this issue in the public square have done so in a hateful way. The media loves to portray biblical Christians as being hateful, mean, bigoted and of course hypocritical. And yet, it appears to me that the worst hypocrisy is seen in how many portray the fight against AIDS. AIDS is a devastating disease. Millions and millions of dollars are being spent on trying to find a cure. But, with consistent blood screening prior to marriage along with (and here is the big one) biblical norms of sexuality were followed, AIDS would be eliminated in one generation. The truth is, following God's Word is not hateful, it is loving.

But look at this text again. Homosexuality is just two of ten sins that are mentioned. I cannot do justice to this text if I focus only on that issue. But neither can you do justice to the text if you try to eliminate it. So, let's look at this passage keeping in mind the larger context. The big idea throughout this entire section is a call for believers to live as they have been called. Remember that this passage is not fuel for a fire-breathing preacher. It is truth for God's people to measure their lives with, doctrine to live by, and

hope to live for. Let's start with the obvious and then work to the specific issues that this text is addressing.

1. **There are Evil People.** 9a

The wording here places the emphasis upon people who practice evil. This is a hard truth to swallow on a personal level. It is not so hard to swallow on a world-wide level. We know that bad things happen. Why? Why is it that seemingly good kids can turn out bad? Is it the environment? Is it society? Certainly we can look at social influences in a person's life, but what are those social influences? They are other people who have turned out bad. Where does it all come from? Jesus was very clear. Our biggest problem with evil is not the evil that is out there in the world, but the evil that resides in my own life. Jesus was very clear that evil doesn't come into us from the outside, but it comes out of us from the inside.

“For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” (Matthew 12.34b-35)

“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” (Matthew 15.18-19)

Now, it is easy, natural and self-deceiving (as we will see in a minute) to think of people who do evil things, (or evil people) as the people who are much worse than me. For example, let's jump ahead for a second and start to look at this list that Paul has put together here. Let's say that you are in bondage to and you struggle with the apparent power that drinking has over you, but you really do not want to admit that getting drunk is the same thing as being evil or wicked. After all, you have some friends that you hang with who get sauced here and there and are known to take one or two drinks too many. Ok, you think, they get buzzed every once in a while, but these are my friends, I know them, they are funny people, they are people I do things with. They have helped me fix my car, they go fishing with me, we have done a lot of things together. These are not wicked people (in your opinion). But, on the other hand, guys who are at the top of big major companies like Tyco and Enron and World Com, who swindle investors out of millions of dollars and wipe out the little guy whose pension fund was devastated by these greedy swindlers because they rigged the accounting books...? These are the wicked people of the world!

Or, you may be a guy who says, “You know, I mess around a little bit with the ladies, but I don't go for that guy with guy stuff – that is really sick. Those people who do that are really messed up.” Or, you may be one who pads his expense account a little bit, or “borrows” some company supplies, or gets a buddy to punch your time card a little later so that you can leave early and you look at your thievery as “really nothing” but the boss who has a boat much bigger than anyone would ever need or a house that is ridiculously big, - now that is greedy. That is wrong!

My point is, it is really easy to spot evil in others and not in ourselves. How many people have been the victims of adultery, only to turn around and do it themselves in order to get even or simply because they feel that they were wronged and now they have a right? There are evil people who do evil things – but let's be honest and humble, we can't point the finger out there without looking first at ourselves. Being evil is a serious problem to God. God is holy, pure and without sin. His future kingdom of righteousness is by definition a time of purity and a reign in which justice, truth, and righteousness prevail. The forces of evil will have been overcome. Obviously, the unrighteous, have no part in this.

2. **Evil People do not inherit God's Kingdom.** 9-10

What follows here, (and what we have already looked at in part) is a list of sins or vices that are completely inconsistent with a person who is a follower of Christ. Paul is not presenting this list as an entrance exam for God's police academy. "Have you ever done this – yes or no?" He is describing life-dominating sins, and habituated actions which have no place in God's kingdom. Therefore, as he states very clearly the people who do these sorts of things have no place in His kingdom. This is not popular to say, but the text is extremely clear - Not all people go to heaven!

We may think that in theory, but in reality it tends to get very fuzzy for some. It is very common for people to think that if there was any good in a person anywhere, then they will go to heaven. Have you ever been to a funeral where a person said, "If anyone goes to hell, it is this guy?" No! Instead even of people whose lives were marked by incredible sin, people think, well, underneath it all, there was a good heart, or, he made a few mistakes, but he also did some nice things too. In other words, he wasn't real good, but he wasn't as bad as he could have been.

Well, let me ask you something? Is that the basis of being part of God's kingdom? God welcomes all those into his kingdom who were not as bad as they could have been? If that is the case, then when we die there is no heaven (as we often call it), there is no future kingdom of God!! If in theory, God's future kingdom is just like earth is now, then there is no kingdom because indwelling sin is still present. Think with me!! Earth is already full of people who are not as bad as they could be. That is what we have now. Hitler was bad, but instead of just killing 6 million Jews, he could have killed a few more. If God's kingdom is populated with people who are not as bad as they could be and earth is already full of people who are not as bad as they could be – can you explain the difference? There is none. In addition to that, why do people die? We get sick and die because we live in a sin-cursed world. Accidents take place. War happens because of the indwelling presence of sin. We exist in a decaying world because of sin. If after death, we go to a realm where sin is still present, then death, disease, and decay would still be present in the future kingdom as well. Follow the thinking: If sinful people (but who are not as bad as they could have been – which by definition includes everyone) go to heaven, then sin is a major component of what we call the afterlife. Since sin is the source of all spiritual, social, and environmental problems then, if sin is in the afterlife,

there is no afterlife with God. Please understand this. Every person in hell was not as bad as he or she could have been. Hell is not populated with people who were as bad as they could have been. Every person could be a little worse, except for perhaps Satan. In order for a person to be able to be part of God's kingdom, a change has to take place. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor 15.50) We must be changed. We have to be made into new creations. But how? Here is the huge dividing line and the text provides a very clear example of it.

Paul is very clear about who cannot inherit the kingdom of God. People whose lives are characterized by the following vices or sins do not qualify. You can go back to Aristotle and Plato and see lists like these which were made as standards for their followers. But they were preaching a message of self-sufficiency. In other words, if you followed their teaching, they would teach you how to live without needing other people. You would be the perfect and complete person. It sounded appealing in theory, but never worked.

You can also see that in the moral codes of civilizations, many of these sins have been classified as crimes. But, the difference is, Paul is not simply listing things that are harmful to a society, he is describing things that characterize a person who is not a follower of Christ because these sins (and the list is not exhaustive) describe a person who lives only for self. Our identity as followers of Christ has such a clear and distinctive foundation, that our lives inside and out are made to be and called to be distinctive. Therefore, this list of vices (6 of which were already mentioned in 5.9-11) is not simply a list that we use to badger our world against political correctness, they are sins that are descriptive of a person whose fundamental core identity and foundation is the worship of self. Paul is not surprised that these sins are part of the greater culture that surrounds the church. He is warning them that when these sins that are in the world are also part of the church, there is a huge problem!

The sins that are listed are pretty self-explanatory. Sexual immorality is a general term that covers all sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage. This God-given, sacred and delightful gift is celebrated in chapter 7 in the covenant of marriage. But when any sexual activity is pursued outside of the marriage bond, it is wrong. This is often where people attempt to turn into lawyers in an effort to justify their own actions. Such as: "We really love each other." Or, "we are going to get married anyway." Or, "we did not do all that we could have done." If you have become a follower of Jesus Christ by trusting in Him and in Him alone because someone explained the gospel to you and you embraced it for yourself, then your life is to be characterized by the new life that you have. Any type of sexual immorality is inconsistent with your life in Christ.

Idolaters are people who worship or ascribe powers and attributes to any part of the creation that are rightfully God's. Whether it be a Buddha, an ancestor, a tree or the sun, idolatry is not only a confusion of the Creator/creation distinction, it is an attempt to manipulate these ascribed powers for one's own gain.

Adulterers is a little more specific term that refers to people who violate their covenant of marriage or someone else's through sexual involvement with someone other than their spouse.

Male Prostitutes and Homosexual offenders refers to men who engage in sex with other men.

Thieves are people who take things from others without paying for it, illegally copied software, music and movies included.

The Greedy are people who live to have things.

Drunkards are people who drink to the point of intoxication.

Slanderers are people who attempt to destroy the reputation of others by saying things that are not true or that do not need to be repeated.

Swindlers are people who attempt to cheat people out of money.

3. **Christians used to be Wicked People.** – 11a

Isn't that a great verse? Do you know what this means? This means that genuine followers of Jesus Christ are part of the "Used to Be" club. Look at all of those things. That is what we used to be. Sure, you may not have committed everyone of those things on the list, but in this room, we have covered them all and more. But, do you see the point? This is what you used to be, you aren't that anymore. A change has taken place in you. Therefore, you must live in a manner that is consistent with how you have been called. You have to live in a manner that is consistent with the change that has taken place. And, if you do not like a change has taken place, then it is very possible that no real change has ever taken place.

If you have already come to faith in Christ, then let me ask you something. What did you used to be? Now, look at this text. You are not that anymore!! Satan knows the power of labeling. You may have been an adulterer, or greedy or a swindler. But that is what you used to be! Don't call yourself that now, because God doesn't call you that. You have been changed. Labels are powerful aren't they? Whoever said, sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me – lied! Names and labels hurt worse because they try to identify us.

4. **Wicked People can only be changed by God.** 11b

These three verbs "washed" "sanctified" and "justified" are all referring to the change that has to take place in a person if that person is going to inherit the kingdom of God. In this passage Paul is saying to the believers in Corinth – this has taken place in your life. You have been washed, sanctified and justified, you aren't what you used to be – live like it.

Justified is the term that means to be declared righteous in God's sight. This is God's new label for those who become His followers. When you recognize that Jesus died on the cross in your place so that he could pay the penalty that you deserved to pay for your sins and when you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior by trusting only in Him, then a divine transaction takes place. Your sins are credited to Christ – who died for them and His righteousness is credited to you. Therefore, on the basis of what Christ did (“in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”) you are declared righteous in the eyes of Almighty God. Even if you used to be a thief, or immoral – or whatever NOW you are JUSTIFIED!!!

Sanctified is a term that refers to your new position in Christ. You are viewed as being holy, set apart, a saint. This is who you are! And Washed? This is possibly a reference to having your sins washed away, but more than likely, Paul is using this particular word to refer to their baptism which publicly labeled them as a follower of Jesus Christ after they had come to faith in Christ.

Who are you? If a follower of Christ – live as you are called! If not, then do not let a label keep you in a ditch – come to Christ. Come to Christ and live! The wicked do not inherit the kingdom of God – but those who have been justified do.