

Title: Come to Jesus

Text: Matthew 21.28-32

Theme: Responding to the gospel

Series: What does it mean to be a follower of Christ – pt.3

Prop Stmt.

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Chuck Klosterman in ESPN magazine recently posed a very difficult question. What will baseball fans do when Barry Bonds breaks Babe Ruth's homerun record? "How do we reconcile a massive, momentous achievement that is neither wholly real nor socially good? Baseball is a game of numbers. There are volumes of statistics. But think about it, what is a statistic based on? A strikeout is 3 strikes. A walk is 4 balls. A stolen base is moving from one base to another. In other words, statistics have meaning because they are based upon actual, definable events. That is why it is so difficult to reconcile the career of Barry Bonds and his assault upon the homerun record. At age 37, when men in baseball are slowing down, this guy hit 24 more home runs than ever before. The allegations of his steroid use have never gone away and now it appears to me that they are being seriously investigated at a level far deeper than ever before. The obvious question is, "is it right or is it wrong?" If, he has used performance boosting medication, then is it right to compare his records to Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron or any person in the record books?

Does it matter if a guy juices himself with steroids in order to play at a higher level? Is it any of your business what he does? After all, it is his body – isn't it? I am guessing that San Francisco Giant fans view Barry a bit more charitably than the rest of baseball fans. What is right? What is wrong? If Barry was a Detroit Tiger and helped us win a pennant, would we look at him differently? Is it wrong because it is on someone else's team, or is it wrong – no matter what? If you really embrace this idea that there is no such thing as absolute truth, that you have the right to make up your own rules about your life, you can see how this really begins to unravel. What is a homerun? These are not theoretical problems for a philosophy class. This is a prime example of the confusion that we live with. When there is a lack of clarity, there is a lack of clear boundaries, or clear categories. Without the loving borders of those categories we drift and in our drifting we lose any sense of an internal compass or anchor. We are confused, lost, angry, adrift, and homeless.

Brothers and sisters, thank God that we are people of His Word. God's objective, and unchanging truth trumps all thoughts, opinions and discussions. While that is frustrating to those who wrongly think of themselves as self-sufficient, self-reliant, self-authoritative and self-compassed, the objective and absolute truth of the Word of God is a gracious gift from God because His Word provides clarity for our confusion. In the baseball world, statisticians are debating on whether an asterisk should be put next to the name of those who test positive for steroids. They are confused, they don't know what to do with life as it is presented to them. Think of this! In the real game of life, God's Word provides clarity. That clarity establishes objective categories. When we know and then place

ourselves inside the fences of those clear categories, we are secure and safe. We can relax. Ps. 119.165 says, "Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble."

There is safety and security within the borders of truth established by God. But, the truth is humbling. The truth that God says about Himself and about us is devastatingly humbling. This awesome God of creation, glory, majesty and might is eternally, unchangeably holy and Sovereign and is the sum total of all perfections. Do you understand the implications of that? He is Sovereign and will always be Sovereign. He is term of office does not run out. He will not be replaced on the throne and for all time His standard of perfect righteousness is a reflection of his infinite holiness. You cannot run to where He is not. You cannot hide where He does not see. You cannot pretend, what He does not already know. You cannot outlast Him, outlive Him, or outrun Him. From everlasting to everlasting He is God. And as God He is called you to do find your absolute delight in Him and in Him alone. When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay!

But instead of finding our delight in Him, we have pursued our happiness in following our own laws. We have been glory robbers. We have tried in vain to take glory that belonged to God and attribute that to ourselves. We think that we can fulfill ourselves, that we are sufficient for ourselves. We can create our own laws, do whatever feels good to us. That is called sin and our hearts are full of it. That is devastating! One of the little boys in our church said to his mommy one day, "What am I going to do with all of this sin?" Isn't that great for this little guy to be graciously visited by God with a conscience that is looking for a Savior? We need a Savior! We have a problem that we cannot solve. We need righteousness. That is why Christ came to this earth. He lived the life that I could not live. His life obeyed the law. He fulfilled all righteousness, and therefore there was no basis of death for him, since the wages of sin is death. When he died, he did not die for himself but in your place. He died a substitutionary death. He died in order that your sins could be forgiven, but He had lived a perfectly righteous life so that you could be credited with His infinite righteousness.

The Bible is very, very clear. God is holy and judges sin. You are a sinner and if you die without something being done to address your spiritually mortal problem of sin, you will be under the eternal judgment of God. That is called hell. How can you be delivered from the wrath of God? You need to be saved from God! That is why God sent you a Savior! He sent you a Savior to save you from Him for Him. God, who had to punish your sin in order to be consistently just, could not punish you without destroying you, so He took out His wrath upon His Son, so that with His justice satisfied, His mercy and grace could be set free upon you.

That is a summary of what I have been preaching on these last few weeks. Who is God, What did Christ do? And what is our response?

The story that Christ told is extremely earthy. Every parent and every kid sitting here is replaying this scene. But Jesus tells this story because he is making it very clear, that the

only way to enter the kingdom of God is through repentance and faith. What I am telling you is that all of this truth about Christ for you, is of no eternal benefit to you unless you repent of your sin and believe in Christ. Repentance and belief are all throughout the Scriptures. Will you go with me to Exodus 19.3-6. What is God saying here? I have saved you from that, and made you a people for me. This is what God has done for them. Here now, is how they are to respond – Ex. 20 – no other gods, (repentance) and obedience in what He has revealed (faith).

What is in Exodus 20 – the 10 commandments! How do they begin? I am the LORD, who brought you FROM this and I am making you a people. The pattern is clear, we turn from what we used to be, what we used to believe, what we used trust, what we used to do and we turn to what God has revealed to us and for us. Do you see it? Turn from and turn to. Turn from sin, believe in Christ. If you are going to be part of the kingdom, you have to repent (turn from) and believe (turn to). It is the pattern of the OT, it is the message that Jesus preached. It is the message that Paul preached. In giving a summary of his ministry before King Agrippa, Paul said in Acts 26.20 that to the Jews and the Gentiles, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” In 1 Peter. 2.9, Peter repeats this theme when he writes, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you OUT OF DARKNESS INTO His wonderful light.

Therefore:

1. Following Christ demands Genuine Repentance

A. Beware of incomplete repentance

Incomplete repentance is not genuine repentance. 2 Corinthians 7.10 makes it clear that there are two kinds of repentance. There is worldly sorrow that may come complete with tears and emotion, but is only sorry for the consequences of sin. Then there is godly repentance that is coming to grips with the sin itself.

B. What is genuine repentance?

There are three different words used in the original language of the NT that describe this process. The most well-known word is metaneo (Matt. 12.41) and it means:

- 1) A change of mind about my sin.

This is a complete reversal of your thinking about things. Instead of glorying in yourself, trusting yourself, advancing yourself, living for self, laughing at sin, you agree with what God has said about your sin. You change your mind, which leads to a change in affections.

The second word (metamelomai) is the word used in our text and it means to express sorrow over sin. Should we be sorry for the consequences of sin? Yes, but it cannot stay there. It needs to go deeper than that. We need to become aware of how deep and entangling sin really is.

2) A sense of sorrow over my sin

But, this change of mind and change of affections must involve a change in my direction. That is when we can see repentance.

3) A change of direction regarding my sin (Matt 13.15)

Now, the truth is, someone can change directions without changing mind or affections.

Ok, let's see how this works. You are driving westbound on 696 and your helpmate, your wife, this gracious partner that God has given to you to point out your areas of weakness says, "Honey, I think we need to be going eastbound." And you say – "I know", as you continue going westbound. Is that repentance? No! She says, "Honey, we are still going to westbound and we need to be going eastbound." And you start crying and saying "I always do this. Every time I get on this road, my car goes westbound, what am I going to do?" as you continue to go westbound. Is that repentance? You continue to go westbound and she says, "Honey we are still going westbound and we need to be going eastbound" and you say, "Fine! Is that what you want? You always think you are right! We'll go eastbound, you wanna go eastbound – we'll go eastbound" as you get off the next exit and head eastbound. Be careful now, is that repentance? No. You can change your direction on the outside, without changing your affections on the inside.

True repentance is recognizing that my sin fundamentally is offensive to God and that my guilt, and deserving punishment is the just and righteous response of God to my sin. This brings a mourning over my sin, which is what Christ was speaking about in Matthew 5.4. Those who make light of their sin, ignore their sin or excuse their sin will not be comforted. But, if you mourn over your sin and that mourning is part of genuine repentance that drives you to the Savior, then you will be blessed.

Repentance is the turning away part, faith is the turning to part. Repentance and faith are two different sides of the same coin. Following Christ demands genuine repentance, but you have to do more than turn away from your sin, you have to turn to the only One who can save you from the wrath of God and save you from the consequences of sin and save you from sin itself. You have to turn to Christ. And how do you do that? You do that with all that you have, you run to, embrace, call upon, believe in, trust in, rest in, cast yourself upon – that is faith!

2. **Following Christ demands Genuine Faith.**

A. **Beware of incomplete faith.**

Let me give you an example that never, ever happened to me. Let's say that you are at the end of the school year and on your report card, you have all A's and one B+++. You want all A's so bad, and you need that one teacher to give it to you. So, you go to the teacher and you plead and beg and promise to bring in cookies or something, just to get that A. You have done all of this, but you need just a little more help to get the grade you want. Welcome to prime time religion. I can manage my life pretty well, but there are some areas where I need a little help getting the extra points that I need. Therefore, I will ask God – you gotta have faith – to help me where I can't seem to do it all. That is not saving faith.

James says, an incomplete faith is one that says, I believe, I believe, I believe, but does not show the authenticity of that belief with behavior that is consistent. What is genuine faith?

B. What is genuine faith?

- A. A change of mind (of the worthiness and person of Christ) – he is Lord
- B. A change of affections (of the desirableness of Christ) - love
- C. A change of action. (of the direction of your life) – obedience

This faith is an acknowledgement that He is Lord (Romans 10.13). It is a love of Christ (1 John) and it is obedience to Christ (1 John and James).

When your mind is changed, you are convinced that Christ is worth your trust. When your affections are changed, Christ is now beautiful, lovely, perfectly worthy of your trust. And when your actions are changed, you are running toward Christ. Paul talks about an obedience from the heart – Romans 6.17, that is a faith-driven obedience. Three times in the great letter of Romans, he speaks of the obedience of faith. Romans answers the question – how are we saved? By faith alone, in Christ alone. What kind of a faith is it? It is a faith that is accompanied by repentance and a faith that produces good works. So, while we become followers of Christ by faith alone, that faith is not alone. It is a repenting, believing, obeying, growing, fruit-producing, sin-hating, Christ-loving, God honoring faith. Faith like that is a gift from God. You may need to cry out to God and ask Him to give you that faith. Here beloved is the greatest news, the most glorious news.

Repentance of sin and faith in Christ are intensely glorifying to God. The humble the sinner, for we are acknowledging that we have absolutely nothing to bring before God that in any way makes us worthy of, or deserving us forgiveness. It is all of grace. Repentance draws all of the attention to God. Because we acknowledge that all hope is from outside of us. Faith in Christ looks only and looks completely unto Him as the only object of that hope. All eyes look to God in asking and longing and saying, What is the sentence? What is the verdict? What does the most Holy Judge determine? This holy and awesome God looks at His Son, His Son who wore out and exhausted the wrath of God against our sin, and God declares us to be forgiven and righteous on the basis of Christ and Christ alone. Your sin, is no longer held against you. God, whose infinite

wrath has been appeased, is now free to pour out upon you His infinite grace. He does not forget our sin, He chooses not to remember!

For some of you, you need to repent and believe, right now. You need to turn from your sin. How do you know if you are turning from you sin? Is there anything that you are unwilling to give up for Christ? Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill, God's truth abideth still – His kingdom is forever! There is nothing in this earth that is worthy of your affection, your hope, your eternity than Christ. All other ground is sinking sand.

The final point, that I am not taking the time to develop this morning is that:

3. **Following Christ produces a life of Repentance and Faith.**

I turn from my sin and trust in Christ as my Savior. What I am saved with, I am saved to. This is how I live. For the rest of my life I am growing in what I am repenting of, and growing in what I am turning to and trusting in.

For the past week, our hearts have been made grievously heavy as we all have known to some degree or another that our body has been dealt a serious and deep wound. Tonight, we will be looking closer at the circumstances of that wound, but brothers and sisters, I am in no position to do that, unless I am seriously examining the authenticity of my own repentance and faith. How do I respond to the revelation of sin in another's life? How do I respond to the revelation of sin in my own life? If I only seek to cover up the consequences of the sin through damage control, if I am living a life that is not characterized by changing my mind, affections and the direction of my life, by running hard to Christ in faith, then I have to seriously consider whether or not I have ever come to genuine faith in Christ. Today, come, come to Jesus. Come to Jesus and live!