

Title: Who's Your Daddy?
Text: 1 John
Theme: The Spiritual Paternity Test
Series: Christ said that? – You Must be Born Again pt.3
Prop Stmt. Children of God will look like their Father

Read Text:

Each time I come in to this pulpit, I recognize that this could be the last time that I ever preach. What is equally true is that this sermon may be the last sermon that you may ever hear. So, what is the most important thing that I could ever say and what is the most important truth that you could ever hear? That reality is part of what drives me to always preach Christ. The good news that Christ Jesus came to this world in order to be your Savior is the ultimately greatest and the ultimately worst news you could ever hear. It is the greatest, if you accept, bank on and surrender to Jesus Christ as King, and it is terrifying if you ignore it, reject it and attempt to be your own little god. The other reason why I am driven to preach Christ is because no matter what section of the Bible I preach from, inevitably it has something to do with the gospel of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. After all, that is the big idea of the Bible, and I desperately want you to understand that, because that is the very plan for which God made this world and everything in it – including you. I so deeply want you to know that so that your life will make sense and so that you do not waste your life on lesser gods. There are so many distractions, but none of them worthy of your heart and soul like Jesus, because you were made by Him and for Him. Of course, that is the reason why Jesus is so controversial. But contemporary Christianity has attempted to water down the radical message of Christ in an effort to gain a wider audience and market share. The results are in:

9% of those claiming to be born again – tithe
80% of the 12,000 teenagers from evangelical churches who took a pledge to wait for marriage had sex outside of marriage within 7 years of the commitment
26% of traditional evangelicals do not think that sex outside of marriage is wrong
Within the broad umbrella of Christianity, white evangelicals are more likely than other groups to object to having black neighbors.

Research from George Barna, Ron Sider and Mark Regnerus, bear the same reality over and over, those who claim to be born again live lives that look no different than their neighbors. The gospel is seen as an important convenience, not the driving passion for life. Christ is respected, but all-out commitment is considered too radical. Recently, I was gripped with the reality that some of you are probably in that group. You think you are a follower of Christ, you claim to be one who has “accepted Jesus as your Savior” and therefore you expect to go to heaven when you die. But, if there is not the evidence of Christ in your life: meaning, if what you truly believe in and what you truly love is no different than the world, you are not authentically born again. For you, I am preaching this series entitled: Christ said that?! We are looking at some of the sayings of Christ that seem so foreign to our lives of ease. If these sayings put you off, instead of stir up your

passions for Christ, his church, his glory and his gospel, then you need to seriously question whether or not you have truly come to faith in Christ.

Now, most of this mini-series is going to be dealing with fruit issues. The question I am addressing is: How do you know if you have been born again?

Example: (tree from office with plastic fruit on it) What kind of a tree is this?

Christ talked about fruit issues, not so that we will duct tape some other fruit on our trees so that we will look the part. Christ talked about fruit issues because root issues are so very, very important. Keep this in mind, because this morning I am going to talk about a fruit issue that reveals a root issue. For the past two weeks I have addressed the statement that Christ made to Nicodemus when he said: You must be born again. Of all of the radical things that Christ said, this is the most radical and the foundationally radical statement of all. Here Christ tells perhaps the most moral, powerful, respected man in the entire nation of Israel that his first birth was not good enough. In fact, when Christ said that you must be born again, he was telling Nicodemus that Nick had a problem that Nick could not solve because no one can birth themselves. What I have attempted to make clear to you is that being born again (the same thing as regeneration) is the act of God based on his mercy, whereby means of the Spirit, he breathes spiritual life into a person. Being born again is something that happens to you that you do not cause. He causes it. He does it. God is the initiator, and we are the recipients. Being the activity of the Spirit, is what makes it spiritual life. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but spirit gives birth to spirit. When the Spirit of God breathes this life into you, he causes you to come alive, spiritually. It is described in Ezekiel 36 as having your heart changed from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. And this change is what instantaneously causes you to believe in the gospel of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Look at Ephesians 2.1-10

(Chart of Conversion)

- Born Dead
- Made Alive (regeneration, born again – by the Spirit, through the Word)
 - o Changes your heart (affections)
 - Christ is now beautiful and sin is now abhorrent
 - Christ is now trusted and works/righteousness is now rejected
 - Repentance and Saving Faith are the results

Now, there are two extremes that must be avoided.

- 1) Stay away from a lazy, heartless, passive, who cares, and ultimately disobedient view of conversion and the gospel.

What I mean by that is this. Christ and the apostles make it very clear that being born again is something that is done to you. But, Christ and the apostles also make it very

clear that we are called upon to repent of our sin and trust in Christ alone. But recognize that repentance and faith are both gifts that are given to us by God, so that we cannot ever take credit for our own salvation or boast in ourselves. (Acts 5.31; 11.18) However, God holds us accountable to believe. That is why I urge you to repent of your sin and trust in Christ alone. (Acts 17.30; Mark 6.12) I preach this glorious truth to you that even though you have sinned enough already this morning to damn your soul to hell for eternity, God delights so intensely in His mercy, and chose to put that mercy on display for all the world to see in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. In Christ and through Christ, God provided the only means for the rescuing of your soul by becoming taking on humanity in addition to his divine nature which enabled him to live in your place and then die in your place. I preach that, because I am commanded by Almighty God to preach this. I preach the gospel (the Word of God) because God uses the proclamation of the Word of God as the tool by which the Spirit of God causes us to be born again. So, I preach and I pray for your conversion to Christ. I pray that God will grant you the gift of repentance and faith, because while I can preach, I can't make you believe. So, I pray to God with joy, because He not only loves to answer the prayers of his children, he loves to show his mercy by saving undeserving sinners from sin and crediting them with the righteousness of his Son, so that they are justified, redeemed, adopted, forgiven, cleansed and born into his family and made partners in the eternal Kingdom of His Son, whom He loves. The fact that it is God who causes people to be born again, is never intended for you to be passive, but because God is at work, BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, because if you believe, it was God who gave you the faith!!!

2) Stay away from the "I prayed the prayer" basis for assurance.

I am equally concerned over these extremes. We have to preach the gospel. We have to send missionaries. We have to plant churches. We are called to go and make disciples from every nation. But, in going, and in preaching we must be faithful to preach the true gospel. In talking to our children and others about Christ, we must be honest with the text. If your child says, "I am not sure if I am truly a Christian" – do not say to them, "Of course you are honey, I was there when you prayed the prayer." Because whenever the Scriptures address this question of: How do I know if I am born again – it never says – Do you remember praying a prayer? And this is my immediate concern. When I see survey after survey that reveals that people who claim to be born again acting no different than the world, then I conclude that many of the people who claim to be born again – are not! So, here is my main point for this morning. A person who has been born again – (that is born spiritually) is born of God. If you have been born of God, you will look like your Father. What I mean by that is that your beliefs, your desires and your decisions will reflect God. I say that, not only because it is inherently logical – that we look like our Father. But, ultimately I say that because it is biblical.

Again, I am fighting against a couple of generations of church culture on this one. We have for decades told people that in order to be born again, they have to say a prayer, and that if they say a prayer to receive Jesus into their hearts, then they are born again. Then, we tell them to look at 1 John 5.13, which says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." Then,

many people are asked – do you believe? Then you have eternal life. The implication that some have made is that, you can sin till the cows come home (which for us city people means a really long time), but, if you prayed that prayer, then you are fine – no matter what. That is not the point of 1 John 5.13. In order to understand 1 John 5.13, you have to understand the book of 1 John. 1 John is a book that is dealing with the affects of being born again.

(chart – the cause of the new birth obviously is God; the affect of the new birth is obvious)

1 John is a book that was written so that you could know whether or not, you have genuine faith. The assurance of genuine faith is not based on a prayer, but comes from the ongoing evidence (or persevering fruit) in the life of the believer. 1 John is a spiritual paternity test to help you know who your daddy is? Look at 1 John 2.1-19. Do you see what has happened? There were some people who had been part of the community of believers who walked away. The Bible says that the reason they walked away was because they were never truly part of it to begin with. The text goes on to say that if a person has truly been born again, then that person will believe the right things about Christ. Therefore, one of the evidences of having authentic faith is revealed in the truth test or the doctrinal test. If you are a genuine follower of Christ, then you will believe the right truths about Christ. Notice 1 John 2.20-23. Now look at 1 John 5.1.

1. **The Doctrinal Test** – You will believe the right truths.

What are those truths?

- A. **You will believe in the Human nature of Christ.**

This is what his name – Jesus implies.

- B. **You will believe in the Divine nature of Jesus.**

This is what his name – Christ implies.

If you are a genuine believer, then you will embrace the truth about the person of Jesus Christ. This is crucial to understand. The implications of this are so clear. This means that the church must preach and teach doctrine. This also means that you are not free to come up with your own ideas of who Jesus is.

Recently, George Barna's research group polled 1,871 people in America who claim to be "born again." In responding to the statement: Do you believe that Jesus sinned when he was on the earth? 22% strongly agreed and an additional 17% somewhat agreed. That means that basically 40% of people professing to be Christians believe that Jesus was a sinner. If you believe that Jesus was a sinner, you have not experienced the new birth.

By the way, almost 60% (58%) agreed that the Holy Spirit is “a symbol of God’s power or presence but is not a living entity.” That means that 60% of professing believers deny the person of the Holy Spirit, which is a denial of the Trinity. That troubles me and I believe that the reason why there is so much theological ignorance is because a) churches do not teach doctrine because the people don’t want it and b) the reason why most people don’t want it is because most people who claim to be born again – are not! Now, this is obviously a serious issue. And my inclination is to fight this weakness with more classes on theology however, just answering the questions correctly on the doctrines quiz at the end of the class does not mean that you are a genuine follower of Christ.

Notice the chart again (effect)

2. The Moral Test – 2.29; 3.9; 5.4

Those who are born of God keep his commandments (1 John 2.3-4; 3.24).

Those who are born of God practice righteousness (1 John 2.29).

Those who are born of God do not make it a habit to keep practicing the same sin. (1 John 3.6; 3.9-10; 5.18)

Those who are born of God listen humbly and submissively to the Word of God (1 John 4.6)

Now, do not conclude that what John is saying in this letter is that if you have been born of God that you are perfect, or that you can be perfect in this life. John knows that you cannot be perfect in this life. That is obvious from the very first chapter. There are some who teach this false doctrine that you can get to the point in your Christian walk where you do not sin, where life is only victory. That too, would be a false understanding of this letter. The point of this book is that for the genuine Christian, there is no perfection, but neither is there defection. (1 John 2.19)

People who have no interest in the Word of God; that is they do not listen submissively and humbly to it, cannot claim to be born again. People who live according to their own rules who seek to justify their own sin, who live in willful disobedience to God’s are not keeping his commandments.

Let’s say that you are in your 20’s and almost everyone you know is involved in some sexual relationship. Phone sex, internet porn, movies, one-night hook-ups, are the norm as far as you know. The fact that you and your girlfriend have sex on a regular basis used to bother you a little bit, and initially bothered her more than it did you. But now, she is afraid of losing you so you guys don’t fight about it much any more. You were raised in the church. You prayed the prayer, and always figured that you were ok, even though this whole Christian thing in the last few years has seemed to be less and less important and quite frankly, you are not even sure what you believe. But right now, you are sitting here and you are feeling like I am talking right to you. You are nervous, angry, and wishing this was over with.

I am not asking you to make a new resolution to about sexual purity. I am challenging you to look at these passages and cry out to God for mercy and for his Spirit to regenerate you, because your life at this point is giving evidence that you are not a follower of Christ. People who follow Christ, follow Christ. His words, his commands, his laws are treasured and valued and esteemed and obeyed. But, when you say, I know what the Word says, but I am going to do what I want to do anyway, then you cannot biblically claim to be a follower of Christ. The final test from 1 John is what I call the community test.

3. **The Community Test** – 4.7

Why is love such a big deal? God is love. Since God is love, and since God's children will look like him, God's children will be people whose lives are characterized by love. What kind of love is this? It is love for the people of God (4.11-12).

A third test of the authenticity of your faith is the community test. For those who claim to be born again but have no desire to be connected to the followers of Christ in community, who have no deep and abiding concern for other believers, but see church as an organization that exists to primarily serve their needs, and come and observe, but do not connect, this is for you. You say you love God, but if you love God, you will love what God loves, and God loves the church. God loves his children. The test of community is the test of love. How deep do you love the people of God? What are the evidences of that? How are you moved by the needs of your brothers and sisters? Are you kind or are you demanding and rude? Do you use intimidation to get your way? Do you manipulate others for your own ends?

In an effort to make it clear that good works do not earn your forgiveness, people often say that going to church does not make you a Christian. That is true, but if you are a believer, then the church will be precious to you. You will treasure the church and love the church and desire to be part of the family of believers because you love the people of God.

4.19-21

So, have you been born again? 1 John is the spiritual paternity test so that you will know (5.13) who your daddy is. I don't care if you can remember praying a prayer to receive Christ or not. That is not the issue. The issue is: Do you believe the right truths about Christ? Do you obey God's commands? Do you really love the people of God? (stand)

This is a serious issue. Illus – going to the doctor with a problem and he says, take 2 aspirin and call me in a week – no big deal. But if he says, I am rushing you by ambulance to the hospital – right now, prepare for 6-10 hour surgery, and you may never walk again – but I think I can spare your life – you know that whatever your problem is – it is serious. This issue is infinitely more serious than that. The demand is radical, but Christ's provision is more than a match for the demand.