**November 17, 2019**

**John 15:22-27**

**Jesus Sets the Standard**

**Introduction: Today is our last sermon in our series entitled Traits of a Disciple. We will conclude John 15 today, and Jesus continues to focus his teaching on what it means for us to be a follower of Jesus in the world. I hope this series has been challenging for you. I hope it has made you think through your own commitment to Jesus, and my prayer is that you look at John 15 and aspire to do the things that Jesus teaches us. I also want to challenge you to be here next week because I am going to be teaching you the material that I will walk new people through who desire to join our church. As I said a few weeks ago, I want all of you to experience the membership class before I begin offering it to people who want to join our church. So I hope you will be here next Sunday as we do a one-week study on what it means to be a part of the body here at First Baptist Dothan.**

**I. We Have No Excuse:** *22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*

A. Sin has always existed long before Jesus, but the coming of Jesus brought to the hearers a moral responsibility. Jesus clearly communicated what he expected of the people, and Jesus clearly communicates what he expects of us as well. We are called to repent of our sin, which means to turn away and begin living for Jesus instead of in rebellion against him.

B. Just like the people that Jesus is talking to in this passage, we also have no excuse for our sin. There is nothing we can say before God one day that will make him change his mind. I’m fearful that many people we know are banking their eternity on being a good person. Many people think as long as they do more good in the world than bad they will be fine. The problem with that way of thinking is that we ourselves become the judge of what is good and bad. We become the center of the universe at that point. Determining for ourselves what is right and wrong is a never-ending moving target. There is no peace involved in hoping you have done enough to be made right with God.

C. The teachings of Paul inform our understanding of the importance of the law. Look at Romans 7:7-8. The law itself is good, but when we as human beings see laws the sin nature moves us to disobey it.

\*When I see a sign that says 70MPH on I-10 I immediately set my cruise control to 77MPH because that’s the point in which I think I can get away with going over the speed limit and still not get a ticket. We are always pushing the boundaries and we do so because we have a sin problem.

D. And Paul later explains in Romans 10 that because of this what the law ultimately does is point us to our need for another way to be made right with God. Paul says Christ is the end of the law. In our attempt to live the good life what the law should ultimately show us is that we can’t. Then our perspective shifts, and it all begins to make sense. Jesus kept the law perfectly for us. He did what we are incapable of doing, and suddenly it makes sense why we have to place our faith in Jesus because it is only through his ability to keep the law perfectly on our behalf that we can be made right with God.

E. All of us are responsible for our actions. But the good news of the Gospel is that if we will place our faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sins than we will not face the penalty of our sin because Jesus endured that price for us on the cross. That’s the good news. We deserve eternal death, but yet placing our faith in Jesus gives us eternal life.

**II. Jesus Will Always be Hated: 25** *But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: They hated me without a cause.*

A. We talk a lot about hate last week, and it seems like a really depressing topic to talk about, but its biblical and its clearly in the text so we are not going to shy away from difficult passages. Those who hate Jesus automatically hate God. You can’t say I love God but hate Jesus. That is a contradictory statement, and that’s what Jesus is saying in v.23

B. This passage gives us just a glimpse of the nature between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father sent Jesus to Earth to be among us. And even though Jesus experienced a completely human life he remained completely God throughout his entire earthly life. So, when people in Jesus’s day or in our day today say that they hate Jesus it means they also hate God the Father because he was the one who sent him.

C. In v.22 Jesus held the people accountable for their actions because they had heard Jesus speak, and in v. 24 Jesus holds them accountable because they saw him at work. The people of Jesus’s day saw him perform miracles. They saw him healing the blind and the paralyzed. They saw him heal a man with leprosy. People heard the stories of Jesus walking on water and calming the storms, and they still chose not to believe.

D. While none of us were around to personally witness the miracles of Jesus, we have heard the stories of them. We have read them in the Gospels. We have first-hand accounts of people who saw the wondrous things that Jesus did. We have the world that Jesus created that gives us evidence of his existence. And most importantly, we have the testimony of his work in our lives. I choose to believe in Jesus because of the transformation I have seen in my own life, and it has nothing to do with me and everything to do with him.

E. Jesus uses a reference from two separate places where this phrase “hated me without a cause” is used. One is Psalm 35:19 and another is Psalm 69:4. It seems more likely that Jesus is thinking of Psalm 69:4 because it is considered a messianic Psalm. What’s ironic about this is that Jesus appeals to the law of the very people that hate him. Jesus is talking to Jewish people and he references a verse from their Jewish scriptures to show them.

F. The hatred of Jesus is without cause because he didn’t do anything wrong. The reason the Jewish people had a problem with Jesus is because he challenged them on a heart level. Jesus told the Jewish people it doesn’t matter how well you keep the laws if your heart is in the wrong place as you keep the laws.

G. This is the same problem that people have with Jesus today. They aren’t willing or they don’t want to be challenged on heart level. It would be so much easier if we could just check off boxes in order to be made right with God. But Jesus doesn’t want our ability to follow rules as much as he wants our heart. The biggest threat that Jesus provides to our world today is the loss of control. No one wants to submit to another person’s plan for their life. We all love control and because of that the teachings of Jesus run counter to individual freedom which is what most people are looking for today.

\*The country of China has tried to stamp out religion for a long time. Many Chinese people and certainly those in the Chinese government probably hate Jesus but in 2010 conservative estimates put China’s Christians at 68 million, and by 2020 some experts think china will have more Christians than the US, and that by the year 2050 China could be a majority Christian country. Just because people hate Jesus doesn’t mean he stops. Where persecution exists, the church grows.

**III. The Spirit Bears Witness: 26** *But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*

A. Jesus provides some important teaching on the Trinity in this verse. The helper is a very generic term to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does much more than simply help us, but it is the meaning of the Greek word that is used to name the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

B. The Holy Spirit is sent to us from Jesus himself, but the Holy Spirit comes from the Father. One of the ways that the Holy Spirit works is to reveal God’s presence in the world. When the Spirit of God is working in our lives it bears witness to build up the church of Jesus Christ and Jesus’s ministry while he was on earth.

C. As Jesus is speaking to his disciples in the historical context of the passage the Spirit has not come yet. He uses the future tense. We know that when Jesus ascends into heaven one of the last things he tells his disciples is that he is sending another person. And that other person is the Holy Spirit.

D. The Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus in a number of ways. Theologian Wayne Grudem points out many of the ways that the Spirit reveals himself. He revealed himself in many of the Old Testament prophets. For instance, the Old Testament prophets were not teaching and preaching their opinion but rather their teaching was filled with the spirit of God. The New Testament authors were not writing their opinions in these documents, but they were inspired by the Holy Spirit as they wrote. So, the Spirit of God provided revelation to both the prophets and the New Testament writers. The Spirit also gives evidence of God’s presence. For instance, when he descended in the form of a dove on Jesus after his baptism. The Spirit working in the world encourages believers that God is near, and we all need the reminder that God is at work in the world from time to time.

\*God is at work in the world. If we don’t see it, then it’s probably because we are not looking hard enough. In 1907, revival broke out in North Korea. Missionaries and Christians in North Korea had been praying for the spirit of God to move in their country. One missionary described what happened on a January Saturday night in 1907 as people began praying: ***not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse of prayer. The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God’s throne. It was not many, but one, born of one Spirit, lifted to one Father above. Just as on the day of Pentecost . . . God is not always in the whirlwind, neither does He always speak in a still small voice. He came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction. My own cook tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it, and cried to me across the room: “Pastor, tell me, is there any hope for me, can I be forgiven?” and then threw himself to the floor and wept and wept, and almost screamed in agony****.* In1900, 1% of people in Korea were Christian as of 2010 that number is now close to 30%. God is at work friends.

**IV. You Bear Witness: 27** *And you also will be bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*

A. Jesus tells his disciples that they will also bear witness about Jesus. The 12 men that Jesus chose to invest in were on the front lines of his ministry. Jesus was depending on them to continue to take the message of Gospel all around the world.

B. No one knew Jesus better than these men, and he expected them to bear witness to all of the miracles. He expected them to pass on his teaching, and most importantly he was expecting them to build up the kingdom of God.

C. While we have not walked with Jesus personally as his disciples, you and me as followers of Jesus are expected to bear witness to what he has done. That means that everywhere you go is an opportunity to be a Gospel presence. Do not view your job as solely the place where you go from 9-5 to make a living. View it as a place where Jesus can use you to invest in the lives of your coworkers, and those you supervise. Do not view your neighbors as simply those that live next to you. View them through the lens of eternal souls. Invite them into your home. Have a Christmas party and invite those that live on each side of you. Be creative in reaching out to them. Do not view your son or daughter’s extra-curricular activities as just something else on your calendar. Invest in the parents of those kids, get to know them, invite them to our church, tell them you are praying for them.

D. Whether you believe it or not all of us currently are bearing witness. Are you leaving a positive impression of Jesus and his work in your life, or are you leaving a negative impression of him?

\*I mentioned to you some time ago a book called *The Gospel Comes with a House Key.* It was written by a lady named Rosaria Butterfield. But I didn’t give you any of the backstory behind Rosaria Butterfield’s life. She was a lesbian feminist for many years while teaching English literature at Syracuse University. She began researching the religious right so that she could write a book and point out all of the problems with it. So, in order to do this she had to begin reading the Bible. She had written an Op-Ed piece attacking the Promise Keepers organization when she received a response from a man named Ken Smith who was a pastor in Syracuse. Ken invited Rosaria to dinner, and they began exchanging books to read and Rosaria became friends with Ken and his wife, Floy. At first, Rosaria simply continued to have a relationship with Ken and Floy so that she could get information for her book, but overtime the Bible began to change her. Rosaria Butterfield became a believer in Jesus Christ, abandoned her lesbian girlfriend, and is now married to a pastor living in North Carolina. This is not a story I share because of Rosaria Butterfield. This is the story of Ken and Floy Smith who patiently loved a woman that they disagreed with. They prayed for her, invited her into their home, and allowed the Spirit of God to work in her heart. That is the type of witness we need to be in this world. We bear witness to the greatest person who ever walked this earth. *Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father who is heaven.*