

What do you think of Jesus Christ?

Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

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This past week, I read that West Virginia and Oklahoma are expected to get enough support to offer the Bible as an elective course for High School students. They were debating on how to go about it so that our youth would be familiar with the history of the Bible and some of the Bible stories, and still be careful not to use it to shape the students values or influence them towards religion.

I find it rather odd since our country was founded on the Judeo Christian principles and values of our forefathers. It is like leaving the yeast out of the bread dough. At least some of our politicians are aware that our country has nosedived since the Bible and prayer has been removed from our educational institutions. It has been replaced with another god and atheistic teachings. Respect for God, family, country and patriotism is taught through the process of role models in the home life, schools and communities. When everyone reinforces truths and values to children there is security in the land.

However, the Bible is not just an ordinary book; it is the inspired Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2 tells us that without the spirit, the natural mind cannot perceive the things that are spiritually discerned.

In this chapter, Paul said that he didn't come to them with excellent speech or with natural wisdom to declare the testimony of God. He was determined not to know anything among them except for Jesus Christ and him crucified. As a man, Paul admitted his weakness, his fear and trembling he felt as he stood before them. His preaching and his speech were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but were given to them through the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. This was so the people's faith would not stand on the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. He proceeded to tell them that he spoke wisdom among them that was perfect; yet not with the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that will come to an end. Paul spoke of the wisdom of God as a mystery, even the hidden wisdom God ordained before the world unto our glory.

None of the princes of this world knew God's plan for had they known it, they would not have crucified the LORD of glory. The Bible declares that "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him."

But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things; yea the deep things of God.

Men understand the things of men by the spirit of man which is in him. No man knows the things of God except the Spirit of God reveals it to him. A person who has yielded himself to God receives not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is of God so that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Paul declares that this is the things that we talk about, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches;

comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, yet he himself is not judged by any man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Throughout the New Testament, people from all walks of life approached Jesus in various ways and reasons. Some came to him with questions sincerely desiring to learn from him.

Others questioned him with the sole purpose of trapping him desiring to twist his words in order to destroy him. Some approached him seeking healing from diseases for themselves or for their loved ones. Others approached him accusing him of being in league with satanic spirits and having power given to him by them. In Luke 7:36 there is a very interesting story portraying various views concerning Jesus. As you read these Scriptures, which one do you most identify with?

In verse 36, a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to dine with him so Jesus went to his house and reclined at the table. In verse 37, another person comes on the scene. A woman of the town who had a reputation of a wicked sinner, after she learned that Jesus was a guest in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment (perfume) and she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, then she began to wet His feet with her tears: and she wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet (affectionately) and anointed them with the ointment (perfume).

The Pharisee in whose house Jesus was a guest observed this scene and began to think within himself, "If this Man was a prophet, He would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a notorious sinner (a social outcast and devoted to a sinful lifestyle.)"

Jesus knew what Simon was thinking so He said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." Simon replied, "Teacher, say it."

Jesus told this parable: "A certain lender of money had two people who owed him money. One owed him 500 pence and the other owed him 50 pence. Neither one of them had any means to pay their debts so the lender freely forgave both of them of the debt they owed him. Now which of them will love him more?" Jesus asked.

Simon answered, "The one, I take it, for whom he forgave and cancelled more." And Jesus said to him, "You have decided correctly."

He then turned to the woman and said to Simon. "Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she from the moment I came in has not ceased to kiss my feet tenderly and caressingly. You did not anoint my head with even cheap ordinary oil, but she has anointed my feet with costly, rare perfume. Therefore I tell you, her sins, many as they are, are forgiven her because she has loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little." And He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Now we are introduced to other people who were sitting around this table at this time.

They began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you: go in peace."

There are people who don't want to see a people rise above their circumstances. They want to trample on them and they seem to take pleasure in watching them flail around

and fail at life. We all have known people who deliberately tempt others who are trying to lose weight to eat foods that will cause them to miss their goal. Those who are trying to kick habits will be tempted by so called friends to engage in the behavior that they are trying to overcome. I once knew a man who had been sober for 16 years but after a crisis came in his life, his brothers talked him into drinking alcohol to ease his pain and he never recovered from drinking after that and died of liver problems associated with alcohol poisoning.

Simon considered himself to be above this woman and yet when Jesus discussed the situation with him, Simon realized that he had not shown proper respect for such an honored guest, the master, for the sinner woman desired to give Jesus the very best she had to offer.

People around the table judged Jesus and wondered "what right does he have to forgive the woman of sins? Only God can do that."

The sinner woman was the only one who went away with a different view and a new life. Jesus forgave her of her past and gave her a blessing that she took home with her. In his sight, her past was wiped out and she was given an opportunity to have a bright future. This is the gift that Jesus Christ offers to every one of us; freedom from the past and hope for the future.

See John 4. The woman at the well, when she understood who it was that was talking to her, accepted God's gift and leaving her water pots, ran into the city and declared, "Come see a man who told me everything that I ever did. Is this not the Messiah?" Jesus offered her living water, an opportunity to trade in her old failures for a brand new start. It didn't matter to him that she had been a social outcast and no one wanted to be seen talking to her or associating with her. Jesus saw the desire of her heart, for she had hope that the Messiah would come and things would be different. Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." No matter how far down the wrong path you have travelled or the many failures that have tripped you up, Jesus Christ is able to create in you a clean heart and give you a new spirit. He will give you his spirit and his love and you can be cleansed by his blood. He will place in your heart a new song and you will have a peace that this world cannot offer you. In

1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul speaks about those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. He gives a long list of wrongdoings and then he said, "And some of you fit in this category at one time. But now you have been washed clean and purified by a complete atonement for sin and made free from guilt." Man cannot change the heart of a person, only God can.

No one can force you to change your mind about sin, only God can. Praise God He can change our status, our direction, and give us a new life on earth and eternal life.

Psalms 53 reads that fools say in their hearts that there is no God. They are corrupt and have done abominable iniquity and there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven to see if any child of man understood and if any sought God. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that does good, no not one.

But Jesus Christ came to teach us the way to eternal life; he gave his life as a ransom on the cross of Calvary that we might believe on the Son of God and through him have a new heart, a change of mind and a right spirit placed within us.

Psalms 51 is a beautiful prayer of repentance written by King David after he had committed adultery and murder. In verse 10 he asked God to create in him a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within him. He asked that he would be restored the joy of his salvation and that God would uphold him his free spirit. Then David would teach transgressors God's ways and sinners would be converted unto God.

My prayer is that we approach God with reverence and ask him to open our minds to the spiritual meaning of Scripture that as spiritual food will nurture our souls and we might find and walk in the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. The Bible is more than history; it is more than good stories; it is the way, the truth and the life. It is the map that will lead us into the kingdom of God. It is the remedy for leprosy of the soul. No man can see God without holiness and accepting God's plan of salvation cleanses the soul and makes it whiter than snow. Psalms 51:7

< Psalm 51 >
King James Bible

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

(2 Samuel 12:1-12)

- 1 {To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.} Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.
- 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.
- 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
- 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
- 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
- 13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
- 15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
- 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
- 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

< Psalm 51 >

New International Version

Psalm 51a

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
- 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- 15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.
- 18 May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Footnotes:

a 1 In Hebrew texts 51:1-19 is numbered 51:3-21.

b 17 Or The sacrifices of God are