



THE JOURNEY CHURCH

SERMON GUIDE 3.13.2022

Communion with Christ We've Settled

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 7:21-23

RECAP:

The subject we are diving into today, and over the next several weeks, is deep, rich, and can potentially change your life. I want to challenge you in this series to pray a particular prayer for your life: "Lord, help me to be closer to you than I ever have been." Not only do I want you to pray this prayer, but I want you to commit yourself to praying that your heart would genuinely desire to be closer to God. Because I believe if our hearts desire it, then we'll take actions to draw near to Him, and if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. He promises that in His Word. So it is a promise we can cling to.

James 4:8 -- Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

If we pursue Him and draw near to Him, He will not leave us hanging. We will find Him when we seek Him with all of our heart.

I've had 3 big "ah-ha" moments of theological understanding in my lifetime. The **first one** was understanding the sovereignty of God in our suffering and developing a doctrine of suffering. The **second one** was the sovereignty of God in salvation, and grasping the doctrines of grace. The **third one** is the subject of this series. In a summary statement: **Communion with God is central to the Bible's storyline and the heart of the Christian faith.** When I say "communion" I mean fellowship/relationship with God. The name of the series is Communion with Christ, but we can commune with each person of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit). John Owen, the English Puritan wrote a fairly sizable book on Communion with God. He spends 1/8 on communion with the Father, 1/8 on communion with Spirit, and about 6/8 on communion with Christ. There are ways in which we

commune with all three persons of the Trinity, and ways in which we commune with specific persons. I'll bring some clarity to that later in the series.

Communion with God isn't just a part of the Christian life, it's the centerpiece of the Christian life.

C.S. Lewis "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

In this quote, Lewis is talking about the Christian faith, and how it is a lens for seeing everything in life. In the same way, drilled down a little deeper, what I aim to show in this series is that I believe in communion with Christ, fellowship with Him, not only because I see it in Scripture, but through it, I see everything else in Scripture. Not only do I want you to see the importance of it, I want you to experience it. I want you to recognize that if you have put your faith in Christ, you are reconciled and saved to a relationship with God.

When my oldest daughter, Kaleigh, was 4 years old, we went Easter egg hunting at my grandmother's house. We had eggs scattered all over the yard, and we even had special eggs hidden in different places. My grandmother also had some Easter decorations in the yard. She had a big wooden Easter Bunny, and a few oversized Easter eggs (that were like basketballs). After watching for a few minutes I noticed that Kaleigh had put one of those decorative eggs in her basket, filling the entire thing. She saw the decorative egg in the yard, not realizing it was just for looks, and thought, "I want the big one!" I love that she saw that one and said, "That's the one I want." I love that she didn't settle for just scooping up the small ones. You see, because here's the deal, we were created and redeemed to experience a relationship with God--that's the Big Egg--and yet many keep settling for less. And I want to show what we often settle for.

Matthew 7:21-23 -- *21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*

Often when we read this passage, we see it as a warning about end times judgment. It is certainly that. But the content of what Jesus says is also very instructive for other parts of our theology and understanding of the faith.

“Lord, Lord” — Jesus knows that many will call him by his proper title, demonstrating proper beliefs in him. To call him Lord implies a certain amount of knowledge and intellectual agreement. But Jesus says not all who call him that will enter the kingdom. This immediately tells us that there is more than being in the kingdom than right knowledge. Demons have right beliefs.

James 2:19 -- *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!*

“Did we not...” — Jesus then begins to go down the list of things people may claim they did for him. Good things. Religious things. But again, these actions are not enough for entrance into the kingdom. You see, we can still fall victim to this today. Didn't we attend church, do social justice, pay our taxes, fight against political correctness in your name? But it is not enough. **Beliefs and behaviors alone will not bring you into the kingdom.**

Titus 3:4-7 -- *4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

When Jesus gives us a snapshot of the Day of Judgment, the Last Day, the Day of Sorting the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the weeds. It will not be a division of good people and bad people. It will not be the people who have the deep intellectual grasp of the gospel. What does Jesus say to these people? Depart from me, I never knew you. He doesn't know them. And he's not talking about being ignorant of their existence. He's saying there is no relationship. It will be those who know him and are known by him who enter the Kingdom. **Relationship with God is the heart of salvation.**

Yes, relationship with God is informed by beliefs, so theology and doctrine matter (you cannot simply construct your own version of God). Yes, relationship with God should shape our behaviors, so how we live matters (those are the fruits of our salvation). But the heart is made for communion with God. Relationship with Him.

I was in my twenties before I ever heard the idea that we could have a relationship with God. And I know many others with the same experience. I believe there are professing Christians all over the world who have settled for a Christianity that has no power. It is a Christianity rooted in right beliefs or right behaviors, but absent of relationship. There are many in the world, outside the faith, who've peeked in at Christianity, seeking to understand what it is about or teaches, and rather than hearing about a God who

demonstrates amazing grace to sinners, through His Son, so we can have a relationship with God, they see Christianity as simply a series of intellectual propositions to be believed or a set of behaviors to be adopted. They reject a Christianity that is not even the heart of Christianity. Just BELIEVE and BEHAVE. BELIEVE & BEHAVE.

We've settled. There are some of you guys here who have settled. You have settled for simply believing right beliefs or living the right behaviors, but you don't regularly experience the ongoing reality of relationship with God, communion with Him. You're not pursuing to know God in a relationship.

You see, marriage is a great illustration, because marriage is a pointer to the relationship of Christ and His bride, the Church. We enter into a union with the Living God through faith in Christ. This is like the marriage ceremony, it becomes legal. But once we enter marriage, we are invited to a relationship, an intimacy. This is communion.

Union w/ Christ + Communion w/ Christ = Satisfied Heart

Philippians 3:7-11 -- *7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Paul lists out all the reasons, if he wanted, that he could boast in the flesh. He could boast of his education, status, piety, and practices. He could point to how solid his beliefs and how holy his behaviors are. If anyone wanted to have a competition of the best beliefs and behaviors, Paul could beat them. But whatever gain he had in those things, whatever benefits they gave him, he counts as loss for the sake of Christ. In fact, he counts **EVERYTHING** as loss because of the **SURPASSING WORTH** of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. What does Paul value above everything? Knowing Jesus Christ. THAT is the all-surpassing worth. There's nothing more satisfying to our hearts.

He suffers the loss of all things and counts them as RUBBISH, to have Christ and be found in him, not with a righteousness of his own, but that which comes through faith in Christ. This is the gospel. This is how we are saved. Then he says again, “**that I may know him...**”

The storyline of the Bible is all about knowing Him. It's all about Communion with the Lord. **1.** Man was created in the beginning to know and walk with God. They weren't created to simply believe in Him, but to fellowship with God and love Him. **2.** But man rebelled against God, and had their communion with God severed. They were expelled from the Garden. That relationship has been affected ever since that day. **3.** But God did not abandon us. He establishes a covenant to set apart a people for Himself, they would be His people and He would be their God. This people starts with Abraham and becomes the nation of Israel. But it is quickly clear that the blessing to Abraham would be a blessing extended to the whole world, and from Israel would come a Messiah and Redeemer to reconcile a people from every nation, tribe, and tongue to communion with the Lord. **4.** And what is Heaven going to be like? Simply believing in God? No, we will know Him and walk with Him forever. Created for Communion. Severed from Communion. Christ restores Communion. And eternal life is Communion with God forever.

Friends, do you know Him? Jesus came and lived a holy life for your righteousness and died a death on the cross, for forgiveness of your sins. He came to provide union with God, and change our legal standing. But he also came to give us communion with God, and change our relational standing.

1 Peter 3:18 -- *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*

Today, I want you to know both. Don't settle. Quit stuffing your life full of the little easter eggs that never satisfy. Pursue the big egg. Go after Him with your whole heart. **If** you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, then give Him thanks for His grace and ask Him to stir your heart to go deeper. **If** you are not enjoying daily communion with God, pray for the Holy Spirit to stir your heart and breed a spiritual hunger in your soul for more of Him. **If** you have never placed your faith in Christ and repented of sin, cry out today and cast your cares upon him.

QUESTIONS:

1. If you didn't do so on Sunday, stop and pray right now to be closer to the Lord than ever before.
2. What does it mean to draw near to God? How does that allow for Him to draw near to us?
3. What smaller eggs are you settling for? What works are you going and counting on to earn your salvation?
4. What must we do for Jesus to recognize us?

5. Where does our righteousness come from? Is there anything we can do to earn it?
Why not? (Isaiah 64:6)
6. Why is Paul longing to attain the resurrection from the dead?