

Sermon- Rejecting a Coronation

Scripture: John 6: 14-15

Sunday, March 11, 2018

Today, we will be continuing our journey through the book of John. Last Sunday we looked at this big miracle of the feeding of the 12,000 people. Jesus' miracles always have a larger point and I had shared that in this case Jesus was communicating his identity, as the one who was like the prophet Moses, who feed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness. In fact he was telling them, he was also in fact greater than Moses because Jesus' provision even had 12 basketfuls of leftovers. And those 12 baskets stood for the living bread provide for the eternal life of all his chosen people signified by the 12 chosen tribes of the Old Covenant and the 12 Apostles of the New Covenant. Of course Jesus knew that people would only gradually absorb everything he taught them, and in the mean time they would misunderstand and do things quite contrary to his wishes. And that is exactly what happens next.

People who were blessed by Jesus that day, saw that Jesus was their best case scenario. If Jesus was a prophet of the stature of Moses, that would be the best thing that happened to them because that meant Jesus would be able to liberate them from the Roman oppression like Moses liberated his people from the Egyptian Pharaoh. And Jesus would keep their refrigerators stocked! How could things get any better. After all these years of suffering. So it does not take them much time to organize, decide that they wanted to declare Jesus as their king and strike while the iron is hot by crowning him right there.

Now I know, this does seem a little hasty, doesn't it? It sure does. But having grown up learning Indian history in a way I feel for these people. You see, their situation was similar to the situation India was just recently. You see India is a country with a long and proud history. When Abraham and Sarah, not Abraham and Cheri 😊 were going about

their business in the Ur of the Chaldeans in 1500 BC, the Indus Valley civilization was at its peak. For thousands of years, it participated in global trade, from gold and diamonds to spices and everything in between. And to make sure that things were calculated right it even made the most important contribution to the field of mathematics, the number zero among many other things. Then the British come along and treat the nation as its private gold mine to do with it as it pleased, while the locals slaved and died of starvation. This went on for a 190 years and the British milking the nation for everything that it was worth. So it is very understandable that the locals where desperate for the British to leave and would gravitate to any leader who promised to liberate them. The Jewish people were in a very similar situation. They were an ancient and proud people. They even knew they were God's chosen people. And here they were being kicked about by some arrogant Romans. They desperately wanted liberation. And here was Jesus, a prophet of the kind that comes around only maybe once in a thousand years, so hey why not make him king right there. Right? What are we waiting for? So you have 12,000 people who have eaten there fill and who suddenly realize that Jesus is the answer and know what to do. This is like a political wave that sweeps through the crowd.

Now it is time to turn our attention to Jesus. Jesus, of course does want to be crowned King at this point. Now, of course if you grew up listening to the Bible stories, you know the sequence of events and you know how the whole Bible ends. So of course you tell yourself there is no coronation at this point in the story. It does not fit in with God's plan and you move on quickly, right? After all it is just two verses in John. But the problem is this, if we move on too quickly, we do not get to appreciate the depth of the struggle Jesus would have gone through. Remember, Jesus was not just fully divine but fully human as well. Now of course it is hard for us to understand fully this duality because we are all 100% human as far as I can tell. But in his human aspect, the Bible tells us that Jesus had to deal with every human challenge and every human temptation. And this is

how the situation would look from Jesus' human perspective. So Jesus knew he was prophet, priest and king. So if he become king right there, that would not in any way go against his true identity. Also he came to establish his kingdom on earth. And with his power, He can easily overthrow the Romans and from there, ruling the rest of the world was not such a big deal. End goal established. So why does Jesus not go this route? Well, Jesus knew that if he become King by the use of his divine power, he would be a ruler from the outside, but internally, the hearts of the people would be unchanged. People would go about their sinful ways and nothing would change at the deepest level. The kingdom of God that Jesus came to establish was one where people made him king in their inner most being. And for that to happen, he would have to do something no other king has done before. He would have to first give up his life and go to the cross, taking his people's sin on himself. That way he would overcome not military power but an even greater power, the power of sin and death. And in the process, hearts would be changed. This was his end goal. So Jesus was not about to get crowned there because he had great clarity about his end goal, and he was not about to be distracted.

Secondly, Jesus had great clarity about the means to get there. Jesus was moved to decline his coronation because he was not about to take the easy way out to get to his end goal. To understand this we need to look at a parable about means that Jesus taught called the parable of the wide and narrow gate. In Matt 7 ¹³ "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell^[1] is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it. Two paths. And if you take the wrong path, you will get to a different destination than you intended. The wide path, is very easy to see, takes no effort to get onto and seems to be easy to move on. But if you were to look very carefully, Jesus tells us, you will find that this path leads you straight to hell. Then there is the narrow path. It is difficult to spot. That means it takes some discernment to even know where it starts. And when you are on it, every step forward is

going to be a challenge. Like one of those winding mountain paths, which is so narrow that you have to put one foot in front of the other to move forward. But the destination this narrow mountainside path leads you to is the glorious kingdom of God. If you were to look at the totality of Jesus' teaching and life you can be quite sure that what he is saying is that on life's journey, it is not just the end goal but the path we take is really important too.

There is a third principle in Jesus' approach. If you have to make a choice between pleasing God and pleasing people, you have to choose God every time. This is super obvious in theory but super hard to do in practice. Because, if you have a crowd of people, and they all want you to do something and they will love you and adore you for it and give you anything you want, it is like a giant vacuum or like a rising tide. If you are a little boat, you cannot do much but to rise and fall with the tide. But Jesus was not influenced even by such a thing as the tidal pull of 12,000. How? Because Jesus, he is so in tune with his heavenly Father that he is always clear about what His heavenly Father wants him to do. He loved his heavenly Father so much that the pull on his heart of his heavenly father was greater than the pull of 12,000 people or even all the people on the planet. Just a few versus earlier when Jesus scolded the Pharisees he tells them, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?". Of course this principle of pleasing God over people is seen all over the Bible and there is no one who shows us how it is done better than Jesus. But here is the thing though, when Jesus chooses to obey God over people, his action is not against the people in anyway. Rejecting the people's desires at that moment is the most loving thing he can do for them. Sometimes to love people, you have to do the exact opposite of what they want. And if you need an example of how it is done, you need look no further than Jesus in these two verses.

Three principles from Jesus' rejected coronation. Clarity of the end goal, never compromise the means to get to the end, and chose to please God over pleasing people everytime.

So how does this apply to us.

Well at the individual level, the principle of the narrow way tells us that if we are not really struggling with the forces of this world, that should be a red flag to us because we might actually be giving in to the lure of the wide and smooth road the enemy has made to lure us into his trap. But God's people who are making a real kingdom difference are always stirring things up in the spiritual realm. And the enemy is really not happy and will do everything possible to try and block your path forward. The good news of course is that, the enemy has already been defeated and while it can make life difficult, it can never hinder the progress of a child of God on the narrow path. There are many ways, you can be lured onto easy street. Today, I think something everyone should be very mindful of are technology facilitated addictions. In the old days, it used to be nicotine and very expensive illegal drugs that had the capacity to get you addicted. Today, a big part of the job of technology companies is to figure out how to make there websites and apps and games and cell phones addictive. And what happens to the 21st century consumer addicted to all kinds of technology? Well, if we are not careful we are on the information super highway to hell. There are two roads in life. One is not just less traveled but narrow and difficult. But if Jesus' Christ taught us anything, it is the narrow and difficult way that leads to the Kingdom of God.

I believe the principle of the narrow way applies to the church as a whole as well.

One of the ways is this. Every church is looking to grow as a community. And growth is good because it is a sign of life and it also helps us be self-sustaining. But to get to the end goal of growth, if we were to compromise our beliefs and even make the Gospel message something that tickles ears and all about how accepting Jesus in their lives will

make all their problems go away, that kind of message grows a lot of churches but we don't want to grow our church by compromising the message. How we get to our end goal is as important as the end goal itself, because the way we do things is an opportunity to communicate our identity. If people don't want to join because of the approach we take to the Gospel or the stand we take for peace witness then those people were never meant to be part of this church community. Jesus was in no hurry to get to his coronation because there was a lot of work he needed to do to show the people who he really was. And before the people made him their king, Jesus wanted them to be crystal clear about what kind of king he really was and so it must be with the church.

Three lessons from a time when Jesus rejects the will of the people to continue in the center of his father's will. First, it is not just the destination but how you get there is important as well. If Jesus wanted to rule the world, he had many options and Satan himself offered the world to him. But Jesus was not interested because for Jesus, the path is as important as the destination. Secondly, when it comes to paths, you have the broad and easy route that most people are on and you have one that is narrow and difficult. When you have these two options in front of you, know this, the narrow route is the right one to take. Thirdly, Jesus' example in this story and his whole life shows us that it does not matter how many people are pleased with you at any given moment. What matters is God is pleased or not. How you do what you do matters. Being on the narrow way matters a lot and pleasing God matters the most.

Like Christ, may God enable us to be just a little closer to the center of his will each day and in so doing, may we grow in our love for God and our neighbor. Let us pray.