

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: The Blessed Light of the Gospel Message

May 27, 2018

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Stories of Muslim conversions

Context

Exegesis

Main Point: God is extra gracious to gospel-deprived people and will intentionally do what is necessary to bring them the gospel message.

1. The residents of Galilee lived amongst pagan cultures that were influential in a culturally and spiritually negative way. This is most likely what Isaiah was referring to when he said they sat in darkness.
 - The Galileans had the Samaritans to the south with their syncretized religious worship (Think Amazonia in S. Africa today).
 - They had other nationalities and religions surrounding them. The Assyrians were the first to import pagan people, then the Babylonians and finally the Greeks so that at the time of Christ, the main cultural influence in Galilee was the influence that the cities called Decapolis permeated throughout the region. So the neighboring towns just a few miles away from Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum, and Nain like Tiberias and Sephoris were thoroughly Greek in their lifestyle.
 - Unlike the Jews in Judea, these northerners were the in the minority and it was difficult for Israeli parents to keep their children from becoming influenced by the culture.
 - If we had a discussion time today, we could ask the question, “How do you keep your children from being assimilated into the culture?” Israelites had it easier than we do. They had dietary customs, dress customs, holidays to celebrate that kept them unique and distinct. But we have none of that today.
2. The Christian families of Alexandria, MN live in the midst of a pagan culture dominated by social media, Hollywood media, secular education, peer pressure, and pop culture.
 - Most church children growing up in the 40’s 50’s and 60’s lived in a predominantly Christian culture. Most everyone went to some church and most parents in the neighborhood shared the same moral values.
 - Today most children never went to Sunday School, they do not know the basics

of biblical knowledge, Adam and Eve etc.

- In that sense we are very much like the people living in darkness in the region of Galilee of the Gentiles.
- If Caesar worship and worship of the Greek gods back then was the pervading influence, today it is:
 1. The lack of respect for human life as a result of evolution being taught and abortion legalized.
 2. The destruction of marriage by Hollywood's new moral values and Woodstock's influence on the Hippie generation.
 3. The death of guilt via the denial of sin.
 4. The acceptance of all forms of sexuality as permissible even though Scripture clearly condemns all but one. Thus men may now use women's bathrooms if they decide that day they identify with the opposite gender.
 5. The veneration of wealth as the new god-of-glory and happiness.
 6. The privatization of faith. It is becoming more and more offensive to share one's faith publicly.
 7. The attack against all God-placed authority, parents, police, teachers, but most importantly God's word.
 8. The indoctrination of students in Marxist doctrine in academia.
 9. The influence of radical feminism in our churches.
 10. The attack against truth caused by post-modernism. When Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life" can we trust that anymore? Maybe there are more ways than one to heaven and isn't my truth just as true as Jesus' definition of truth?
- 3. God cares about today's gospel-deprived generation of youth as much as he did the Israelites living amongst the Gentiles in Jesus' day.
 - They need to know that their future and hope is infinitely better than the culture around them. From that time Jesus began to preach, ² proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, *"The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent, and believe the Glad News!"* ¹ *For the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
 - What did this statement mean for the people of Capernaum and what does it mean for us today. You can't get much bigger than salvation by grace but this is even more!!
 - For them: Tyrant, leader, repentance, rescue, marriage covenant at Sinai, presence of God, promised land.
 - For us: Satan the tyrant, Jesus the leader, repentance 1st, rescue at the cross, united with Christ in marriage, presence of God via HS, and eventual conquering of all cultures and peoples with the blessed millennial bliss of 1,00 year reign and eternity.