

# 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

February 16, 2020

Sermon Title: “Things that Keep People From Coming to Christ” from John 5:39-47

Today’s Scripture: See insert

Introduction: I don’t get it. If I were a salesman and I had the greatest product mankind needed at a cost they could easily afford and I would be a trillionaire. But I do have the greatest product and it is exactly what the world needs to keep them out of hell and it doesn’t cost anything except switching allegiances from one master to another, yet I and you have so few takers. What’s wrong? Muslims can’t because they fear reprisal. Wounded church-goers can’t because they have been hurt. College students can’t because they have been indoctrinated. And children growing up in a hypocritical home can’t because they can’t get past their parent’s hypocrisy.

Main point: Pride and fear are the two main reasons why people refuse to surrender to Christ.

Context:

1. Eternal Life is found, not in the Bible, but in the Bible’s author. [39] You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.
  - The Jews believed they had to obey the 10 Commandments and all additions to them in order to be approved by God and allowed to enter heaven.
  - Typified by this encounter: Mark 10:17–22 [17] And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” [18] And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. [19] You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” [20] And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” [21] And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” [22] Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (ESV)
  - Saul learned the lesson the hard way. 1 Samuel 15:[22] And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. (ESV)

- Jesus could have said “Who in the world do you think Isaiah 53 is talking about”.  
**Isaiah 53:11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. (ESV)**
  - Today, many religious people are striving to keep the man made laws they think come from the Bible. Working and striving they imagine that all of their hard work will pay off with eternal life. It won't. Not unless they come to kneel before the Savior.
  - Others think that because they are scholars and know the Scriptures backwards and forwards that they are going to heaven but they are not because they have not personally surrendered to the King who wrote the book. It would be no different than people buying a health and fitness book because the person who wrote it looked like our First Lady but just because they have memorized every line does not mean they look like the first lady.
  - Another way to say this is that the Jews were in the Word but the Word was not in them. There was a blockage preventing them from believing in Jesus. Paul refers to this blockage this way: 2 Corinthians 3:12–18 [12] Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, [13] not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. [14] But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. [15] Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. [16] But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. [17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. [18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (ESV)
2. Wanting people's acceptance (Pride) and not their rejection (fear) is why people refuse to surrender to Christ. **[41] I do not receive glory from people. [42] But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. [43] I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.**
- If the Jews stopped following the Pharisees and turned to Jesus they would lose so much and gain so little (so they thought). Social gatherings and invitations would be over.
  - That's why Jesus said He didn't care for man's approval. We need to follow His example.
  - How did He know they didn't love God? Simple. Because they loved man more. If they loved God more than people's approval they would follow Christ and listen to what the Father is saying to them about His Son.

- Honestly I have struggled with this over my whole lifetime and it has not been until my later years I have found total freedom from this addiction. Now, as an older pastor I can see it in younger pastors. For example, I may watch a pastor skip over a passage like Malachi 2:13–16 [13] And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. [14] But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. [15] Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. [16] "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." (ESV) Why? Because there are so many in his congregation who would be offended by hearing they blew it when they divorced their wives without cause.
3. The people-pleasing idol makes it impossible for people to believe. [44] How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?
- Many want to accept Christ and it makes sense to them, but they can't go all the way out of fear of what others will say. **John 12:42–43 [42] Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (ESV)**
  - Nothing has changed. When I asked a good friend why he stays in a denomination that ordains homosexuals to the pulpit he admits freely that it is out of fear of what his family would say if he left. He may be saved, but he certainly is not pleasing the Lord when his tithe supports immorality.
4. Trusting in ultimate truth requires knowing that truth better than you think you do. [45] **Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. [46] For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. [47] But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" (ESV)**
- The ultimate truth for the Jews was the Torah (the Law). Since Moses spoke directly to God for five books of the OT, then there is no authority higher than him. But, did they understand Moses. Jesus says no they didn't.

- They didn't see Jesus in the animal skins God used to clothe Adam and Eve.
- They didn't see Jesus in Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac on Mt Moriah.
- They didn't see Jesus in the Passover, the Red Sea Crossing, the Rock out of which sprang forth water, the Angel who guided them in the wilderness, the Tabernacle. . .
  - The altar of sacrifice
  - The altar of incense
  - The Table of Showbread with twelve loaves
  - The lampstand
  - And finally the Ark of the Covenant

### Application

Pride and fear are also two main reasons we refuse to witness of our faith, especially to unsaved relatives and friends. It's easier to go on the mission field where no one knows you than to call a friend and say let's have dinner so we can discuss your eternal life.