



For the Week of March 25, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
Authority

Life Notes for Missional Communities

a special note to Missional Community facilitators and members

Greetings to all in the name of Jesus, and thanks to many of you for emailing encouragements and ideas this week. I appreciate your input more than you can know.

We are doing **Life Notes** along with Pastor Mark's sermons as a way to develop relationship with Father, Son, Spirit and each other. Already, lives are being changed. We have about 5,500 people to support, and I am so grateful for the role that each of you plays in this journey. God is good.

For those in your Missional Communities who might like a reading suggestion, I'd suggest *Story: Recapture the Mystery* by Steven James. It's a great read, filled with inspiring prose you'll come back to or pass along. It's the story of God and us, told in a personal, creative way. It's Biblical, poetic and personally challenging, and it's a great resource to help you join God in what he desires to do in your life. Here's a little taste of the writing content and style.

"When Jesus came to earth, he brought along the folktales of heaven. He didn't lecture like a professor, but told fables like a bard, weaving tales of another world into the fabric of human lives.

"He told stories because he knew humans are rarely interested in truth unless it's wrapped up in a story. He taught through stories, used stories to explain himself to his detractors and helped people with eternal hungers get a foretaste of heaven through his parables.

"When Christianity becomes something other than entering into and living out the story of God, it becomes something other than Christianity. God's story isn't over; it's still being told today. Each one of us has the potential to become both a chapter of history and his story."

(You can buy or order this book from Cyndi Brannan at the Mission 68 bookstore.)

Remember, an MC is more than a traditional small group that studies God's Word or a book together. An MC is a group of believers who are committed to helping each other grow - living honestly with each other, loving God back together and actively taking Jesus to the world. An MC is a group of believers living God's story together. An MC at MISSION is a group of believers committed to living out Micah 6:8 - living justly, loving mercy and walking humbly - together.

introducing this week's passage in John

The passage we're studying in John this week is, essentially, an explanation given by Jesus. There are many times Jesus speaks in the gospels, and this one directly addresses complaints he's hearing from the Jewish religious leaders. They are upset with Jesus, so Jesus reveals more about himself. Let's look at the entire passage, keeping in mind that Jesus had just healed a man who didn't want to be healed in the first place and wasn't very grateful for the healing. Gratitude was lacking all around Jesus that day.

the Word: John 5:16-30

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

Jesus: *"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."*

For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus (to the Jews): *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it."*

"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man."

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."

explorations: chronicles of a healed man...

The first part of John 5 talks about a man who is healed, even when he doesn't want to be healed (we studied this last week). Just one more thought to explore. The man had his own identity (38 years at the same location, you get to know people...) before Jesus healed him. Once healed, the man was free but he also had to be responsible for his life. This happens to us all. God leads us through difficult times and takes us deeper in our walk with him, but that growth also demands something of our attitudes and our actions. This next "examen" question might not apply, but it might...

*What responsibilities do you sense God asking you to shoulder right now that you gratefully bear?
What responsibilities do you sense God asking you to shoulder right now that you resist, resent or want to avoid?*

(hint...it can be gratifying to be a leader but difficult to ask someone we've hurt for their forgiveness)

explorations: religion meets Jesus

John 5:16 and 18 describe the frustration of the Jewish leaders. Basically, Jesus bothered them. And he bothered them over and over and over again. They couldn't figure him out - he was nothing like the Messiah they'd anticipated. He talked to objectionables, healed insignificants and did not respect their idea of the Sabbath at all.

What bothered the Jewish leaders about Jesus? Write down their stated objections and then what you think might have been behind those objections.

What are some obvious things that the Jewish leaders were blind to or missing in the situation? (hint: who and what did they really care about? And who and what did they fail to care about?)

What are some "whos" and "whats" that we/you are blind to today?

How does this blindness affect your life with Father, Son and Spirit? With those you love? With objectionables? With insignificants?

How and where is Jesus specifically asking you to follow him today?

explorations: the ultimate relationship

Jesus literally did nothing without his Father. Nothing. The following verses are Jesus' explanation to the frustrated religious leaders. Read the passage again - aloud is almost always best.

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

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Note all the interconnections and ties that bind. God the Father and God the Son are one. This relationship, commitment, connection is mind-boggling for us. Their relationship is the perfect dance of the trinity that we can't yet fathom.

Pastor Mark taught us that...

the son can do nothing by himself,
the father loves the son and shows him everything he does,
the father both trusts and entrusts his work to the son,
the father wants the son to be honored,
the son loves to please the father,
the father and the son are one,

...and he revealed the chain of authority this passage unfolds for us.

"The Father has authority over the Son. The Son submits to the Father. Jesus has authority over us as Lord, life-giver, and judge, and we are to honor him and submit to his authority over us."

We are to submit our lives to Jesus, just as Jesus submitted to the Father.

It isn't easy to give up our own control and this world's offerings in favor of living connected to the ultimate mentor. Just as Jesus was faced with world leaders, religious teachers and the cultural norms and promises of his time, we are faced with the same. There are voices all around us, making their points and calling us to agree. But there is only one voice that satisfies, only one voice that speaks truth, only one authority. Pastor Mark told us our "*minds need to be renewed and changed.*" And they do. Jesus wants us to imitate him as we daily see Father God working and hear him calling us to follow.

Where do you look for your daily praise? What happens when you don't get it?

Right now, at this time in your life, who are you trying to please and why?

How do you respond (what do you do) when others disagree or seem to invalidate your life or faith choices?

What is the source of your daily fears? Do you fear societal attitudes or specific people's judgments? Do these fears drive your choices?

What can you hear Jesus saying to you right now about following him? What "next steps" can you take to choose Jesus? How can you imitate him today?

Pastor Mark closed his sermon with this thought: "*The lasting, sustaining joy you're seeking through everything else will never be found because it can only be given by your Creator who made you and loves you and longs to bless you.*"

In closing, please read the following prayer together as a group and allow the words to join your hearts together. Prayer is such a powerful shared experience. So often we pray for things that we see as needs in our own lives or the life of those we love, and God receives our prayers with joy. But another aspect of prayer - a life-changing aspect of prayer in community - is simply to listen and invite Father, Son and Spirit to transform our hearts.

"God of our creation and recreation, you who are constantly at work to shape me in the wholeness of Christ, you know the hardness of these structures of my being that resist your shaping touch. You know the deep inner rigidities of my being that reject your changing grace. By your grace soften my hardness and rigidity; help me to become pliable at your hands. Even as I read this, may there be a melting of my innate resistance to your transforming love."

Robert Mulholland, *An Invitation to a Journey: A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation*

next week

To prepare for more discussion in John, read John 5:31-47 and pages 90-94 in Metzger's *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*.

Don't forget to email questions you might have on these passages in John to Pastor Mark at markc@mission68.org.