

Cutting Out Jesus

Cutting things out usually has a negative connotation. If we tell someone I'm cutting you out of my life we are implying, we never want to see them again. However, it can also be a good thing. Children in school are sometimes told to cut out a picture of a duck or some other animal from a magazine. In this case cutting out doesn't imply a removing of that thing but a removing of everything else so only that which is cut out remains. Our text this morning calls on us to cut out Jesus. Not to remove him from our life but to remove everything else so that only He remains.

Mark 9:38-50 ³⁸ Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us."

John says "we forbade him because he does not follow us." It is easy to see how John has the wrong attitude. Instead of rejoicing that Jesus name is being preached John is upset that he and the other apostles are not in charge of the situation. John's attitude is focused on himself and his right as a disciple.

This church was started with the goal of Jesus. But how easy it is to lose the focus on Jesus and have it become all about "our church." How easy it is to slip from we want to teach people about Jesus, to we want people to be members of *our* church.

I've heard there is a new church in town here, another nondenominational church. Should we be upset and jealous if they are growing and we are not? Or should we rejoice that another group is preaching Jesus?

If our focus is on "our church" we will easily be upset, angry, jealous when someone impinges on what we think of as our jurisdiction. If our focus is on Jesus and a deep desire to rejoice in his death and resurrection we will rejoice when Jesus is preached. As Paul did

Philippians 1:18 Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

This doesn't mean we approve of any false teaching they are doing.

³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me.

Jesus brings John back to what is important. This man is preaching the name of Jesus and by the power of Jesus' word he is changing lives. He is casting out demons and healing people. This is what we want. This is what we rejoice in. That the name of Jesus is changing people's heart.

Understand that there is no indication that this man was teaching or preaching anything wrong. Jesus also does not say that the disciples ought to go and join him. Other scriptural passages like Romans 16:17 make it clear that we ought not to join with those who teach things contrary to Jesus' word.

In this case Jesus does not say, go join him, but he does indicate we don't need to try to stop him. We can rejoice that Jesus name is preached even if we know that he is wrong about certain things.

Nor is this passage that teaches gospel reductionism. That is to say that the rest of God's word doesn't matter.

Jesus says, "The truth will set you free," and also, "abide in my word."

Every word of God is sweet and precious.

The point is that it is all about Jesus. Keeping Jesus cut out as the focus.

Moses said, "Are you jealous for my sake."

If we are jealous and envious for our own sakes, we are wrong. If we rejoice in Jesus name, we are correct.

⁴⁰ "For he who is not against us is on our side.

This summer when I was trying to Kayak down the Grand River there were areas where the river was full of down trees. I had to constantly get out of my Kayak and drag it over, across or under. Then there were areas where the trees were up on the bank where they are supposed to be. It was such a relief to paddle for a stretch without a constant battle. Those trees were like my best friends simply because they weren't in my way. There were so many trees in the river to battle, how foolish it would have been to battle those which were not in the river.

There are so many that actively oppose the preaching of Jesus' name. Satan knows how to throw every tree he can across our path. It is a wonderful thing when someone is doing so little as just not getting in the way of Jesus name.

We don't need everyone to be one of us. It would be nice if everyone were a part of our church but its not the most important thing. We do want everyone to be of Jesus. Jesus is the picture

⁴¹ "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Jesus here argues from the smaller to the greater. If you are out preaching Christ and someone helps you out with a glass of water, that person has helped you to preach Christ, and that is a good thing. If even such a small gesture will be rewarded by Christ how much more if they don't just give you water but help in the preaching and sharing of Jesus name.

My brother and I were handing out VBS fliers on a very hot day. When of the men we spoke to offered us each a can of cold Coca-Cola. He did not do it for our sakes but for Jesus' sake. He didn't come to our church or send his kids to our VBS, nor did we go to his church, but his small help was still an aid in the preaching of Jesus. How much more so if he had passed out fliers with us.

This man was doing more than giving the disciples a glass of water. He was handing out fliers so to speak. He was helping them in the task of preaching Jesus name. Rather than being jealous to keep that work for himself, John should rejoice that more people are hearing the name of Jesus.

⁴² "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

Are there those whom we should oppose? Are there those whom we should forbid?

Absolutely, but again its about Jesus not about us. It doesn't matter if they oppose us, it does matter if they oppose Jesus.

Whoever is an offense needs to Jesus name should be opposed.

Remember the word offense means not that my feelings are hurt but rather a death trap. This word indicates a trap set for an animal. The trap will either kill the animal out right or keep the animal trapped until the hunter comes and kills it. These days sometimes people trap animals and let them go again some other place. That wasn't really a thing in Jesus' day. That certainly isn't what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about those who lead children to spiritual death. They are a death trap to Jesus little lambs.

They need to be opposed because they oppose Jesus not because they oppose us.

What is that that qualifies as a death trap? We heard that last week. Whatever leads people away from that cut out of Jesus. Whatever leads people away from that simple sentence we heard Jesus speak last week.

"The son of man must be handed over, die and rise again on the third day."

Peter also reminds us

Acts 4:12 ¹² "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Salvation is God's gift to us. It is not something that we earn. It is received through faith. Anything which denies that Jesus died for our sin is a death trap. Anything which denies that He died, which denies that salvation is a free gift given to us lead people into death. Anything which denies the vicarious atonement is an offense, leading people to certain damnation.

If that man had been preaching against Jesus and against his free salvation then indeed the disciples should have stopped him. Not because he was opposed to them, but because he was opposed to Jesus.

This is the same attitude that Paul displays by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

He rejoices when Jesus is preached, even if the hearts and motives of those preaching are not pure

Philippians 1:18 Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

But he vehemently opposes anything which preaches against the gospel of Christ

Galatians 1:8-9 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

⁴³ "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-- ⁴⁴ "where `Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.' ⁴⁵ "And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-- ⁴⁶ "where `Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.' ⁴⁷ "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire-- ⁴⁸ "where `Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'

Jesus does not mean in these verses to teach us to mutilate ourselves. He only says, "if your hand causes you to sin." We know that the hand is not what causes the sin. As Jesus himself says:

Matthew 15:19 ¹⁹ "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

Sin is a matter of the heart and the desires of the heart not of the hand or the foot or the eye. Cutting of our hand will accomplish nothing.

But this is once again an argument from the lesser to the greater. Would it be better to enter heaven lame than to enter hell with two feet? The answer is yes of course it would be. How much more ought we than to cut out anything which would be an offense. Anything which would deny Jesus' death and resurrection. If it would be better to cut off a hand, surely it is better to cut away anything which denies Jesus.

This is what many of our great grandparents did when they left Germany. There they were being forced to join with both the pietists and the liberals. The liberal churches denied that man is sinful and needs Jesus to save us, in so doing they were leading people to spiritual death. They were an offense in the truest sense of the word. The pietists denied that salvation was a free gift from Jesus. They taught that we could learn to be holy by ourselves. In so doing they denied the death and resurrection of Jesus and were a true offense. They left so that they could cut out Jesus and he alone would remain.

We oppose such thoughts not because they are against us but because they are against Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:5 ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

⁴⁹ "For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. ⁵⁰ "Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."

Salt in Jesus' day didn't come in nice neat cubes or bags or salt shakers. You bought it in a big lump which often contained other minerals besides salt. If such lumps got wet the salt could easily dissolve away, and then the lump of "salt" would be without salt. Salt can season other food, but if the lump lost its salt what then.

Jesus disciples were the salt of the world. You are the salt. They walked with Jesus and knew the truth. Instead of telling the man to stop preaching they could have seasoned him. They could have taught him the full truth of Jesus. We know the truth. We are able to season those who lack the truth.

But we must be careful that we are not caught in the death trap. We must be careful that we do not lose our saltiness. Jude reminds us:

Jude 1:22-23 ²² And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Some like the man at the beginning of our text we rejoice with and share Jesus with them. Seasoning them with the salt that is the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. But others if they are an offense attempting to pull us down into that death trap, it is better to cut them off lest we are pulled down.

Yet once again it is not about us but about Jesus who is able to keep us by his grace. As Jude continues:

**Jude 1:24-25 ²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵ To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, *Be* glory
and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.**

To always rejoice when Jesus is preached, but to always fear and avoid that which is an offense, a death trap, this is truly wisdom from above. For our salvation rests in Christ alone.

Amen