

20100404_bj sermon: BFF+_Jesus Christ (Christian Character X) – Easter Sunday

Call to Worship: John 2: 11-23; Matthew 27: 62-66; Matthew 26: 59-68; Luke 24: 1-8

Message:

This is the tenth (*sic*, ninth) message in our series on Christian Character. It comes to us in God's magnificent timing on Easter Sunday 2010. Today, we honor and glorify Jesus Christ in the defining process of His character, in which He set His standards for all time for all people. His standards are marked by knowledge of the will of God, by Satan's deadly opposition to God's will being accomplished in the life of Jesus Christ, and by Satan's strategies of deterrence to the accomplishment of God's will; by Jesus' human weaknesses, by Jesus' unwavering commitment to being an instrument of the accomplishment of God's will, and by the accomplishment of God' will. In Jesus' life, His walk from the Last Supper to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, defined His fulfillment of God's purpose and plan in Jesus' human life, and revealed His character of making Godly choices at every point along the way, of enduring and persevering, of trusting the Father in Heaven. And what was accomplished through the Christian Character of Jesus Christ is that those – we – who were dead in sin have the promise and hope of forgiveness of our sins,

of encouragement to walk out God's will in our own lives, and of life eternal in the New Jerusalem!

Yes, we are blessed and we know it and we are thankful for it and today we especially celebrate, at what we call Easter, that period after the Passover after which the Crucifixion occurred. Professor Vines, in his study of Biblical words, tells us in *Acts 12:4* appears the Greek word "pascha" has been mistranslated in several English versions as "Easter". He explains that "pascha" is the Greek spelling of the Aramaic word for the Passover, from the Aramaic word "pa-sach", to pass over, to spare, commemorating God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, now also commemorating the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the Cross.

Just to give you context, New King James reads, however, in *Acts 12:4*: "*So when he (Herod) had arrested him (Peter) to put him (Peter) in prison, and delivered him (Peter) to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.*" The phrase "after Passover" in more accurate translations signifies after the whole festival (the Passover) was at an end. So, Professor Vines explains, that the word "Easter" is not of Christian origin; that it is another form of "Astarte", one of the titles of the Chaldean goddess known as the queen of heaven.

Thus, the festival of Pasch – after the Passover -- held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast of Passover, but it was not instituted by Christ nor was it connected with Lent. And that brings us to Easter, in which we celebrate not just the anticipation of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the Cross, but that it actually happened, Jesus actually came, lived here, and went to the Cross and gave the blood sacrifice that enabled atonement for our sins. We have so much more to celebrate than anticipation; we celebrate accomplishment of God's purposes in Jesus' life and all that is available to us in and through the Blood of Christ in our lives.

Today, this Easter, I want to share with you some insights from that fateful weekend of Jesus' life, insights that God intends will strengthen you and me.

First of all, let us look at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, **Luke 22: 41**: “*And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Your will be done.’*” Jesus' knowledge of God's will for Him was confirmed, in **verse 43**, when an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and then in **verse 44** as He accepted

that strengthening – even anticipating the agony He would endure – by praying more earnestly and His physical manifestation including sweat appearing like great drops of blood, as His spirit wrestled with his human soul to discipline His body to take the steps set before Him in God’s plan and purpose for His life, and indeed for the lives of all humanity then living and to be birthed!

God does not intend that we would reach all of humanity, in our few human steps but He has intended, and does intend, that we would reach others, and that is vitally important to God’s plans being accomplished – no one left behind, that all men should come to a saving knowledge of the truth which is Jesus Christ.

So, we start in this picture from history by understanding that Jesus knew God’s plan and purpose for His life, and, in Jesus’ flesh, He was resistant to it and fearful of it, but He still chose obedience to God’s will, plan and purpose. That is foundational to Christian Character.

Next, let’s look at Jesus, after the lashings and beatings, bearing His Cross up to Golgotha’s Hill, where (*Matthew 27:33*) He was crucified. Scripture suggests (*Luke 23: 26*) that Jesus faltered and was unable to bear the Cross by Himself, physically,

and so Simon, a man from Cyrene, Africa, was enlisted by the soldiers to help Jesus carry the Cross. What we see here confirms Ruthie's Scripture and prayer: **Proverbs 4: 27**, "*Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil*". Jesus kept on going straight up the path of that Hill, even when He faltered, physically, He didn't quit, He didn't give up, He didn't try to run away, He didn't try to fight the soldiers. He just kept plodding up that hill,, carrying that Cross and dragging it along to a certain death that was God's will for Him.

Look at the context of **Proverbs 4: 27**, back to **verse 20**, and **following**: "*My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established, do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.*" See, Jesus understood the context of that Proverb, that instruction of God's will and kept it and measured it in His heart with all diligence, putting away the mental deceits the enemy surely brought into

Jesus' mind, and the voices from the crowd, and simply establishing His way by keeping His vision on the path God set before Him, and never deviating to either side. This discipline to obey is foundational to Christian Character, and that discipline to obey is under our control, because it is within our choice realm: As Jesus said, *Matthew 20: 28*, “. . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

You would think, if this was happening in our day and age, that one might think, even Jesus in His mind and soul realm, might be led to think, “this is not fair!” God's will is not always based on fairness – indeed, the whole concept of service, of sacrifice, of obedience, is to disregard concepts of fairness when in conflict with God's will. But is you are ever so tempted, remember that we have been bought with the blood of Jesus – He saved our lives – and we are obligated to be His bondservants – nothing else – and, through those same choices, that same discipline, we ought to take joy and find peace in that obedience, that service, and whatever sacrifice He calls us to.

Conclusion

In Jesus, as one might expect, we find the greatest exposition of Christian Character that has ever existed. He created and defined Christian Character that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the travail of those beatings and lashings, in that painful and fearful walk up to Golgotha's Hill, in the agony of the Cross. Yet, on the third day He arose, and His obedient service and sufferings raised Him up with a glad heart, a heart of joy as He knew His mission was accomplished, and that God's will had been done through Him, yes, through Jesus as man, as human, who made decisions through discipline, and that God's will was accomplished in heaven and on earth. The veil of the temple was now torn from top to bottom, and the sins of mankind, for all time, had been atoned. Hallelujah!!

As we honor and celebrate the events after that Passover, as we honor Jesus and His Christian Character, let us examine our selves, and our Christian Character. I know you have decisions looming out there in your lives that will define your Christian Character – How will you discipline your selves to obey God's will, plan and purpose in your lives? Will you make God's decisions in your life? Will you, *Proverbs 4*, give attention to His

words and keep them in the midst of your heart; will you keep your heart with all diligence; will you put away a deceitful mouth; will you ponder the path before your feet; will you keep your eyes (and your heart) in focus on God's will, purpose and plan; will you keep straight to the narrow highway, neither turning to the right or the left?

Many questions, but one answer: God's will, through Christ, because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And to live is Christ, to die is gain (*Phillipians 1: 21*). Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

The Service of Holy Communion

Bible Faith Fellowship: An Order and Practice of Holy Communion

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole

world.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of your dearly beloved Son our Savior Jesus Christ, we, your humble servants, do celebrate and make here before your divine Majesty, with these your holy gifts, which we now offer to you, the memorial your Son commanded us to make; remembering His blessed passion and precious death, His mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; offering up to You our deepest thanksgiving for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by Your mercy.

And we most humbly ask You, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, by Your almighty goodness, to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these Your gifts of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion. And here we offer and present unto You, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto You; humbly praying that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive this most precious remembrance of the Body and Blood of Your Son Jesus Christ, be filled with Your grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with Him, that He may dwell in us, and we in Him.

And although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto You any sacrifice, yet we pray You to accept our offerings and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses, through Jesus Christ our Lord;

By whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. *AMEN.*

And now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say this the Prayer that Jesus ordained,

People and Celebrant

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Service of the ministers

Service of the Body

[The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. *[Amen.]*]

[The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. *[Amen.]*]

After Communion, the Celebrant says

Let us pray.

Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank You that You feed us, in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and assure us thereby of Your favor and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporated in the supernatural body of Your Son, and into the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs, through hope, of Your everlasting kingdom. And we humbly pray You, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with Your grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as You have prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with You and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end.

Amen.