*VBC*

*Pastor John Johnson*

*John 8:31-32*

*July 13-14, 2013*

**“The Freedom That Comes With Truth”**

Part of our summer diversion is watching *Under the Dome*

-a TV adaption of a science fiction novel written in 2009 by Stephen King

-it’s a story about people living in the small town of Chester’s Mill

-who find themselves suddenly and mysteriously trapped under this impenetrable dome that has landed on them

-and each episode is about how people behave when they are *cut off from the society they once belonged to*

-most chapters of the Bible are about how people behave when they are *cut off from the God they once belonged to*

-trapped under the dome of in their own sin

-and people are pretty desperate—until God steps in

-as He does in John 7-8

-Jesus came into Jerusalem—that was actually very religious

-people conducting pilgrimages and rituals and observances

*-but over the years, God was cut off, taking on the same status as the royal family in England*

*-a symbolic anchor of a certain way of life in the past, but hardly important to its day-to-day functioning*

-and then Jesus stepped in—interjected Himself into their rituals—announced that God and His kingdom had shown up

-and it unnerved everyone—for *He brought into the open the diseased condition* of the community’s spirit[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. HE EXPOSED THEIR *ANIMOSITY TOWARDS GOD*

-their preference for hand religion over heart religion

-their tendency to be more about ritual than relationship

-Jesus came and was a threat to their traditions

-He uncovered their hypocrisy—and so there was great hostility such that they tried to put Jesus away

-but something, Someone prevented them—8:20

2. HE UNCOVERED THEIR *AMBIVALENCE*

-many were somewhat disinterested in Jesus, oblivious to what God was up to—UNDISCERNING

-like so many today—(He is a wonderful Teacher, but He doesn’t have seminary credentials. He speaks as Someone divine, but He comes from the wrong neighborhood. Is He crazy? Is He going to kill Himself?)

-but then—Jesus revealed something worse—

3. HE REVEALED THEIR *SUPERFICIAL BELIEF—read 8:30*

-many responded—this *happens from time to time in John*

a. John 2:23—while He was in Jerusalem, many trusted in His name when they saw the signs He was doing, BUT Jesus *would not* entrust Himself to them

*pt —there was a believing that did not go to the heart of who Jesus is*

-Jesus saw a shallowness that only One who see the heart could see

-they said the right prayer—but their hearts lacked any depth—and Jesus knew He could not depend upon them

b. John 6—we see the same fickleness—they followed Jesus, believed in Jesus— until He called for commitment—verse 53

-and many of His *disciples* “turned back and no longer accompanied Him”—verse 66

-they were fans—but not followers—and so they left—and we understand why—

*“Fans don’t mind Him doing a little touch up work, but Jesus wants complete renovation. Fans come to Jesus thinking tune up, but Jesus is thinking overhaul. Fans think a little make up is fine, but Jesus is thinking makeover. Fans think a little decorating is required, but Jesus wants a complete remodel. Fans want Jesus to inspire them, but Jesus wants to interfere with their lives” –Not a Fan—Idleman*

c. in John 8—we can’t help but ask the same question

-were these people believers? Were they really disciples?

-the conversation shows no real evidence

WHAT IS TRUE FAITH? Who are the real believers?

-do you know?

-in response to their “belief”—Jesus told them—*read verses 31-32*

-there are two indicators of true belief—

*A. A LIFE SET IN GOD’S WORD*

-established, settled, remaining, “at home”—verse 31

*-authentic faith has everything to do with one’s relationship to Jesus words*

-these “believers” believed—but it was inauthentic because their relationship with His word was superficial—more of a euphoric rush

-the text tells us—they initially received His word—“as He *was saying* these things they believed”—verse 30

-but they refused to stay with it— make permanent space for Jesus’ words—verse 37

-His word was allowed to visit—but it was not allowed to move in, remain

-not allowed to stay long enough to penetrate, interfere with one’s habits, contradict one’s preferred way of thinking

ILLUSTRATION—a little like those I saw at Billy Graham Crusade

-in contrast—those who are *true* disciples, authentic believers “continue”, REMAIN in God’s truth—“*keep an agreement*”

-they are bound to it—come back and keep coming back—receiving, embracing, submitting to the Word’s penetration

-they invite it to awaken, expose—and then stay in an ongoing relationship—

a. even if it touches a nerve and calls you out—go and sell everything

-doesn’t seem to live up its promises—Train up a child in the way he should go

-goes contrary to how we would do things—why is God waiting so long?

-doesn’t make sense—prophets eaten by lions?

*b. to use Eugene Peterson’s language—there is “a long obedience in the same direction”*

-these “believers” in John 8 were like the first three soils Jesus talked about in Matthew 4

-where the seed of the Word never germinates, or if so, it gets crowded out by life’s distractions

-but true believers let the word remain—go deep into the soil of their hearts and bear much fruit

-here’s the second indicator of true, authentic, real faith—and it follows logically from the first

*B. A LIFE SET FREE*

-too often we miss this—that Jesus came to this world to set us free

a. “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me…to proclaim freedom to the captives” (you, me)—Luke 4:18

b. this is why God sent the Holy Spirit—“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”—2 Corinthians 3:17

c. this is why He gives us His Word—“the truth will set you free”

-they combine to set us free—free from what? *Free from sin*

-for this is what sin does—it entraps, imprisons, enslaves us to addictive behaviors, chains us to habits, temptations—*SIN SEEKS TO OWN YOU!*—Rom 6:20

*-there are these disabling attachments*

-in his *The Shattered Lantern*, Rolheiser identifies three particular sins that imprison our souls today—

*1. the sin of NARCISSISM*

-we are trapped within ourselves

-held down by excessive self—preoccupation—the inclination to value anything (family, church, community) as long as it enhances ourselves

-we insist our reality is always the paramount one

*-the Word frees us by training us to die to self daily—and in so doing—find life—Galatians 2:20*

*2. the sin of PRAGMATISM*

-wherein we value only the things that work—regard people only by their work, by what they accomplish

-prayer is only valuable if it produces

-church is only important if it is productive

-easily we become enslaved to achievement—it demands, takes precedence over family

-doing counts for everything—being counts for little

*-the Word frees us by teaching us what matters—that gaining the world and losing the soul is to lose everything—Mark 8:36*

*3. the sin of RESTLESSNESS*

-we are trapped on this treadmill—driven, hyper, compulsive

-unable to stop and take in a day—thank God for what He is serving up

-rather we are in bondage to expectations that cannot be realized—held hostage by an impatience that pushes us towards premature and irresponsible experience

-hence we are seldom at peace, at home, fully satisfied

*-the Word frees us by teaching us how to rest—Ecclesiastes—be grateful—telling us to seize our divine moments*

-our text reveals a fourth—

*4. the sin of ARRIVAL*

-the assumption we have it altogether

-our traditions are more than adequate to see us through

-a little Jesus to top things off will do

-until Jesus exposed that these believers were far from the destination

-pointed out that they did not have it as together as they assumed—verse 33

-were still in bondage to sin—verse 34

-alienated because they had not made real room in their hearts for His words—verses 37, 43

-told them they looked more like the devil’s descendants than Abraham’s—verse 44

-described them as still alienated—living as liars—verses 47, 55

-and in turn—they showed their true colors

-called Jesus the S word and accused Him of having a demon—verse 48

-sought to take Him out—verse 59

-so wait—who were these people really?

-either John was writing very carelessly when he described them as believers—or their faith was really deficient[[2]](#endnote-2)

*-unbelieving believers*

CONCLUSION

Do we believe?

-are we authentic disciples—here’s a test—

a. do we sense Him holding back from entrusting Himself to us—as those in John 2?

-that He can see we are not all in

b. does our believing in Him only go so far—as those in John 6—who wanted Him only for what He could give?

-are we fans—or followers?

c. is there a superficiality—rather than a depth—John 8

-an impulse kind of believing?

-the kind that does not remain

*-Jesus said—“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God”*

ILLUSTRATION-Brea

Impulsive, impetuous, imprudent, spontaneous

-true disciples consider the cost—then stay with it

1. Craddock, 59 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Barrett, Gosepl of John, 287 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)