

November 27, 2016

## THE UNFORGIVEABLE

Matthew 12:30-32

Some bad news:” *“Whoever blasphemes against the Spirit will not be forgiven! ...Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven!”* (12:31-32) This teaching of Christ is set against the background of Christ’s *“house divided...kingdom divided”* lesson, where the Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of demons. Last week, I said that some Pharisees, still watching Jesus’ every move, couldn’t see the blessings in the healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue (12:10-13), and they tried to undercut His popularity by their slanderous accusation that He was doing something evil. It seems obvious that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to say that Jesus is possessed by evil. The contradiction in logic makes the notion absurd because a house divided will collapse or a kingdom divided will not stand. All the good that Jesus was doing could not be called evil.

Isaiah proclaimed a woe against such people: *“Woe to you who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Woe those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right! Therefore as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like the dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel!”* (5:20-24)

Isn’t blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the same blatant sort of hypocrisy? Remember how the Pharisees were more Law than grace, and were unwilling to admit any sin in their lives and therefore thought they had no need for repentance. Could this kind of arrogance be blasphemy against the Spirit?

But the Holy Spirit is described by Christ as *the Spirit of Truth* in the Gospel of John. (14:17) What would it mean to blaspheme against the truth? Isn’t the greatest lie, according to Jesus, to deny Him? Is the unforgiveable sin that easy? Heaven help us all! Heaven help all those who deny Christ! Remember how, in Chapter Ten of Matthew, Jesus said, *“Everyone who acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father in Heaven; but whoever denies Me before others, I also will deny before My Father in Heaven.”* (32-33)

Examine this good news – bad news, reality. It seems that this passage needs little interpretation. It just needs to be trusted. But it is another example of how faith in Christ is never meant to be just personal, secret, or private. A relationship with Christ must be acknowledged...before others! Not just once at your Baptism, or, your Confirmation, or, on Christmas or Easter. If your faith is not active, then your faith is not Christian. Try having an inactive membership in almost any other organization. Would your membership last?

How many are there who have professed Christ as their Lord and Savior but who seem to deny this truth almost daily as if they had no relationship with Christ at all? How many are there who get Confirmed or join the Church only to stay away from the purpose of their spiritual journey by attending worship only infrequently or never (!), by never tithing or giving, and by failing to serve or pray or witness or make any disciples? They may never verbally deny Jesus, but their actions or, as the case may be, their inactivity speaks volumes.

Look a bit more seriously at verse 30 in Matthew Twelve: *“Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters!”* More bad news. How do we live so as to acknowledge before others that we are with Christ? First of all, Jesus Himself suggests it can have to do with *gathering*

*with Him.* I ended last Sunday's sermon by suggesting that everyone present call on those who are absent...and encourage them to gather. How did you do? Hmmm. Got guilt?

The good news is that *"people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy,"* and, *"Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven!"*

Still, realize that, to be forgiven, we need to repent. We need to change our direction. We need to do more than just realize we were wrong, we have to **do** what is right! Remember how Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but they who do the will of My Father who is in Heaven. On that day, many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many mighty works in Your Name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me you evildoers!'"* (Matthew 7:21-23) Jesus also said, *"You will know them by their fruits!"* (7:20)

The good news is that we *can* repent, we can receive forgiveness, and we can begin to bear good fruit again!

Blasphemy.... What if blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was to deny the urgings of our conscience? Prevenient Grace is considered by John Wesley to include the working of God, the Spirit of God, through our conscience, this innate human gift that helps us instinctively know right from wrong. To disobey our conscience is to deny or resist the moral truth we know within. Is the unforgiveable sin that easy? Heaven help us all!

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgiveable, simply because it is a denial of reality. But then, isn't denying reality a psychological illness nowadays? Something that needs healing! Urge them to come to the Healer!

Realize that actions speak louder than words, and sometimes what we do, or fail to do, speaks volumes, now and later. *In this age, and in the age to come!* What we do today matters. Some things can't be put off!

Help people see reality! Help them know the truth!