

Sunday, February 12, 2017

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

I Corinthians 3: 1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

Living the Authentic Life

Life as we experience it today is very different from the way those who lived one or two or even three generations before us. Different is not the same as better or worse, but different in itself. There are many philosophies about life as people are searching for what matters the most. I like this one: "Life is too short to worry about stupid things. Have fun. Fall in love. Regret nothing and don't let people bring you down." Another statement is this: "Life was much easier when APPLE and BLACKBERRY were just fruit." Apple and blackberry are companies which have transformed technology and the information one may share with others and most importantly, how one shares that information across distances and around the world.

Life as we know it has transformed itself because our history has redefined work and pleasure and in many ways have mixed the two. Today many people work from their homes by logging in and communicate from their homes with their corporate offices a great distance away. We know that work has been defined through time and yet the question that needs to be asked is what is an authentic or real life today? Many people understand what is pretend or virtual but the reality of this is often asked, why are we living at all? And to ask what virtual reality is throws out our definition of normal life. What is our purpose? Just what is an authentic life?

This question was asked of the Hebrew people as they prepared to enter into the Promised Land. For several generations they had wandered in the wilderness as God led them to the 'land of milk and honey' where they would no longer be servants to masters, but only be in covenant with God as his children through faith. In Deuteronomy 30 God is preparing the people to enter into the land of promise. God is commanding the people to do something that is not too difficult or beyond their understanding. God set before them life and prosperity, death and destruction. And His command is this: to love the Lord your God to walk in his ways and to keep his commands, decrees and laws and if you do this- then you will live and increase and God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient or if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, you will be destroyed. You will not live long. Then God sated—"Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice and hold fast to him. For God is your life." This was a question of whether the people wanted to live an authentic life with God.

But what is an authentic life? It is one of those slippery know- it when you see it buzzwords. It involves the rejection of a pretense that there is a need for truth. So what do we do to be authentic Christians? God is always truthful; never does he lie nor deceives yet we need to accept the biblical teachings of God to truly understand what it means to live an

authentic Christian life. And this is what Jesus was teaching as he continued to share his Sermon on the Mount.

In this passage from Matthew 5, we continue to read Jesus' words as he shared them with the many people sitting on the side of a hill. He reminded them of the laws that God first gave to the Hebrew people many years before as the commandments. Those sitting on the side of hill would be familiar with these teachings but instead of just sharing these Jesus goes on to explain that what living out a good life means. He gives the example of being angry with their brother and at the time of making an offering to God remembers this anger, they should go and be reconciled with them first. Jesus also instructs them to settle matters quickly with adversaries in order to be reconciled with each other. Jesus continues to teach about what is wrong with committing adultery in their hearts. He also speaks of sins and what to do to prevent them including adultery which may lead to the need for divorce. Jesus also speaks about oaths and not breaking them. We are to be true to your word by making your yes be yes and no mean no.

Some of these teachings we might think are outdated yet what does it mean to live and have an authentic life today? We find the answer to this in Jesus' teachings and in John's first letter which emphasize the need to know Jesus as the Son of God. To live the authentic life as a Christian one needs to confess Jesus a Lord and saviour and acknowledge him as the Christ because when we do, God lives in us and we live in God. (I John 5:15). We will sin because all people sin. Yet as an authentic follower of Christ, there will be a sense of discomfort in that you know that what you are doing is wrong. (I John 3:9). As a Christian living authentically, you will want to enjoy the fellowship with other believers. I have been told, that after worshiping together, it is the fellowship of the coffee hour that is the best. This is because true Christians want to be with each other to encourage each other, to learn from each other and to grow together (I John 5:1 and Hebrews 10:24-25)

In order to live as Jesus' followers we need to obey the commands of Jesus. (I John 5:3) These commands are not heavy or burdensome but protect us from potential harm. For if one breaks the commandments, they are at fault but God does not leave them alone. But through faith, we believe that God will walk with and care for us until a time of peace and reconciliation.

If we truly love God and obey His words, we need to know it. (I John 2:5) As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to regularly study scripture and to live according to its teaching. (2 Tim. 3:16) Many believers have professed their faith but do not realize that to grow in faith and to live a more authentic Christian life one needs to know in our hearts and minds the word of God.

But what is this authentic faith we search for? An example of faithfulness is a story that is found in the OT book of Numbers 13. Moses sent men to explore the land of Canaan to see what the land was like and whether the people who lived there were strong or weak, few or many. They were to observe whether there were walled cities or small villages. They were to look at the soil and see if it was fertile or poor. They were to try and bring back some of the fruit if possible. So these 12 men went and explored for a very long time.

When they returned they reported to Moses and Aaron what they had experienced. The land flowed with milk and honey and they brought back some grapes. They saw they

people there and there were powerful and the cities are huge and fortified. And the crowd became loud. Then two of the spies spoke (Caleb and Joshua (son of Nun) and shouted, we should go up and take possession of the land for we can certainly do it. But the other 10 said, No, we can't attack them, they are stronger than we are. We will surely die." These 10 men then spread a bad report about the land that they had explored.-- that it evil and devours those living in it. All the people are of great size. We were like grasshoppers in their midst— Surely we would die.

Which of the spies were living the authentic life God called them to? What if the 12 spies came to our church this morning? Would we be deemed authentic Christians? Do we proclaim God's glory and give thanks for Jesus His Son?

As we seek to live an authentic Christian life, we need to tell the truth even in moments when we have sinned. We need to share with others in our church family the burdens we face for most likely someone has experienced something similar and can encourage us. We are each broken at times and we all question God when things don't go as we hope. But this is the godly life that we have said yes too. It is not just a pool of experiences but when we live and share our lives we also share wisdom as we have learned it and share it with hope from God. Our true self is found in Jesus and we are on a journey to become like him.

We read in I John 3:2 We are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This is living our life as God's children, according to Christ's teaching and trusting God to see us through each day until that day he calls us home. Let us come together and live an authentic life in Christ for one day all will be revealed as we share our heavenly home with Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

PRAYER

Holy God we praise and thank you that we might be your faithful people. Enable us to understand and to live an authentic life in you. Amen