

Division: A necessity of the Cross

My name is Tyler Velin, I'm one of the pastors here at SHEC and together we are going to be looking at a very interesting passage in the book of John.

The past two chapters in John have been a very interesting two chapters because in them the main themes we see are unbelief and division. Now in chapter 6 we have one of the most beautiful passages in the whole Bible, where Jesus is telling the people that if they don't get him they don't get life, if you don't partake of the slaughtered lamb, you do not spend eternity his glorious father. And after he says this people begin to leave and Jesus turns to his disciples and asks them, "Do you want to go as well?" and Peter, often dumb, often confused, knife swinging, Christ preaching Peter says "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

So there are those who get it, but for the most part, in the last two chapters, whenever Jesus says anything, the crowd either gets confused, walks away, or wants to kill him.

Do you realize that the Jesus of the Bible is the most controversial figure the world has ever known? This Jewish carpenter tops the list. No single person has had, or will ever have a greater influence on humanity as a whole as Jesus Christ did here on earth.

Jesus Christ is the world greatest divider. He pierces thoughts, polarizes opinions and shapes people groups of all kinds.

We see this clearly in our passage today. If you remember from our last passage in John, Jesus finished by saying this **John 7:37-38**. And today's passage picks up right after with this **John 7:40-44**

Today I want to look at why Christ is so controversial, and I want us to learn why we are so easily divided, and then I want to look at how we live as a divided people. But first lets **pray**.

So we just saw in our passage a division happen amongst the people. And it was a division that went from all sorts of extremes. There were those who thought Jesus was simply the old testament prophet, and not the Christ. There were those who thought Jesus was the totality of the prophecies and was the Christ. And then there were those who were not sure on anything except they wanted Jesus arrested and executed.

And in these facets of division, I guarantee you that there are three ways of life. See your opinion on things changes the way you live. What you allow to divide you, the things that you say this, and on this alone is where I stand, those things not only divide you from the opposite side of the argument, but they also define you.

At a core level, your convictions change you. And on an external level your convictions largely define you.

We can see this more in the next passage of verses. Look here **John 7:45-52**.

So in the first passage we saw the division, now in the second passage we saw the results of that division.

You see the Pharisees are out to kill Christ. They do not believe in him, they do not like him, they no longer want to be burdened by him.

So everything that Jesus does, is interpreted by the Pharisees as something worthy of death. He is, regardless of what he is doing, a thorn in the Pharisees' side.

Some of you may know people like this. They are people whose minds are totally made up. They will not change, they will not waver, and anyone who stands in opposition to their belief is a horrible person who is simply ignorant.

-Just for the record, these people can be Christian or non-Christian

The division is shaping them. They were defined by what divided them.

Now you also see the guards, and Nicodemus. Do you remember Nicodemus? We saw Nicodemus in Chapter 3. He was a Pharisee who came to Jesus at night, so as not to be ridiculed by the type of Pharisees we just talked about. But he came to Jesus and asked him, "What must I do to be saved." And of course that is where Jesus said the famous words, "You must be born again."

And Nicodemus, perhaps because of his encounter with Jesus a little earlier is not caste in hostility like the other Pharisees, in fact his division defines him and he speaks up to this blood thirsty mob and says "Doesn't our law demand a fair trial and hearing before we kill him."

The guards also, being told to arrest Jesus couldn't because they were astonished by his preaching saying "No one ever spoke like this man."

They couldn't act in the way the Pharisees were telling them too because they were frozen by the words of Christ.

Now I want to get under this issue a little more. Because it is apparent that division exists here, it is apparent that the division is causing people to act and perceive what is happening differently. But I want to get to the bottom of this. Why is division so prominent around Jesus? Why does division continue to exist today?

And I'm talking about true division. I'm not talking about vanilla versus chocolate ice cream, Griz versus Cats. Because it is true that I prefer chocolate over vanilla, but that only changes my life when I am eating dessert. It is true that I was born a copper and gold bleeding Grizzly, but that only defines the way I look at sports.

But what I want to get at is the division that pierces to the core. Division that defines the way you interact with others, division that changes the way you love your wife, division that shapes the way you parent, division that completely alters the course, direction and eternal well being of your soul.

All true division is theological. All true division forces you to choose an authority. Not just a physical authority, but an absolute authority.

See we can debate between chocolate and vanilla, but ultimately that comes down to personal preference. But when we start debating abortion, or gay marriage, or human rights or separation of church and state you are no longer allowed to participate in that debate with only a preference, but rather the nature of that debate requires you to acknowledge an authority.

An authority that allows you to define the delicacy of life, the divine distinction between man and woman, the value of a person, and the penetration of one's beliefs.

The world cannot deny the existence of an absolute authority. Aristotle, while denying a Christian God, said that there must be an unmoved mover, something that has authority over the physics and control of the world. See the world cannot deny the fact that something or someone has control over humanity, but rather we enter the debate of who it is.

In the passage we just read, we see very clearly to two sides of this debate. There comes a point in one's life where you are forced to choose an authority, is it God, or is it man. And the authority you choose is a total authority, ruling the thoughts actions and hearts of those who submit to it.

Look here, look at what the Pharisees chose. **John 7:47-48**. The Pharisees took the perspective that man is ultimate. They challenge the guards saying, this foolish crowd may be deceived but look at the intellectuals, their minds were the absolute, not the prophecies being fulfilled right before their eyes.

Now on the flip side, look at the guards. **John 7:46**. They found authority in Christ. They saw his message as stronger than the Pharisees. We saw a similar statement not long ago in **John 7:14-15**, in **Luke 4:32**.

True division exists because it is a matter of authority. It will always exist as long as sin exists. We are made as God's people, but as long as God's people live side by side with people who operate at a different core level, there will be conflict and mission.

So we see here that division is a matter of authority. But now I want us to look at what that authority does to us. There are three things that Christ's authority does in the hearts and lives of those who are his.

Christ's authority separates us from sinners, Christ's authority separates us from sin, and

Christ's authority calls us to himself.

1. Christ's Authority Separates us From Sinners

Now I do not mean separate in terms of geography here. When Christ is our authority he is not calling us to live in Christian communes where we are condemned to G rated movies and we turn off football games during commercials so we don't have to suffer through the beer commercials. But rather when I say God separates us from sinners, I mean God first and foremost, in the death of his son, sets us apart from sinners.

Remember when I said that your division defines you, sinners are defined by their sin, saved sinners are defined by their savior. You are no longer the worlds, you are God's.

There is a dividing line, those outside the law, those who labor in vain trying to prove their worth by their own measures, and those inside the law whose worth is tied to the value of the one who died in their place.

2 Tim 2:21, we are cleansed by Christ, set apart as holy, ready for good works. This truth is at the core of our division. The theological term for this is justification, meaning that all of your debt all of your wrong was justified, reconciled, brought to justice through Christ dying on the cross. Meaning you are no longer a debtor to God's eternal wrath, because his wrath for your sins was poured out on his son, bringing you freedom.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says "He became sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Now I am stressing this point because if we truly believed this as Christians, we would look, act, think, give, love and worship immeasurably different than those who are not justified.

If our absolute authority is a living and active God who speaks with authority and his sheep listen, we should stand out like a sore thumb. Let me ask you this question. If you woke up tomorrow, and God was dead, would your life have been a waste? That's how big this division should be in us.

Paul says if Christ is fake, if the gospel is all for naught, we are of all people most to be pitied. Is that true in your life?

We as a Christian culture are very good at segmenting the area's in which Christ is the absolute authority. We make billboards and have talk shows talking about His authority being neglected in public schools, and through abortion and gay marriage. But does that authority show in your devotions, in your bedroom, in your conversation with your neighbor, in your love for the sinners? We are a different people, set aside for a future glory.

2. Christ's Authority Separates us From Sin

Now again, a disclaimer, this does not mean that once Christ justifies us, we no longer struggle with sin. But it means that when we do sin, it irritates us.

Look at the apostle Paul once more in **Romans 8:1-5**.

See, justification is the once and final act where Christ died for all sins, including your unbelief, your apathy, your lack of love but sanctification is the process of living in freedom from the sins that Christ died for.

To be sanctified means to be set apart, therefore sanctification is the process of continually choosing Christ's condemnation of your sin over your consumption of sin. It's saying that Christ killed that sin, so by his grace, for the first time, I no longer am a slave to it's impulse because Christ has set me free from it, and because he who is in me is greater than he who is in the world, I choose life in Christ rather than death in sin.

See there is this misnomer in the Christian faith that when you become a Christian you have to start acting different, you have to clean up your life. But the truth of the matter is, when Christ died for you, you became different. It's not a choice on our end to stop doing things that make us different, but rather it is an amazing miracle of God that he took us and set us apart, and now we are no longer different only in our decisions, but we are different in our DNA.

The conviction that comes from sin is a gift from God, because it is his spirit living in you that acknowledges that something is wrong inside of you. It's the holy spirit saying get this death of sin out, and let the life of Christ in.

Because we are divided from our sin through the cross, we now need to work everyday, and push every day to live as one set apart, bought for freedom and glory by the blood of our Savior.

Now these are things that should naturally be happening in Christians. We should naturally begin to show a division between us and those who are not saved, and we personally should naturally look back at our old way of living and say, there is no way I want to go back.

But unfortunately there will be times where realizing both of these things is hard to do, and we become overwhelmed by the world, we become burdened by our doubts and we begin to lose hope. But the greatest thing about our God is that his authority and his presence and his power is not limited to when things are good. But rather he works even when we are at our weakest.

3. Christ's Authority Binds us to Himself

Now remember the passage we started with. Jesus amongst a divided partly hostile crowd? Well let me remind you that Jesus' there are some in the crowd who still get it. Whether it is the Guards, or Nicodemus, or his disciples. But you know what happens in 12 chapters, Jesus

dies. The authority of some is killed.

But guess what. Those Pharisees, also eventually died. The churches that they run, eventually changed. They were eventually forgotten.

But unlike the men and their institutions, Jesus didn't stay dead. And when he appeared again to his disciples in the end of Matthew, the last thing he said was **Matt 28:18-20**, he is with you always. Even to the ends of the age.

See Jesus didn't just leave us on our own to complete our mission, he didn't leave us on our own to finish our own sanctification, he didn't leave us on our own when the world persecutes us because we are different. Jesus' authority lives in each Christian, Jesus' authority is given to us through his word. Jesus' authority is preached as an encouragement through Bible believing churches all across our globe. Jesus' authority continues to change us from one glory to another because God works for our good and his glory.

Jesus lives in us so that we will be different from the world, because his authority is greater than the world. He died to make us different because the same was killing us. He died because he knew that man's authority, and man's systems never bring true happiness. He died to draw us to himself.