

In Your Mouth and in Your Heart

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 April 2022

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 0 0] Well, this morning as we come to the Word of God, we're back to the story of Jesus in the Gospel of John. We're in chapter 12, verse 42. If you have your Bible, you can open it up to that.

If you don't, you can grab one of the black Bibles in the pews there, or it'll be on the screen for the most part today. Where we're at in the story, it's the Passion Week.

And the hour of Jesus' betrayal and death is drawing near. Therefore, right before this passage that we're coming to this morning, we heard John give a kind of summary of how things are going.

Verse 37. Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. And we wrestled with the difficult reason why, given by John in verses 39 and 40.

For this reason they could not believe, said John. Because as Isaiah says elsewhere, he has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. But this is not the end of John's summary.

[1 : 0 9] Verse 42. Yet, says John, at the same time, many, even among the leaders, believed in Jesus. But because of the Pharisees, they would not openly acknowledge their faith.

For fear they would be put out of the synagogue. So for a moment here, John seems to be doubling back on what he said earlier. Don't get the wrong idea here.

It's not as though nobody believed in Jesus. It's not as though it was just a scarce few. Actually, says John, many believed in him. There were even some among the rulers.

The word used here is a clear reference to the Sanhedrin. And this is maybe a little bit surprising, isn't it? I mean, in just the previous chapter, chapter 11, we heard that the Sanhedrin officially and formally decided to oppose Jesus.

They began plotting to take his life. That back in 11 verse 53. And so it would seem that since then, the opinion of some of these Sanhedrin members has shifted.

[2 : 2 2] They've watched as Jesus was paraded into Jerusalem by this massive crowd of people. They've been hearing him speak and teach daily in the temple courts.

And they have even seen him perform some of these signs, no doubt, as John has been telling us back up in verse 37. Well, this sounds great, doesn't it?

Even some of the leaders, the high-ups of the Jewish rulers, are believing in Jesus now. But hold on. Not so fast.

They're believing in Jesus, but, says John, because of the Pharisees, they would not openly acknowledge their faith.

For fear that they would be put out of the synagogue. Let's remember here that there are different kinds of people on the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin. Some of them are Pharisees, and they represent the dominant religious order of the day.

[3 : 2 8] The others may be more like politicians, or officials, or significant people in Jewish society.

Not that they were totally unreligious. I mean, almost everybody was religious in this culture, in this setting. But many of the people who were not of the Pharisees might have been more like the Sadducees.

Men who were religious, but not too concerned about the spiritual things. All things in moderation. So this many who believed in Jesus, which includes some of the Sanhedrin, they're keeping their lips sealed about Jesus.

Why? Because they don't want to be excommunicated or banished from the synagogue. It's here we see the religious control that the Pharisees have over the people.

They were the ones in the positions of religious authority in the nation. And they were threatening to revoke membership in the worshiping community to anyone who supported Jesus.

[4 : 46] And I can't help at this point to feel some sympathy for them. You know, we see this kind of thing all the time in our world today. Agree with us, or we'll cancel you.

We'll kick you out. We'll revoke your membership. And as bad as it seems in our political and cultural settings today, this is far worse.

This is tantamount to saying, you will be cut off from the people of God if you confess openly that Jesus is any one of the big titles that are in view here.

Son of God. Messiah. Son of Man. So I feel some sympathy for them. They seemingly have a lot to lose, these leaders who believed.

But then, John, by the Spirit of God, gives us God's evaluation of what's really going on here. I'll read the whole thing again.

[5 : 52] Yet at the same time, many, even among the leaders, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees, they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.

For they loved human praise more than praise from God. Literally, they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

They loved to be in good standing with people, with each other. They loved to receive the honor and glory that comes from other people more than they loved to be in good standing with God and receive the honor and glory that comes from him.

Now, this kind of raises a big question, doesn't it? Is the faith of these many who believed really genuine? Is it sufficient?

Are they in? True followers of Jesus? Is this the kind of faith or belief by which they can be saved? Or is this questionable faith?

[7 : 03] Is this shallow, lacking faith? It's not as easy a question to answer as we might think. At first glance, their faith in Jesus seems genuine enough.

John sets these believers in contrast with the people who did not believe even after seeing so many signs. In verse 37. But then, is their faith genuine?

If what the Pharisees say is controlling their final behavior more than what Jesus is saying? Do they really believe in Jesus?

Or are they kind of going back and forth with what's popular at the moment? This is probably a good time to remember that John has told us before about some people who have believed in Jesus and yet their faith seemed suspect, lacking, questionable.

Look back at John chapter 2. This was Jesus' first ministry visit right after his baptism to Jerusalem. And it's there, we read that while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

[8 : 24] But Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all men. He did not need any testimony about men for he knew what was in a man or in each person.

There was something not quite right about the belief of the people back then on that visit to Jerusalem. And Nicodemus, at least back then, seemed to be an example of this. He believed that Jesus was at least a teacher who had come from God and yet according to Jesus' own words, Nicodemus was not accepting and believing the things that Jesus was saying as he should be.

we ran across this sort of thing again in John chapter 8 verse 31. John tells us there that to the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. But then we saw that by the end of that conversation, Jesus was calling these same people children of their father, the devil, and these people were trying to stone Jesus to death.

Again, the sort of belief in Jesus that seems superficial, questionable. Is that what's going on here again with these many who believed in Jesus even from among the leaders?

[9 : 50] Now, some of you might be thinking, well, if John says they believed, then they believed. They're saved. I mean, do they really have to confess it openly to prove that that's what's really going on in their hearts?

That's a big question. I can't help but think of what Paul says in Romans chapter 10 verse 8 to 10. This is what he said to the church at Rome.

But what does it say? The word is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart. That is the message concerning faith that we proclaim.

If you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith or confess and are saved.

Here, according to Paul, it seems that confessing Jesus with your mouth as the Lord is inseparable from genuinely believing. Or to put it another way, the promise of salvation is made to those who confess with their mouths and believe in their hearts.

[11 : 14] Both go together. And so this also might call into question the faith of these many whom John is talking about. Do they really believe in their hearts if they are unwilling to confess Jesus with their mouths?

Now maybe when it says that they were not confessing Jesus, it means that they were not confessing him within the circles of the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees.

The really public, sort of confession. Perhaps they were still confessing him amongst their close friends and family. Maybe the faith of some of these people or even all of them is genuine, but they've just not yet found the courage to declare it publicly, given the hostility and the grave consequences.

But then on the other hand, the reason John gives us is not so sympathetic. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

Maybe some of you might be ready to make a judgment here. Surely if they love the glory of men more than the glory of God, well that's the answer right there. How can their faith be genuine?

[12 : 37] It must be superficial. It must be shallow. It must be lacking. But then I would say, was not Peter loving the praise of men more than the praise of God the night that he denied the Lord Jesus three times?

On the night of Jesus' betrayal? Israel? And yet surely he had real, genuine faith long before that. What can we learn from all this?

I hope that as you listen to the back and forth here, you realize that it's not always easy to judge the faith of another person. Or to evaluate where another person really stands before God.

God. Now of course there are some people who obviously don't believe in Jesus no matter what they're saying. It's just obvious because the whole pattern of their lives is just to ignore the things that Jesus has said and to disobey the things Jesus has commanded.

We're not talking about those people. Neither are we talking about those who obviously do believe in Jesus, who declare it, confess it, and whose lives confirm it undeniably, consistently.

[14 : 01] In both of these cases it's obvious what these people believe. But now the people we're talking about this morning, they either claim to believe in Jesus but their lives look a little suspect.

Or their lives look really good. they seem kind, they do and say all the right sorts of things at church and amongst Christians but for some reason they don't want to seem to confess Jesus too publicly because of what others might think.

We really need humility to admit that it's not always easy to evaluate the faith of another person. To make that judgment about where another person stands before God.

Are they in or are they not? Are they saved or are they not? Are they genuine or are they really good at pretending?

There are times in the Bible where God calls us to make this judgment. Let's make no mistake about that. Specifically when it comes time to appoint elders in the church we're to appoint believers and to do that we need to make that evaluation in matters of marriage and divorce in church discipline.

[15 : 30] But thankfully the good news is that when it comes to that final judgment of whether a person is a believer a true believer or not the good news is it's not up to us.

It's not ultimately our call to make. it's God's. He alone knows what's going on in the hearts of individual people.

Consider the words of Proverbs 21 verse 2. A person may think their own ways are right but the Lord weighs the heart.

That's a verse that should cause us to tremble a little bit. It basically says that God knows better than you do why you do what you do.

In other words it's quite possible for us to be self-deceived. Let's look at what God said long ago through the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 17 verse 9 and 10.

[16 : 34] The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind to reward each person according to their conduct according to what their deeds deserve.

Paul says it this way in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5. He says therefore judge nothing before the appointed time wait until the Lord comes.

He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

So at the end of all this we need to take a step back. We need to admit that truly only God knows whether these people here in this passage were true believers and were saved even many among the leaders are not.

But not only that we may need to take a step back in our own evaluations of the people around us who we know and admit that only God truly knows whether some of them today truly believe and are saved.

[18 : 02] Now I'm not suggesting that we all begin to look around the room here and ponder whether some of us are pretenders or not. I'm not suggesting that we either that we can't be sure about people.

What I am saying is that there should be some pause in our hearts when we see a brother or sister in Christ who seems hesitant or resistant to living in obedience to the commands of Christ.

We should be slow hesitant careful as we look at a brother or sister in Christ who seems unwilling to confess Jesus openly as their Lord.

In these cases time will tell. As Paul said to Timothy 2 Timothy 2 verse 19 The Lord knows those who are his and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.

Now it's easy for us to look around at other people we know think about them evaluate their faith maybe but far more important a passage like this calls us to consider our own belief in Jesus.

[19 : 36] I wonder what do you think the people in this church would say about your faith in Jesus? Would they say that it's obvious that you genuinely believe and belong to Christ?

And why would they say that? Or why not? Or might they say like when we look at these people that John's talking about I'm not so sure.

And why or why wouldn't they say that? And then we should probably consider that what other people think of your faith is not the most important evaluation.

Do we care more about what each other thinks of us or about what God knows about us? Let me ask you this question on behalf of the Lord.

Do you know that God knows the real you? You just might be able to fool other people.

[20 : 59] Probably not because we all have blind spots and it's not too hard to see when someone else has ketchup on their face even though they don't realize it. But even if somehow you manage to fool other people, you cannot fool God.

He knows the real you. He knows what's going on in your heart. Do you know that God knows you even better than you know yourself?

With that in mind, let me ask you the real question. do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe that he is the Messiah, the King that God has chosen for the kingdom of heaven?

Do you believe the things that Jesus is saying through all these gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John? Do you take those words with absolute seriousness to your heart?

God knows if you do. Listen, there's a very real sense in which it just doesn't matter what other people think of you, whether you're a full-blown Jesus freak in their view or not.

[22 : 34] Because at the end of the story, at the end of your life, when Jesus returns, there's only one person's evaluation of you that matters, and it's Jesus' evaluation of you.

Listen to what Jesus said, Matthew 7, 21. He said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?

Then I will tell them plainly, said Jesus, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers. this is why the apostle Paul spoke with all seriousness to the church at Corinth, the believers there, and said this, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.

Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you, unless, of course, you fail the test? your eternal destiny is on the line.

[24 : 02] Heaven and hell is on the line. Let's come back to Romans chapter 10, verse 9 and 10.

There is assurance, there is confidence that we can have, and this is where I find it. If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved, both together, in the heart, on the lips.

Based on these words of God which came through Paul, we should not think that merely saying the words, I believe in Jesus is enough. God's not looking for mere lip service.

He's looking for genuine belief in your heart. Not perfect faith, not perfect belief, but genuine faith, genuine belief. And the other side of that coin is true as well.

[25 : 18] We should not think that merely believing in our hearts privately, quietly, personally, is enough. Genuine faith in the heart, it will, it must result in confessing Christ openly with your mouth.

Or to put it another way, if you are unwilling to confess that Jesus is Lord with your mouth, he most certainly isn't the Lord of your heart. God. And so I ask you this morning, do you believe in Jesus?

Do you believe that he is the Lord, your master, the king, sent from heaven by the father, the one who will judge all of us someday, Jesus was known to be quite direct on occasion.

This is what he said one day to a crowd of many thousands who were gathered around him. I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that can do no more.

But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him who after your body has been killed has authority to throw you into hell.

[26 : 53] Yes, I tell you, fear him. The glory and the praise that comes from other people is massively overrated.

The well-done, good, and faithful servant that comes from God is all that matters. Maybe you're here today and you know that you have been at times, maybe even recently, a coward, where you've said or done something recently that really does show that you care more about what other people will say about you than about what God will say about you.

the good news of Jesus is that he will forgive you. He is merciful. If you confess that to him, if you ask for his forgiveness, that's why Jesus went to the cross and died, to atone for our sins.

I think of Peter. he denied the Lord three times on the night of Jesus' betrayal. If the Lord Jesus forgave Peter, he will forgive you and me if we ask.

He is rich in mercy. Let me end this morning by reminding us of the words that Peter said in his letter.

[28 : 35] After all that was over, but in your hearts, he said, revere Christ as Lord. Always being ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

And so may the word about Jesus be near us, each one of us in our hearts and in our mouths.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, these are sobering realities that we've been talking about this morning.

And we thank you that your word brings conviction and that you do expose what's really going on in our hearts. You know it already and you expose it so that we can see it too.

we ask for your forgiveness for all the times in which we've cared more about praise from other people than about the commendation that you would give us, Lord.

[29 : 50] Forgive us. Teach us to live for you and your glory alone, to worship you and you alone. thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for sending him and thank you for the amazing thing that he has done for us that we can be forgiven and without guilt, pure and holy, righteous even in your sight because of him.

We love him. We love you so much. It's in his precious name we pray. Amen.