

Never Man Spake like this Man - Thu evening communion service

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[0 : 00] I would like this evening to turn with you to the words we read in John's Gospel in chapter 7.

And reading at verse 45, Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said unto them, Why have you not brought him? The officers answered, Never man speak like this man.

Then answered them the Pharisee, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

Nicodemus said unto them, He that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

Amen. This is a very interesting part of the narrative of the life of Jesus, the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

[1 : 26] It's interesting in several accounts because of what it maybe challenges you and I with, with regard to our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we prepare ourselves for a communion Sabbath day, it is important for us to do quite a bit of heart searching.

Unlike the Pharisees who felt that there was no necessity for them to do any heart searching, they believed that because in some kind of outward way they were trying to keep the law, that everything was fine and there was no problem for them.

But of course it's not just the Pharisees of Jesus' day, upon which that kind of spirit was prominent. And this is why I say that it's good for us even to come to a passage like this, which might be, and by many people's thinking, a strange passage to take on the Thursday of the communion, which is usually looked upon as the day of repentance and confession of sin.

But I think what Scripture does do, on every single account of it, it jogs our thinking, surely, in asking ourselves, where am I in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ?

[2 : 55] We sang there at the very beginning of our service from the words of Psalm 139. And this psalmist there giving admission to the fact that he knew, and he admitted, that God knew everything.

God knows everything. And that's something that probably would put the fear in us. Not necessarily the right fear that we should have of God, but maybe concerning a judgmental fear.

The thing is, that you and I are being called upon every single day of our lives to witness a true confession. Not what people might expect of us.

That's important, don't get me wrong. But what is more important is what God expects of each and every one of us. We have all learned our catechism, I'm sure, and we know the very first one off by heart.

What is the chief end of man? Well, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That can trip off the tongue very, very easily.

[4 : 14] If that, there is no doubt. But I ask myself, and as I ask it of yourself, to ask yourself, what is my enjoyment in relation to the faith that I profess?

I profess faith in the living, true God, in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified and who rose again and ascended into heaven, and that he did this for me, in order that I can take to myself the assurance of the word of God that there is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Now, I ask myself, and as we turn to this passage, I'm thinking to myself, there is so much in here that reflects even those of us who have the grace of God in our hearts.

Now, please, in my looking at this passage, I'm not suggesting for one moment that these men, the officers of the temple, that these men were in any way at all is not suggested that they were converted men or believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But they stand out, certainly, as a kind of a beacon, even in the very statement that they make concerning this man, Jesus. You know that the situation is that the Pharisees have had enough.

[5 : 57] These officers were sent out time and time again to follow the Lord Jesus, to see what he was about, what he was saying, what he was doing, what miracles he was performing.

And especially, I think, they were very keen to know what this man, Jesus, was thinking about them. Well, of course, they got at full force on numerous occasions when Jesus responded to them and to their kind of life that they were living to this extent, where he would say, you know, woe, woe, you people who are just set upon your own agenda without giving consideration to the needs of others.

He spoke of them as being vipers, quite as sepulchers. Jesus knew only too well. And of course, that's something, of course, they didn't like. And they thought, well, we've had enough of the reporting going on as to what Jesus was doing and saying.

So they wanted to be caught and taken and brought before them so that they could question him. Now, these men, however many there were, I don't know, there could have been two, there could have been four, there could have been any amount.

But they didn't need too much of a strong arm to take Jesus prisoner. And David, however, they went in response to the command that they were given.

[7 : 29] We read that earlier on, that they told these men to go and take him captive and take him back. But when they came back, the interesting thing was that he wasn't there.

And to this, of course, the Pharisees responded almost in an accusative way, where is he? Why have you not brought him?

The accusation would be, of course, that they were given something to do. And these Pharisees, who after all, were their masters, and why did they not take Jesus according to the command that they had given him?

given them. And their only reply that they could give was that no one had ever spoken like this man. Now there, I want you to rest on a thought for a moment or two.

If you were amongst these men who came back with this message and said, no one ever spoke like this man, how would that resonate with you?

[8 : 34] as an individual, as a believer, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or even if you are here this evening and you are not a follower of the Lord Jesus in the sense that you haven't given your life to him.

You may have an interest, you may have a curiosity, but you haven't given your life to him. But those of us who are following the Lord Jesus, what do we think of that statement of these men who were not classified, as I said already, as believers in the sense that we would understand being born again.

But the thing is, they were exposed, just like every one of us here. We've been exposed down through the years, some of us decades almost, under the gospel.

And we could all admit, I'm sure, to the very fact that our exposure to the gospel wasn't really producing much in the way of fruit. We would hear it, and we'd go in one ear and out the other, and we wouldn't really be listening.

It wasn't going to have any great effect. But then, of course, in the providence of God, one day, the Spirit of God moved us to acknowledge and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our saviour.

[9 : 59] And why? Well, I think, in one level, these men have the answer. No one, no one, but no one, ever spoke to us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's here that I think that there is something very significant that we take on board. Now, we're not saying, as I keep on saying, and I have to make sure that I'm not giving the impression that I'm suggesting that these were holy men.

They weren't holy men. But, dearie me, they said something that was astonishing. It was astonishing to those of their hearers.

Are you deceived? They said to them. Why haven't you brought up no man ever spoke like this man? Are you deceived? Are you deceived? Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on this man?

And, of course, the answer has to be, no, they didn't. Except, of course, maybe Nicodemus, maybe he was coming in here. Well, we know what he said toward the end of the chapter, but I'll leave that for a moment or two.

[11 : 12] But for these Pharisees, this was an astonishing statement. These men were, after all, in the payroll of the temple, of the leaders of the temple.

And I'm sure, having not done what they were called upon to do, was almost tantamount to losing their job, their livelihood. Who knows what could have happened? Who knows what kind of imprisonment they would have expected?

They must have known when they returned to the Pharisees, having not taken them. they had the wherewithal to take him. But of course, they couldn't. It was not in the mind of the Lord for Jesus to be taken at this stage.

But nevertheless, the important thing is as to what these men had said and suggested, no one ever spoke like this man. And that is true for every single believer.

And if you this evening are sitting here as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you know what has been suggested. No one has ever spoken to you like Christ has spoken.

[12 : 18] We have listened to many things, I am sure, many people, many things that would tantalise our ears. But at the end of the day, it was the word of Christ that was significant and singularly important in the conversing, the bringing of you and I as an individual.

And my concern is, have we lost that in any way whatsoever? Are we still listening to the voice of Jesus speaking and calling upon us to live our lives in obedience to him?

What does the word of Christ mean to us? What does the whole deportment of Christ's ministry mean to us? Or are we neglecting the very word itself?

Maybe in our daily readings, are we reading and not contemplating? Are we not thinking of Christ's words? Please, I'm not trying to be offensive in any way at all.

But I know how easy it is to slip in to a kind of take it or leave it kind of spirit. We read and then we forget. because our life is so overtaken by so many things in this world that we forget the reality of the word made flesh that dwelt among us.

[13 : 41] We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Where is that powerful influence of the word of God in us this evening?

We have to examine ourselves. We've got to ask ourselves, where am I in relation to this man Jesus of whom it has been said here, not by professing Christians, but by people who had obviously followed him and brought back to the Pharisees everything that he said.

and you know, it was maybe having an effect so much so that all they could say no one spoke like this man.

Now we could spend a lot of time going through many parts of scripture and narrative concerning this Jesus and the things that he said and the way that he said them and I think that's very important.

I wonder what it was that went through the mind of these Pharisees when in almost the kind of an accusative way these men were saying to them nobody but nobody they heard speaking like this man Jesus.

[15 : 00] Not even you are bosses. No one. That was an affront to the Pharisee. But I want to take you somewhere because I think it causes maybe to reflect a great deal a great deal and where we have lost sight of the preciousness of the word and the testimony of Jesus.

If I might start by imagining maybe it's not the right word to use in this context but I want you to think of a situation maybe in scripture itself where Jesus is speaking to the people he's bringing to them the message the message of hope and redemption and salvation.

Whatever way the Pharisee wanted to deal with that message that God had given to them down through the generations from Moses and so on whatever the Pharisees were thinking about that word one thing is sure they lacked the spirit of Christ.

That's the challenge I think when people outside even the church would come to a realization that this Jesus spoke in a way that was so profound it challenged them no one ever spoke like this man think of it for a moment or two even if you go to the cross itself there you have the challenge of the thieves and the cross I know we talked on this subject the last time I was here but the thieves on the cross they had an opinion about this Jesus I'm quite sure that they themselves had heard many things about this Jesus but it went right over their head they weren't listening because they were too involved with the world please remember that's what can happen to us even as believers we get so involved in the world that we forget the most important thing the most satisfying thing but these two thieves you remember according to

Matthew and Mark's account both of them were railing upon Jesus but then the thief that I'm thinking about that I preached on before who was listening to Jesus he had heard many things I'm sure but at that particular point while he was himself being crucified suffering great pain on his cross and acknowledging at the same time that he and his partner in crime were deserving of what was happening to them and he came out with this thing remember me now where did that come from that came from a soul that had become enriched by the message of Jesus whatever part of the message he heard there was one thing that is sure that his conscience was pricked he knew as he said to his partner in crime we deserve our due reward oh yes at one time he was calling that you know if there will be the

[18 : 39] Christ save thyself and us but he came to realize and that's what every one of us has done we've come to realize that this Jesus has a message to proclaim and he has proclaimed it and we have heard it by faith and we have put our trust in him but have we stopped putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ in the way that we once did ask yourself what part of the characteristics of Christ's ministry are found in any one of us now of course I know none of us are perfect and we cannot claim to come anywhere near the example of the Lord Jesus Christ but that doesn't mean to say that we should neglect the example of the Lord Jesus Christ could you find anybody in your community coming and saying to you

I've never heard anyone speak like you speak as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ you see it's not only what Jesus was saying that was getting to these men I think that what was very much paramount was the way that Christ spoke and you can look through the narrative of scripture with those people as I mentioned already who were listening to the words of Jesus if you're listening to Jesus what do you hear go to the song of Solomon which we read I'm not going to just now but you go back to the song of Solomon and try and listen to yourself of whom it has been speaking and what has been said of him what has been said of his words and the presentation of his words what is said of any one of us how do we speak how do we react as followers and believers in the

Lord Jesus Christ what are our words no one ever spoke like this man not that these men became great theologians maybe they had a bit of understanding but the main thing was that no one had ever spoken in their hearing like this Jesus so there was something and what I think was they were listening and they began to believe that this man had all authority they were not saying it but I think that that is what is happening here in the whole life department as they come back to the Pharisees and say no one spoke like this man you see the Pharisees as I said already they pounced them and said are you deceived well we can all be easily deceived by what's around us but these men were not deceived they were listening and hearing and they were hearing something that they had never heard before they were hearing a voice speaking they were hearing the voice of authority they were hearing a voice of wisdom a voice of compassion you know the next time you raise your voice to your child or your grandchild just listen what would

Jesus do how would Jesus perform you remember when the Pharisees came with a woman who was taken in adultery in the very act now they had an understanding that what happened in that kind of situation was that this woman should be stoned stoned to death she was an immoral person and they had adjudicated they weren't listening to the words of Jesus even though you read in Matthew's gospel judge not that you be not judged for with what judgment you judge you shall be judged that's the significance of what these two men are these men are saying no man ever spoke like this man when Jesus spoke at that point when the Pharisees had taken this woman expecting him why would they expect him to take up a stone and throw it at her he just ignored them basically he put his finger in the ground and started was it writing or moving his finger in the ground almost ignoring and of course what happened was the Pharisees disappeared and then he spoke to the woman and I think that this is something that you and I have heard you may never have been involved in the kind of activities that she was involved in but by you've been involved in lots of things that you know fine were deserving of the judgment of God and Jesus said to her knowing what activity was coming out of the mouth of these Pharisees he said where are your accusers she didn't know they had gone away and then he said to her neither do I accuse you what I want us to do is think and listen to the Lord

Jesus Christ in his ministry what makes his ministry so authoritative so compassionate it's the very character and nature of Jesus he doesn't speak the way that we speak even those of us who have grace in our hearts we do not speak the language of Jesus as we should and that should be an admission we make we can be short in our temper we can do all kinds of things and say all kinds of things in a way that is very dishonouring to the very witness that we are making but when these men speak concerning this Jesus no one ever spoke like this man I would like us to think as individuals and collectively as believers as we go forward to a communion we can to think very sincerely about what the voice of Jesus the word of Jesus the authority of Jesus what it means to us in our everyday living when we hear

[25 : 49] Jesus speaking to us as Jesus said to the woman neither do I condemn thee go and sin no more it's a beautiful interaction that speaks so clearly does it not of the way in which Jesus speaks to a poor needy sinner you heard something of that this morning I'm sure but if I go just for one moment to the woman at the well there's a beautiful incident of Christ and his compassion to a poor sinner however deluded she might have been with regard to her understanding of spiritual things she had a degree of course of understanding this much that she said she knew that the Messiah was going to come even although she was a Samaritan she knew that the Messiah was going to come but didn't acknowledge that this man that was at the well with her but as progress went on in the conversation the discussion he began to show to her what she really was not by some hard condemnation there was no need to do that because the woman was already under condemnation but what she needed more than anything else was for the word the word of the perfect word of

Christ the authoritative word of Christ to speak to her heart and soul and everything he said to her was true he wasn't there to judge her she was already judged by her own conduct just like every one of us all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God none of us can stand aloof above anybody else once we do that we become less Christ like in our spiritual walk and conversation for her she realized that this man what he was saying to her was true and for her I'm quite sure it was true in a real way no one spoke like this man no one ever spoke to that woman like this man after all was she not an outcast basically that's why she was at the well at the time of day when she was no other ladies would even want to be nearer because of her lifestyle and yet

Jesus was there the disciples were surprised that he was talking to this woman but he was there because he knew that there was a soul his sensitivity toward that soul was great beyond measure that we could even understand and the consequence of course of that was that she ended up going back into the town and speaking to the men with whom she had her illicit dealings and saying come see a man that told me all things that ever I did my understanding of it is that Christ had opened this woman's heart in such a way in such a profound way maybe as it has done it to you and to me he has shown to us the way very often we miss out a tremendous amount by ignoring the way that Jesus speaks yes we have all the theology we've learned our catechism we've learned scripture we've done all of these things but I think we miss out in the one great thing is how

Jesus speaks the way that he speaks to those to whom he's addressing his compassion and his desire that no one should perish but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth now of course we know that not everyone that heard Jesus speak came to faith in him not even sure that these men who were sent to take him captive came to faith in him we're not told that but one thing is sure if these men could have been influenced so much by the words of Jesus the speech of Jesus the whole deportment of Jesus where does that leave us are we still moved are we still apprehended by the word of

Christ by the very voice of Jesus because after all there is no one that will ever speak into your heart and soul like Christ all I'm saying is listen listen to the voice of Jesus put yourself in that position where you are listening and don't ignore it because it's a voice of sweetness it's a voice of fragrance is it not listen to these words in the song of Solomon the voice of my beloved behold he cometh leaping up in the mountains skipping up on the hills my beloved is like a roar of a young heart behold he standeth behind our wall he looketh forth at the windows showing himself through the lattice my beloved speak and said up to me rise up my love my fair one and come away what is the voice of Jesus to you and to me what is his message is it one that inspires you like it did the psalmist when he wrote these words in psalm 27 one thing I desire of the lord that will

[32 : 31] I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the lord all the days of my life for what purpose to behold the beauty of the lord and to inquire in his temple let us pray that the lord would help us to follow him to listen to his voice be attentive to his voice to everything that he says and to the way that he says it so we too might have something of the example of Christ within our hearts shall we pray be pray be