

Obedience is Thicker Than Blood

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Date: 10 February 2019

Preacher: Nick Portengen

[0:00] Good morning, everyone. James mentioned this already. My name's Nick, and I work here at the church with Student Ministries. And James and I did a little swap today.

James is going to actually come downstairs at the 11 and do a little teaching for our group. And so I get to be here today and do some teaching here this morning. So I'm excited for what James is going to say later.

Something else you might not know is my wife Jasmine and I have been here since the fall. We've been attending this service, and I just want to say thanks. We really enjoy participating with you guys and being here together.

So thank you. All right, this morning, we're finishing up chapter 12. Right at the end of this chapter, we're doing the Gathering Store series.

And today, I have titled my sermon, I kind of ripped this off from someone, and it's, Obedience is Thicker Than Blood. I was like, whoa. And I stole that from Eugene Peterson.

[1:03] You might have heard of him. He wrote the message, and he put that as his subtitle in his little section on this passage. And I think it's really good. It gets at the heart of what I think is going on here about bringing out these true markers of Jesus' family.

So I don't know if you noticed this while the text was being read, but there's a verse missing. Do you guys notice that? Some of you? No? Okay, verse 47.

You'll see there's no verse 47 if you take a close look. And that's just because the ESV said, nope, we're not including it because it's not in the earliest manuscripts. But it really doesn't change the meaning too much if it were there.

It just says someone went to Jesus, basically. So the point is, Jesus was speaking. His family was outside. And presumably somebody went in, interrupted Jesus, to let him know that his family wants to speak to him.

Now, I think it's reasonable to assume that whoever that was that got that opportunity to go interrupt Jesus was assuming that Jesus was going to stop and attend to his family.

[2:12] So I imagine for that person, this might be an awkward interaction, interrupting Jesus, and then Jesus being like, what? I don't have that. Who's my family? And kind of puts this question back on them.

Who is my family? Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? But in another way, this is usual.

Jesus typically responds in the gospel in unexpected ways, I find, when I read it.

And so he does it again. And he does so to make a point about what family in the kingdom of God looks like. Or as Matthew says, the kingdom of heaven.

What family in the kingdom looks like. So basically Jesus says, hey, my family over here, that's not my family, but my family is these guys. He points at the disciples.

This then gives us the question, wait, why not them and why them? To which Jesus immediately answers, saying what I think is the most important line in our passage today. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

[3:16] Now it doesn't explicitly say this, but I think it's implied, then, that those who do not do the will of the Father in heaven are not part of God's family.

So at this point, maybe some of you are wondering, saying, hey, wait a minute, Nick. I'm saved by grace through faith, right? It's not by works. And to that I say, yes, good question.

And let's go back to Matthew chapter 7 and look at something there. So in Matthew 7, it's page 812 in your pew Bibles. Matthew 7, verses 21 to 23.

I want to read this passage because I think these are connected. So it says this, verse 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But the one who does 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, many works in your name?

[4 : 23] And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Real comforting passage. So whoever does the will of the Father.

Again, that thing comes up here again. And if you keep looking, verse 24 continues this by saying, whoever hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Okay. We can also think of other places. James, for example, talks about faith without works is dead. Or we could look at Luke's account for this same story.

And Luke, when he's talking about the same thing, he writes, Luke 8. And so the point I'm trying to make here is maybe a bit uncomfortable, but it's that the idea of active obedience is everywhere in the Bible.

It's not something new. And so here, doing the will of the Father is vital. Okay. When I was at, so I went to school for my undergrad at Briarcrest.

[5 : 30] It's in Saskatchewan. It's way colder there than it is here right now. It's like minus 40, I think. So, yeah, lucky then. But when I was there, it wasn't always that cold, but I met an awesome professor.

He was brilliant. He taught the New Testament, the Gospels, and Matthew was his specialty, his baby. But out of all of the great things he had to say, one of the catchiest phrases was very simple that has stuck with me to this day.

And it goes like this. He would say, as we're going through, we're studying, he would say, followers of Jesus, follow Jesus. That's it. Like, full stop. That's it. Followers of Jesus, follow Jesus.

And it sticks with me as just this, kind of takes the Gospel and puts it more simply. So, thinking about following Jesus at this point in the message, it would probably be most helpful to talk about what is God's will if this is what we're supposed to do.

So, when we read in chapter 12, doing the will of my Father in heaven, it's a direct echo of what we just read in chapter 7. Exact same wording. Both in English and in Greek.

[6 : 40] The exact same. And so, I think, since we've been reading, if you're going through the entire Gospel, this is an echo, kind of should point us back to chapter 7 and as a whole, the Sermon on the Mount.

Because when it's mentioned in chapter 7, Jesus means, do the will of my Father. He means obeying Jesus' teaching. Specifically, the teaching which he has just laid out in Matthew 5-7 in the Sermon on the Mount.

So, these are things, if you don't remember, these are things like embodying the Beatitudes. So, I think, some examples would be being merciful, being poor in spirit, being pure in heart, being a peacemaker, etc.

It also talks about things like not being angry towards your brother, not insulting him. It talks about how we should give to the needy, how we should pray in secret, fast in secret, and on and on the sermon goes.

The Sermon on the Mount is great. It gives a picture of how God's people, the people that are part of his kingdom, are to live and to love. The good news in all of this is that Jesus has come as the Son of God.

[7 : 52] He lived and taught us these things before ultimately he died on the cross, right? We know this. He rose again and is coming back again. Both are awesome. And he has given everyone who believes in him his spirit, right?

He's given each of us who believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in you and to empower you to live this obedient life of service following Jesus.

The point is not, and make sure you hear this, the point is not that you work hard to obey and then Jesus accepts you. That's the wrong order. The point is that when you believe in Jesus, he accepts you, he loves you, and your allegiance of sorts has changed from being from your, to yourself or whatever it was before.

Your allegiance changed from that to Christ. And so, in this, your life will change and be directed towards living out, I think, this kingdom ethic we find in the Sermon on the Mount.

It's a call to live in active obedience, to participate in the kingdom, to live out God's vision for the world. In other words, to do his will.

[9 : 10] I know that sometimes when we read the Sermon on the Mount, chapters five to seven, it can be easier to say that Jesus is using hyperbole here or this is an ideal, but I can never actually do it.

but I want to challenge you to read Matthew five to seven, to read the sermon today or later this week whenever you fit it in, but to read it and read it with like these glasses that say Jesus means what he says.

You read it through that lens, that you're reading these words, Jesus actually wants me to do these things. He expects these things to actually happen. This isn't just an ideal. To try and read it that way if you haven't done that before.

because both in the Sermon on the Mount and in our text, those who do the will of the Father in heaven, they are Jesus' brothers and sisters and mothers.

They are the ones who are part of God's family. Now to wrap up, here's what I want, here's how I want to end. So this text, I think, does bring a challenge.

[10 : 13] It's a comfort. We're part of God's family, but it brings a challenge and should challenge us all to wonder if we're doing God's will, are we living out this obedience that God calls us to?

And I think this text also brings to light, there's a tension that exists, right? Between this gift of grace, which is a gift, and then also this call to respond to grace.

They're kind of held together. A familiar passage, maybe Ephesians 2, talks about how it's grace that saved you, not works. That is true. It's a gift from God.

But just after that verse, it says, in Ephesians 2.10, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them, that we should do them.

James 2 is another example. It says, in 21, verse 21, uses Abraham as an example. Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

[11 : 20] You see that his faith and his actions were working together. And his faith was made complete by what he did. And later, verse 26, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

God places a big call on us to obey when we come to him. But at the same time, we can know the comforting reality and the promise of his spirit.

God's spirit dwells in you and God desires to work through you to empower you. Guys, God really wants to do this in you. To empower you to be a part of bringing his kingdom to bear here on earth, here in Vancouver, here in Richmond, wherever you are, as it is in heaven.

Remember this. Followers of Jesus follow Jesus. And we do this with an active obedience in response to the gift of God's grace. Amen. Thank you.