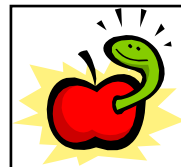


No Fence Sitting

Sermon – Melville Junction

Dean Donaldson, 29 March 2009

- If we look at the set up of chairs in the church, we see a great rift down the middle which divides the church into a left side or a right side.
- Either you are sitting on the left side or the right side.
- The layout of chairs do not allow for anybody to sit in the middle.
- **It is the same in life, there are 2 kingdoms.** The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world/ the prince of the world.
- **We have no choice** but to be in one of these 2 kingdoms.
- Even if you are undecided, you still remain on one side. **There is no middle ground.**
- We do not have the ability to support one side like **a Stormers fan.** When your team is doing well you support them but switch allegiance when they are not doing well.
- It's more like being **a Bulls supporter** which is more like you are with us or you are against us.
- It sounds quite harsh.
- But let's come back to it just now.
- Here are 2 pieces of fruit; the one on this side is bad/rotten whilst the other one is good for eating.



- The one is inviting, you feel like taking it, shinning it up and sinking your teeth into it.
- The other piece though, you don't even want to touch.
- **It looks and smells like what it is**, no amount of hunger is going to turn it into good fruit again.
- **We might eat it because if we were very hungry**, but it has not changed the fact that it is a bad piece of fruit.
- Let me ask one more random thing before I actually start preaching on the thing I plan to preach on.
- **Is there such a thing as unforgiveable sin?**
- If there is, **how do we make sense of it** in light of the fact that we stand forgiven by the blood of Jesus? **For whoever has been set free is free indeed...(Jn 8:36)**
- We have been talking about **our 2nd value, being led by The Holy Spirit.** We have looked at The Holy Spirit as a good gift, a guide, a comforter etc.
- But **I want to stress again the importance** of this value, our take home message is this. Being led by The Holy Spirit is not a nice to have; it is like oxygen for our soul.
- **Without it our soul will die.**

- Can you turn to **Matthew 12:22-36**

Jesus and Beelzebub

²²Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

²⁴But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub the prince of demons that this fellow drives out demons."

²⁵Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁸But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

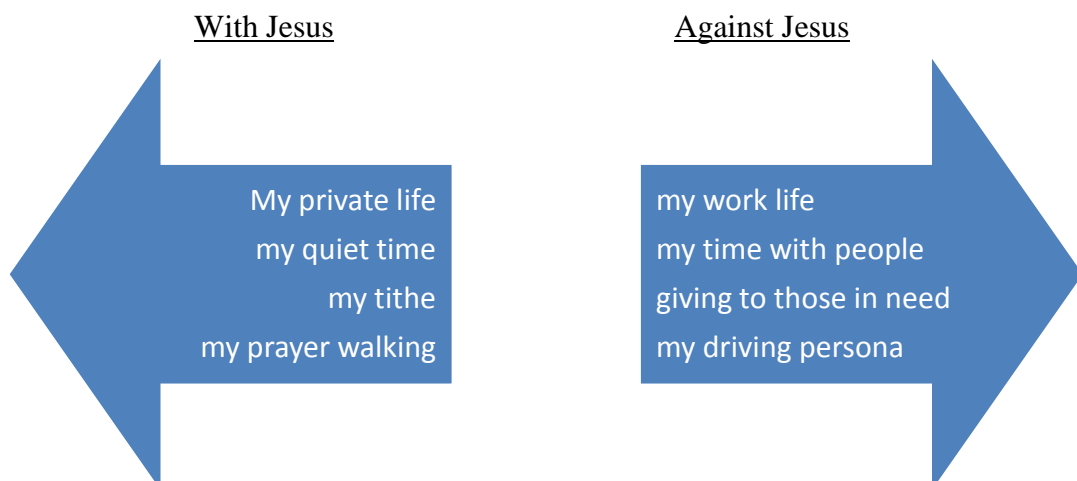
²⁹"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

³⁰"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. ³¹And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

³³"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

- **Hectic**
- **Let's try to make sense of what Jesus is saying here.**
- **Before this chapter**, Jesus has been healing people, casting out demons and performing many miracles.
- The Pharisees are becoming more and more agitated by Jesus and **start plotting to kill him.**
- We see in **Matt 11**, that **Jesus speaks out against the Cities** that have seen the miracles but have chosen not to repent.
- Now in chapter 12, the Pharisees are saying that the miracles performed by **The Holy Spirit are the work of Satan.**

- They see the miracles but they cannot accept that they are from God. They essentially say that it is witchcraft.
1. **The first point I want to pull out of here is this, there are two sides. The side of Jesus or the side of the prince of this world (Satan)**
 - Jesus explains here that what He is doing is **defeating Satan's Kingdom**
 - **Why would Satan defeat his own Kingdom**
 - He is saying that **he has tied up the strongman (Satan)** so that He can take back the souls of those that Satan has taken.
 - **He says that you are either with me or you are against me.**
 - **The Pharisees**, the religious leaders of the day (those who claim to speak for God) **have chosen their side.**
 - **Imagine accusing the pope for example of being a follower of Satan.** It would have had similar implications.
 - You are either sitting on this side of the church, or the other side. **There is no middle ground.**
 - **What does this look like for us here in Melville, 2009?**
 - It means **the same thing** but I think that we have perfected **the art of sitting on the fence** by having one foot on either side.
 - What this looks like in **my life for example** is for some things I am on this side and other things I am on that side.



- **We need to bring our lives over to the same side.**

- **All aspects of our lives for Jesus**, the things on the other side are not simply things we do to get by in the world.
 - **No they are things that are actively at work against Jesus.**
 - **Ray Oliver spoke a prophetic word** to this church last weekend saying that we are great at being family, but we need to learn to become an army.
 - **The battle is between these 2 kingdoms.**
 - So that's the first thing, **you are on a side**, which side are you on.
2. The second point is this: **The hardening of our hearts to such a point that we are not able to see the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the world around us is a dangerous place to be.**
- vs 32 says...

³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

- **That's weird; you can speak badly about Jesus, but not the Holy Spirit?**
- **The Message** puts it like this...

If you reject the Son of Man out of some misunderstanding, the Holy Spirit can forgive you, but when you reject the Holy Spirit, you're sawing off the branch on which you're sitting, severing by your own perversity all connection with the One who forgives.

- **John 12: 37-43**

The Jews Continue in Their Unbelief

³⁷Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸This was to fulfil the word of Isaiah the prophet:

"Lord, who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

³⁹For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰"He has blinded their eyes
and deadened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn—and I would heal them." ⁴¹Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory
and spoke about him.

⁴²Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

- **They loved praise from men more than they loved praise from God.**
- **Why Has God blinded them,** and deadened their hearts?
- **This is difficult for us to understand.**
- It is the same as God did with **Pharaoh in Exodus.**
- God says He will harden Pharaohs heart.
- Then He hardens Pharaohs heart.
- **We think to ourselves, why would God do that?**
- If you read more carefully though, you will see that Pharaoh hardens his heart **after seeing miraculous signs**, Pharaoh hardens his heart, then God hardens Pharaohs heart.
- **So what Jesus is saying to the Pharisees here is be careful,** your hearts are so hard that you are nearly at the point of no return.
- **The Holy Spirit reveals the fathers heart to us, He has been given to us as a guide in this life to show us the way.**
- **If we push Him away** to the point that we can no longer recognise Him **we are lost.**
- **Imagine going Hiking in a vast wilderness.**
 - You get dropped off by Helicopter with a GPS and co-ordinates for your next destination.
 - The GPS is The Holy Spirit.
 - If you throw the GPS away, you are going to be lost.
- **Is anybody here worried that they may have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit?**
- If you are worried, that is a good sign.
- If you are worried then you have not crossed that line.
- **Those of us who hang onto our religious practices,** our self righteousness, our holier than though practices are the ones who are in danger.
- **If that is you, hear this.** Be careful, that your heart does not get so hard that you no longer have place for God.
- Being led by the Holy **Spirit is our life line, listen to Him.**
 - If you are at the shops and you get prompted to pray for someone – do it.
 - Don't discredit The Holy Spirit when talking to Christians or non-Christians.
 - Because it becomes easier and easier to explain away miracles if you try to.
 - Watch your heart.

3. **The 3rd point is this, a person who is led by the Holy Spirit produces good fruit, but a person whose heart has been hardened to The Holy Spirit produces bad fruit. People will know you by your thoughts, words and actions.**

- What Jesus is saying is that it is **what is in your heart** that determines if you produce good fruit or bad fruit.
- What is in your heart, not **what you do outwardly?**
- **The Pharisees do all the right things in public**, but hold something different in their hearts.
- **For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.**
- Matt 15

... ⁷You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:
⁸"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.

- **If your heart has been hardened to the Holy Spirit, you will not be able to produce good fruit.**
- **Galatians 5 talks about the fruit of the Spirit vs the fruit of legalism** (the condition of the human heart)
- **The 2 are opposed to each other.**
- The fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control.**
- **We want to be with those people**, the world wants to hang out with these people.
- **We see these virtues in people and we want to hang out with them.**
- **The problem comes** though when people look at us and they see that what we say and what we do are different **to what is in our hearts.**
- **You hypocrites they say.** This almost always happens when we revert back to legalism/religious practices.
- **Ephesians 4:29-32** says...

²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** ³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

- **We cannot get rid of all of those things without being led by the Holy Spirit.**
- **In all areas of life.**
- **We need to be those, who through our lives draw people close to Jesus.**
- **Through our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**
- **If we can get this right, we will be those who know what it means to build authentic relationships.**
- **Authentic relationships with each other and with people in the world. (Our 3rd value)**

So may we be those who know that there are two sides, we are either whole heartedly with Jesus or we are against him.

May we never get so bogged down in legalism and religious practices that we no longer recognise the work of the Holy Spirit.

May our hearts remain soft and open to the prompting and leading of the Holy spirit.

May we be those who through a life led by the Holy Spirit produce good fruit.

And may this good fruit lead people to God through Jesus.

Let's Pray