

Numbers 12:5-9 and Hebrews 3:1-6

“Jesus more worthy than Moses”

So I have told you this many times before, but for those who are new to the church, who wants to tell them what my favorite time of the week is here at FPC, it happens every week. That’s right, chapel time with the preschool. We sing songs together, we pray together, and we act out Bible stories together, and everyone wants to be Jesus every week, so we have to keep track of who was Jesus one week and who was Jesus the next week. This past week I did a story of Jesus and his disciples, and the next best thing to being Jesus, is being a disciple. So this little girl was a disciple and then on Monday the mom came in and said, who was my daughter in chapel? Heather told her, oh, she was a disciple. The mom said, that makes more sense, she came home saying that she was a free sample in the Bible story.

On Friday when the kids leave they all say goodbye Pastor Bob, and there is a new little boy who didn’t really understand the word Pastor, so he said, goodbye Master Bob. I like that, should put that on my business cards. You know, it is easy to get the reason and the purpose behind church confused. We can see it as a social club or just a neat time of fellowship, you know giving out green jackets and what not.

But the importance of church can’t be overestimated, as both a positive and a negative influence. In confirmation the kids are learning about the presence of the church in history. The church was behind Hitler’s Nazi Germany and also behind apartheid in South Africa. While it was also the spearhead for the civil rights movement and when you travel around the world you will see hospitals and schools established by churches looking to heal people and teach people about the love of Jesus.

Both of our Scriptures today speak to the importance of following God’s word to guide and direct the people of God, but Jesus, Jesus who is lifted up as greater than all those who went before him so we are told to follow him. Let’s read.

READ

We begin right away in chapter 3 with a verse that describes our relationship with Jesus and with each other as holy partners. I love that image. Think on that if you will. What we are doing here together as a church matters because, according to the Bible, we are holy partners with a heavenly calling. Look, turn to the person next to you and tell them: you have a heavenly calling. That’s right, it is not by chance that you are here, you are here because you have a heavenly calling, every single one of you. As a result that makes us heavenly partners, I bet you

never thought of yourself like that before. Holy partners with a heavenly calling, that's us, that's the church.

And the source of that calling, the pioneer of that calling is Jesus. This is why it is so crucial for all of us to be mature in Christ, which is what we are trying to do here, make every single person who walks through these doors mature in Christ as Colossians 1:28 tells us. We read further in this section of Hebrews that Moses had a similar calling. It was his responsibility, a responsibility that was given to him by God, to make the people of God know God's word and lead them on the path that would give them opportunities to walk closer to God. We cannot overestimate the importance of Moses to the people of God.

To this day Moses is seen as someone who was the clear mediator between the people of God and God. The Numbers Scripture that we read has God chastising Aaron and Miriam for speaking out against Moses because Moses was unlike any of them. God chose to speak to Moses face to face, unlike he did with any other person in the Old Testament. Moses was clearly a vessel that God chose to use in order to speak the Word of God to the people. He was a servant of the Lord placed in that position by God himself.

But Jesus, the author states, was someone completely other. While Moses was a servant, Jesus was the Son. We have that whole parabola of faith, I'm telling you, you need to get to know it. Son the creator, Son the redeemer, Son the ruler. And I know, over the years I have spoken with some of you who have a hard time as seeing Jesus as something more than a mediator, as someone similar to Moses, but not as God. But Jesus is God, Jesus is the one who built the house that Moses inhabits. What distinguishes Moses from Jesus, says the author, is glory. Moses was the servant in the house of God, Jesus was the Son, the heir. Jesus is given greater glory, all glory and more authority, all authority, as compared to Moses who was just a vessel.

There is no one greater than Jesus and no one who serves the role of intermediary like Jesus does. He is the one who has complete access to God because He is God. As a result, look around you, this is the church that Jesus built, that God built. And as a church we have a responsibility to live as Christ lived. If we experience realities within our culture and within our society that go against the teachings of Christ we are called to be consistent and to speak out against all that is anti-Christ, or against Christ.

In my 15 years of being your pastor I have spoken out at various times in all administrations, through 4 different presidencies, against all things that I believe are not God's will and that are impacting the witness of followers of Jesus. They tend to be controversial topics so I don't dwell on them much because there are so many other topics that can unify us than those that can divide us. But I also don't shy away from them when they need to be addressed. I have spoken out against the death penalty, against abortion, and gay marriage, I have lately been the strongest on welcoming the stranger as our Christian duty and economic justice has been on the forefront of Jesus' teachings as well.

I'll be there is not one person in this room who agrees with me on all of the topics that I mentioned, these topics that get us fired up and tend to divide us, but they are all topics that Scripture addresses directly and topics that I understand as God saying a very specific word to us on what is God's will. But I was born, raised, and trained and all of my ministry as a pastor I have been involved and served in capacities where racial justice could be considered the topic of social justice that I spend the most time talking about.

So when the highest leader of our nation, who was baptized and raised Presbyterian by the way in NYC, puts forth an encouragement to accept, approve, and encourage a known racial trope, then the church cannot remain silent. That is satanic, it is of the devil and not what the church ought support. I know, some of you are cheering, finally, others of you are furious, why does he always pick him out, but that's what we do as a church. I believe I have been consistent in speaking out against that which is against the will of Christ regardless of who is in power.

We read in vs.6 that Christ was faithful over God's house. We are God's house. What unifies us is not what side we take on the culture wars, but that we be unified under the banner of Jesus Christ and not under the banner of red or blue. In John 17:11, read, Jesus prays to the Father that we would be one, unified through the blood and the body of our Savior. The salvation that we have in Jesus is what unified and drives us to live like Jesus. We cannot separate loving God and loving our neighbor. As a church we are good to keep both of these together, yes in tension, but together nevertheless.

Jesus prayer that we would be one finds its ally in this thought that we would be holy partners with a heavenly calling. There is deep theological truth that we don't choose a church, but rather we are chosen for the church by God. The church is not a club for people who are religious, or who even identify as being Christian. The church is a community of people

summoned to a task and thrown together in ministry. I have heard people say to me: I don't have anything in common with people in the church. My response is good! Churches are meant to be a place where people who would never imagine being together and working together share life as brothers and sisters in Christ.

A church is nothing but a collection of sinners until it is gathered by the grace of God into seasons of worship and acts of love. The church is holy not because of the purity of its members, but because it is made pure by Jesus. The church, and today is living proof of that, proclaims a word often not welcome, with a love easily scorned, to a world quick to be cynical, in the name of a Christ who was rejected and despised. All the church has going for it is Jesus. That's all, but that is enough.

Jesus demands a partnership which brings his church together around his presence and his teachings. We are holy partners and we are the house built by God and governed by Christ the Son. Amen.