

The Blessed

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of truly hearing and keeping God's word over relying on false connections or past obedience.

Scripture: Matthew 7:21, Matthew 12:50, Luke 6:46, Luke 8:21, Luke 11:28, John 14:23, James 1:19, James 1:22

Topics: "True Repentance", "Obedience To God"

Description

Richard E. Bieber delivers a powerful sermon warning against the danger of trusting in false 'connections' with Jesus, emphasizing the importance of truly hearing and keeping God's word. He highlights the deception of relying on past deeds, relationships, or religious activities as a guarantee of salvation, stressing the need for genuine repentance and obedience to Jesus' teachings. Bieber urges listeners to open their hearts to God's word by being still, listening attentively, and letting go of anger and self-righteousness. He emphasizes the transformative power of acting on Jesus' words immediately, rather than just discussing or contemplating them, and encourages applying God's teachings first within one's own family.

Transcript

It's going to be a strange gathering outside the door of the Kingdom when that door closes. There are going to be people standing there who just can't believe it. "Lord! Open up! Lord! You made a horrible mistake! Lord, don't you remember us? We cast out demons in your name and did many mighty works in your name!"

"Lord, don't you remember us? We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets. Lord, don't you remember us? We went to church all our lives. Lord, don't you remember us? We stayed out of those filthy hypocritical churches. We were the true totally-committed ones."

And from the other side of the door he will say, "I never knew you. Depart from me you workers of iniquity".

Too many people who profess to be following Jesus are putting their trust, not in Jesus, but in an idea planted in their minds by Satan: the idea that they have already made the grade through some special "in" with Jesus. They've got a special connection with Jesus. They're not trusting Jesus, they're trusting their special connection.

"I'm a blood relative."

"I've been sitting in the front row of every preaching mission Jesus ever had."

"I went to school with the man, for goodness sake! He ain't gonna forget me."

"I had a pizza sent over to his hotel room."

"I gave him a set of tires one time."

"One year I gave over \$500.00 to charity."

Oh, it's subtle. There's not one of us that escapes this kind of thinking.

"I belong to the clique." "I'm a true believer."

"I tell it like it is." "I'm for real."

"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."

"God, I thank thee that I have connections with Jesus that put me inside!"

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by destroying the idea that you can "have connections". The people of Israel were just like 21st century main-line Protestants; they lived their sloppy, mediocre, safe, comfortable, self-righteous lives, certain that they were connected to God through Abraham and had nothing to worry about.... until John came along.

"You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits that befit repentance and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father', for I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

But they soon forgot. Jesus barely got going in his ministry before there were people who thought that because they sat in the multitude and listened, they were "connected" ... because they stood around and admired him they were "connected." "If he is the Messiah, we got it made. After all, Lord, we ate and drank in your presence, you taught in our streets. Well surely his mother, surely Mary has a connection, she bore him, she nursed him."

Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked.

But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it".

There are no "connections." No one, not even his mother, has a special claim on Jesus. There is only one way for any human being to have a claim on Jesus: by hearing the word of God that comes out of Jesus' mouth and doing it.

The best favor you can do yourself, my Friend, is to relieve yourself of all these "connections" with heaven you think you have, ("I belong to the right group" ... "I'm living a decent life" ... "I'm doing my best") and ask God to show you whether you are, in fact, hearing and keeping his word.

If you really want to get close to Jesus, hear the word of God that comes from him. You don't hear by merely having the sound waves bang against your ear, you hear by opening your heart. When God speaks to you through his Son, one of two things happen inside you: either your heart opens or your heart

closes. If your heart opens to what Jesus is telling you, you're hearing it. If your heart closes you're hearing nothing even if you memorize the words. Some of us have our hearts closed so habitually, we don't know how to open them. We sit under the word of God repeatedly, yet our hearts are hard as stone.

Here are a few suggestions for opening your heart. If you truly want to open your heart - close your mouth. Most of us don't listen, we talk. We're incessantly talking. If we aren't running at the mouth, we're talking inside our heads. Jesus is speaking to us words from the mouth of the living God, but we're too busy selling ourselves, defending ourselves, expressing ourselves, planning what we're going to say the next time so-and-so calls up. We talk all day long, and when night comes, what have we accomplished? What have we learned?

Even in our prayers, it's far too much talk and far too little listening. When we talk to each other, too often our minds are on what we are going to say to our brother, not on what he's saying to us. God is trying to speak to me through my brother, but I'm too busy with my own talk. The first step toward opening your heart to God's word is to close the mouth. Give it a rest.

Be still and know that I am God.

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.

For every hour of talk let there be about 10 hours of silence. In the silence we will hear Jesus. And, in that one hour of talk, our words will be life instead of death.

The next thing to do if you want to open your heart to the word of God is shut down the fires of wrath. When those fires of wrath burn within you, you will not hear God. You drown out his voice in the clatter of your anger.

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

We always try to justify our wrath by saying we're "just like Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple". Ninety-nine percent of the time, the wrath in us is the wrath of self-righteousness, piqued pride, arrogance ... the same wrath that dragged Jesus before Pilate and had him nailed to the Cross ... wrath that breaks down every tender shoot that God has been patiently nurturing. You cannot hear God when you're angry.

Even the mighty prophet Elijah couldn't hear God when he was mad. Elijah was still seething with anger when he got to Mt. Horeb in the wilderness to escape the sword of Jezebel. God had to literally shake Elijah. It took wind, earthquake, and fire before Elijah would settle down inside and listen. How many times God has to do this with us! He has to give us a taste of his wrath, shake us up in order to make us cool down and listen.

If you've got a bonfire of anger roaring in your heart, shut it down, or God might have to shut it down for you. There is no grudge, no anger, worth holding on to, if it's going to dull your heart and deafen your ears to the voice of the living God. Repent of it and listen. God is speaking to you in the person of his Son even at this moment.

After you've closed your mouth and shut down those fires of wrath, concentrate your heart on what Jesus is saying to you.

It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.

The words that I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are life.

Jesus will speak to you through the prophets and the apostles as you read the scriptures. He'll speak to you through your brothers and sisters. Sometimes he'll speak to you in your own heart, and you will know it's his voice. Sometimes he will even use the lips of your enemy to tell you what you need to hear.

Once you become quiet inside, you'll find that you can distinguish his voice from the voices of the thieves, and the robbers, and the false prophets.

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go,

I will guide thee with mine eye....

and as you receive his words into your heart, you will be filled with his life.

Finally, after you hear the word, keep it.

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Don't let the word of the Lord fly away again. There is only one way to prevent Satan from snatching the word out of your heart, and that is by acting on it immediately. Turn that word into a deed. If Jesus tells you to step up your prayers, don't wait till next week - do it now. If he tells you to fall on your face in repentance, do it now. And if 250 people look down their noses at you for falling on your face, who cares? They ought to be on their faces too. If Jesus tells you that your stinginess is hindering his Spirit in you, don't think about it for a month. Sit down and write a check to that family down the street. Pull that wad out of your mattress and get some groceries for the old lady across the alley who's next to starvation.

If by nightfall you haven't done something about the thing Jesus pointed out to you this hour, you will probably have lost all the good of it. No wonder it was "one day of wonder, and six days of blunder", all you did was wonder, you didn't obey... you didn't do.

When the words of Jesus aren't turned into action, when all we do is think about them and discuss them, they become like that day-old manna in the wilderness that rotted and stank and bred worms. If there's something you can do today about what Jesus is showing you, do it.

A good place to start is in your own home. How many people reading these words haven't even begun to show the love of Jesus to their own families. You're willing to forgive all kinds of theoretical enemies but what about your wife? What about your husband? What about your kids? Your parents? Your brothers and sisters? If you don't start keeping the word right there in your home, you're wasting your time reading these words.

Some of us are trying to comfort ourselves with the thought that we were very obedient last year, we did great things in the name of the Lord and bore much fruit for ten straight years---until about a year ago.

We're trying to make our past obedience a special "connection" with Jesus. It doesn't work. What you did last year is wonderful, but what are you doing now? What are you doing about the word Jesus speaks to you this day?

As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked". But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it".

May God wipe from the mind of every person reading these words the lie that we have a special "connection" with Jesus. Not even his mother had a special "connection" with Jesus. There is only one way to know Jesus, one way to be free from guilt by the power of his blood, one way to have him living within us: by hearing and keeping the word that proceeds out of his mouth. Every word that he speaks to us today, tomorrow and everyday until we see him face-to-face.

Blessed are those who hear the word of God

and keep it.

Theirs alone is the Kingdom of Heaven.

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