**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 ***Merry Christmas***

***It’s All About Jesus***

 **December 18th, In the Year of Our Lord 2022**

 **Pastor Matthew Diehl**

**(Unless otherwise noted, NAS Bible text is quoted)**

This title is meant to call a person to make a decision. When a person hears the name of Jesus, there is a decision to be made. This is true for Believers and non-believers. Those who have not surrendered to God know that they have a choice to make. For Believers, there is a constant presence to bring forth all for which He represents.

Moving forward into the second century and beyond, the Believer’s Church was called by God to witness a unified message accurately identifying Jesus. WHY? John 6:39-40 declares the end goal of God.

39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

And when is this end goal achieved?

**2 Peter 3:8-10**

8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

To accomplish His redemptive plan, God moves forward in history with His intended interactions like the Flood, the Tower of Babel, His Covenant with Abram leading to the Incarnation.

 With the Incarnation, we Believers are charged to witness the main attributes of Jesus that distinguish God’s message of salvation from any other religion or faith in the world. To some degree, many will find this technical, but this is the message that went forward from the 1st century. Eventually, the Believers Church got the attention of the Roman government, not as an adversary, but as a savior. History records the Roman Emperor Constantine attached His government to the Believer’s Church. Historians record Constantine’s epiphany of seeing a sign from God that encouraged him to adopt or incorporate Christianity into his governing system. So, with this merger, the state of Rome produced their state Nicaea Creed of 325 A.D. It is my opinion that the Believer’s Church was transformed to the Bishop’s Church then to the State Church. [See the sermon preached on 10-9-2022 “Seismic Shifts - Believer’s Church to Bishop’s Church to State-Church”.] However, the real church of God could never be captured by anyone. The Church of Christ resides within the hearts of each Believer where Jesus is our pastor.

Regardless of the State Nicaea Creed, the personal witness conveying the teachings of God as Jesus went forward. This is what captured people’s hearts and minds. The Believer’s Church operated alongside and inside of the State Church empowering people to live their lives for God. Eventually, the State Church became increasingly corrupt through the Dark Ages that lasted over one thousand years. True Believers, who had unyielding faith, eventually spoke-out which cost them their temporal lives and they died as martyrs. The apex of this speaking-out is commonly called the Reformation led by protestors. Protestors soon earned the name of Protestants. (Believers who left the State Church). However, be it noted that many of the protestors went and formed their own version of a theocratic system. The simplicity and truth of God’s Church is a rarity in the affairs of fallen humanity.

Within this fallenness, I see that we Believers are charged with learning what has happened. In Acts 7, Stephen gives a detailed history to the Jews which held them accountable. Therefore, I cannot emphasize enough how we, like the saints of two thousand years ago, need to understand the historical teaching points.

The historical and Biblical record chronicles what distinguishes “The God” from Muhammad, Buddha, Hinduism and any other pagan religions. Within the historical Biblical record is where there is an exclusive witness and claim to the right-path to eternal life with God. It is not that someone has to know all the theological points about God as Jesus to be saved; however, I see that due to the information age in which we live, we are responsible to learn about the basic events in history. Based on what we know, it is the Believer’s responsibility to witness what God has accomplished in history highlighted in the Incarnation.

 When the truth is known about God’s redemptive plan, I see that actually knowing what has happened broadens the attractiveness of the Gospel Message. That is. . . how God saved people from the beginning.

**ABEL**

Let us start with Abel, like the list does in the New Testament book of Hebrews 11. We need to keep in mind that Abel (Son of Adam and Eve) is the first biblical example, after Adam and Eve, of a person humbling himself to God. Talking about humility, Jesus’ Cross is the greatest sign of humility in history. In reference to Abel, it was his “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) humility demonstrating faith that approved him to God. This is the same way Paul or Peter was approved to God. It is of note that there isn’t any biblical text declaring that Abel knew about Jesus or His Cross, but he was approved by God because of his humble faith and that he was righteous. Jesus points to “righteous” Abel as an example of innocent bloodshed (Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51).

 If Abel would have been asked who his father was, he would have said Adam, but Abel knew that his Spiritual Father was God indicative by his faithful firstling-offering from his heart (Genesis 4:1). Therefore, God approved Abel as righteous. Abel is not considered to be a Hebrew under the Law.

**Abraham**

The genealogy of Abel leads to Abraham, and Abraham’s family tree leads to Adam. Matthew 1:1-17 reports Jesus’ genealogy from Abraham. Luke 3:23-38 provides the genealogy from Jesus to Adam. God desires for us to see the genealogy list to highlight His intentional plan for our redemption that ends in His incarnation as Jesus the Messiah.

Now the Jews consider Abraham to be their father (Luke 1:73), due to God establishing a faith-covenant with him (Genesis 12:3,9; 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6-8ff, 15:6). The faith-covenant with Abel and Abraham was established hundreds of years before Moses was given the Law.

And we know that the Law was added due to transgressions and the hardness of the people’s heart (Galatians 3:19). Thus, the Law was only a tutor pointing to Christ (Galatians 3:24,25). The Law was never intended to remove the penalty of sin (Hebrews 10). So, Abel, not a Hebrew under the Law, is saved (approved by God) because he humbled himself to his Spiritual Father God. We see this when Abel brought forth a firstling sacrifice offering to God (Genesis 4:4), and God approved him as righteous.

By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith (Hebrews. 11:4). This verse proclaims what is the exclusive humble-faith-path to God.

**2000 Years Later**

Presenting a humble surrendering heart to God saves. Then repentance is possible allowing God’s Holy Spirit to turn and regenerate a person’s heart.

Paul highlights the same truth in Galatians 3:7-9.

6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

 Skip to. . .

3:17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

 Paul is direct with Timothy in detailing that the Law was made for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted (1 Timothy 1:9-11).

 From reading Scripture like Ephesians 2:14ff, sin is defined by God as the enmity against His intended order for life. God’s plan for His creation is to live in harmony. This is accomplished through love that generates peace. Within this life economy of peace, God is the one who designates what is good and bad. Meaning that what is good sustains life and what is bad destroys life. In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), He starts with hate as the root cause of murder. Obviously, Cain had hate in his heart for Abel and murdered him. This is an example of a universal obstruction to peace for all. Sin is an obstruction to peace with God and our neighbor.

**Prince of Peace**

It is all about Jesus, because He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) whose lifework on the Cross made it possible for all people to be reconciled to God when He abolished/defeated sin and death (the enmity). We know that the Law of commandments detailing what are right and wrong actions and statements convicts people of their sin. However, it is God as Jesus, that in Himself, He continually offers to make all people new, thus establishing peace.

AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we all have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:14-18)

Below are seven observations about Jesus and why we can say. . . **It is all about Jesus. But before reading the seven observations. . . people need to know that Jesus fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies. Numerous studies have been done. Here is one reference. See: https://www.newtestamentchristians.com/bible-study-resources/351-old-testament-prophecies-fulfilled-in-jesus-christ/**

1. God, as Jesus, lived the perfect path exhibiting to us fallen souls how to gain eternal life. Jesus lived and therefore witnessed for us a perfect humble and sacrificial life to God. This is witnessed most pointedly in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36ff).
2. God, as Jesus, taught that He was the Way to the Truth to Eternal Life (John 14:6). The Way starts with humility (poor in spirit) in surrendering to God. Additionally, Jesus proclaimed and exhibited the Good News Message including His life-practices that are the Truth to eternal life. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 details life-practices Believers are called to live.
3. God incarnated Himself as Jesus to be one of us to pay the price for the sins of the world. No other person in history has made this claim or carried out this action. All the false religions teach that a person has to pay or perform some kind of work to establish and maintain a saving relationship.
4. God, as Jesus, defeated sin and death by rising from the dead proving that life exists beyond our temporal bodies’ ability to sustain life. His Resurrection pointed to eternal destinations for all to be determined by our surrendering faith in Him. We are now held accountable for knowing Jesus’ accomplishments on the Cross and His life teachings. Access to the power of the Cross is determined by a person’s humble-surrendering faith to God. . . just like Abel.
5. God, as Jesus, lived among sin, before and after the Cross, and still was victorious. Jesus lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
6. God, as Jesus, spiritually empowered people (The Great Commission – Matthew 28:19) to go forth in His name with His exclusive eternal life-plan. We call this plan ‘Salvation’ (John 20:19ff).
7. God, as Jesus, will bring an end to this world as we know it. He will bring an end to sin and death and separate for an eternity those who accept and practice His love and those who reject His love (Revelation 20:11ff).

**Revelation 1:7** BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So, it is to be.

**AMEN**