

Destination: Authentic Lives

Matthew 7:29, John 1:14

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Last week we pulled in to our destination. The twin cities of Surrender (last week) and Authentic lives (this week).

The journey of faith and life is to form us into the image of our Savior. The one who lived a surrendered life, honoring the wishes of the Father. Further Jesus is the one who lived an authentic life----being himself and sharing himself.

Consider how Matthew and John viewed the life and witness of Jesus. One wrote, “he did not teach like their teachers of the law. He taught like a person who had authority.” Then John added, “The Word became a human and lived among us. We saw his glory—the glory that belongs to the only Son of the Father—and he was full of grace and truth.”ⁱ

There have always been people who tried to sugar coat the truth. Today we call it “spin.” People are experts at taking facts and making them sound like the logical conclusion to their position. The fact according to the Center for Disease Control is that people who live together before marriage appear to divorce at a rate 6% greater than the general population. In the hands of Focus on the Family such a fact means this, “Living together prior to marriage produces a greater likelihood of divorce.” In the hands of others it becomes, “living together prevents more potentially unsuccessful marriages from happening and keeps the overall divorce rate lower.” Of course we all know there are lies then there are statistics.

The tribe of spinners has always been popular. Whether with words or actions the human race has an affinity for inconsistency. In the past months we have learned Mark Sanford, Tiger Woods, Jessie James, and John Edwards said one thing with their words and another with their lives. What we see is one thing, but what they are is another. The same can be said of us.

The people in the time of Christ were also surrounded by such. At times they were called Scribes but they did not always have a title. They were simply people who said “obey the law” then they proceeded to break it themselves. They always justified their illegal behavior and soon wrote new laws to cover their behavior. This how 10 commandments turns into 614 laws.

The primary quality of this tribe is you have to say something for public consumption (this is one face) while you may actually feel another way (the other face). Once these men caught this woman in adultery (somehow the man got away) they brought her to Jesus. For public consumption they said what the law said, “she should be stoned.” Jesus did not argue with their interpretation of the law. Instead Jesus began to doodle in the dirt, surprisingly the stoning committee adjourned, it is not known what Jesus wrote, but I have an opinion. I think Jesus wrote, “Anna, Rachel, Simone, Rebecca, and Ruth the names of the mistresses of each committee member. They wanted to be known for their public witness but Jesus knew their private witness.

An authentic life is a challenge and painful. No where is this duplicity highlighted more than in the arena of politics. Where one line has to be spoken loudly and often while privately you may feel differently. This was illustrated recent when Tom Coburn in a town hall meeting said of Nancy Pelosi, “She is a nice person.

She's a nice person."ⁱⁱ One man decide to live an authentic life, to stop the madness of saying one thing while another thing is true and he'll probably pay a price for it. Authentic lives in the end always cost something. Duplicity and hypocrisy are not only more popular, they are more affordable. Authentic living is expensive, spiritually and emotionally.

Authentic living means we have pay attention to ourselves. Pay attention to our feelings and our world. The Temple was a holy place, a sacred cow, but Jesus felt differently. He believed it had become a place of profit and abuse. Conventional wisdom would say reform from within, pay your dues, Jesus, don't over react. Conventional wisdom is often the enemy of authentic living. Yet, Jesus fully aware of what it might cost decided something needed to be said and done. The writer John believed this event to be so vital to disclosing who Jesus was that he sets it at the beginning of his gospel. It's as if John is shouting, "this is how authentic people live."

After this, Jesus went to the town of Capernaum with his mother, brothers, and followers. They stayed there for just a few days. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover Feast, Jesus went to Jerusalem. In the Temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves. He saw others sitting at tables, exchanging different kinds of money. Jesus made a whip out of cords and forced all of them, both the sheep and cattle, to leave the Temple. He turned over the tables and scattered the money of those who were exchanging it. Then he said to those who were selling pigeons, "Take these things out of here! Don't make my Father's house a place for buying and selling."ⁱⁱⁱ

It's not that authentic people are like bulls in China shops, it is that authentic people know who they are and they are not afraid to be themselves.

To the broken Jesus said,

"Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light."^{iv}

Yet to those who would break others Jesus said,

"How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You are hypocrites! You give to God one-tenth of everything you earn—even your mint, dill, and cumin.^[c] But you don't obey the really important teachings of the law—justice, mercy, and being loyal. These are the things you should do, as well as those other things. You guide the people, but you are blind! You are like a person who picks a fly out of a drink and then swallows a camel!

"How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You are hypocrites! You wash the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside they are full of things you got by cheating others and by pleasing only yourselves. Pharisees, you are blind! First make the inside of the cup clean, and then the outside of the cup can be truly clean.

"How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You are hypocrites! You are like tombs that are painted white. Outside, those tombs look fine, but inside, they are full of the bones of dead people and all kinds of unclean things. It is the same with you. People look at you and think you are good, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and evil.^v

It was then in-authentic life that angered Jesus. The life unsure of what it believed. The life where what I feel is one thing and what I say is another. I call in-authentic, Jesus calls it hypocrisy. The media calls it spin. The destination in this life is to figure it out---who are we and whose are we?

Trying to figure out who we are will lead us to the work we need to do. Soul and spirit work. We ask ourselves over and over again, who am I? We know for sure between birth and death there is an experience called life. Are we our body? Are we our faults? Are we this disease? Are we a mother, lawyer, banker, or teacher? We are a mixture of beliefs and feelings and honestly we may be at times inconsistent. The authentic life at least knows this. Authentic people don't pretend to have arrived. Authentic people are not perfect, they are humble enough to know they have not arrived. What makes the life authentic is not holding consistent views, it is that the views are consistent with who they are. The grandest kind of maturity includes being truthful about our dark sides. Knowing who we are pimples and all. We can't expect a 12 year old to know this or even a 30 year old. But the destination of the ups and downs, the moments of faith and the moments of doubts, the betters and the worse, the success and failures, the tears and the laughter of life is to arrive at being who we were designed to be. Paul put it this way;

This work must continue until we are all joined together in the same faith and in the same knowledge of the Son of God. We must become like a mature person, growing until we become like Christ and have his perfection.

Then we will no longer be babies. We will not be tossed about like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear.^{vi}

Jesus knew exactly who he was. This is why the people reported he spoke with authority. The legal and religious experts had no authority because they could not be trusted. They were masters of spin. Jesus' authority came from knowing who he was. Influence cannot be hidden.

Thus when John writes, “Jesus was full of grace and truth” what we hear is Jesus was a truth-teller. Yet, it so much fuller than a truth-teller. Jesus lived the truth he was to paraphrase “full of graciousness and authenticity.” He was not one of those two faced, spin masters, he was authentic, the real deal. This explains why Jesus was loved so dearly, so seldom do we meet a person who knows himself so well.

Our life destination is not happiness, it is maturing into the likeness of Jesus. Our question, in the end will not be, why were you not Billy Graham or why were you not Mother Teresa? Our question will be why were you not a complete self? Why did we not look into our life and attempt to live what we believe. It is not about living or even believing. It is about the two being the same. We have matured in Christ when we can report, “I live what I believe.” When you want what you have, do what you can, be who you are, and live what you believe, then you will be who Christ has made you to be. registration

ⁱ Matthew 7:29 and John 1:14 New Century Version

ⁱⁱ <http://wonkette.com/414689/tom-coburn-tells-town-hall-that-nancy-pelosi-is-nice-lady-and-to-ignore-fox-news-wingnuts-furious#ixzz0kzzhGBxS>

ⁱⁱⁱ John 2:12-16 New Century Version

^{iv} Matthew 11:28-30 New Century Version

^v Matthew 23:23-28 New Century Version

^{vi} Ephesians 4:13-14 New Century Version