

“Loyal” 2/21/10
Exodus 20:2-7; Matthew 4:1-10; Mark 11:15-17

9 & 10:45 am

Series: *“Beyond Compare”*

PREAMBLE

New church “The Well,” on Claus Road. The pastor is Randy Balling. We have had lunch together a few times over the past year.

This Saturday they are passing out invitations to the homes closest to the church facility; simply putting a card on the door of someone’s home; no door-knocking.

I’d like for us to help these brothers and sisters reach out in that area, one of the very few churches in that part of town.

Info in program. Put a card on people’s doors, about 90 minutes from 9-10:30.

INTRODUCTION

Last week I mentioned an ancient Jewish proverb, *“Follow a Rabbi, drink in his words, and be covered with the dust of his feet.”*

For the next few weeks we want to walk very closely behind Jesus, so that we are covered with the dust of His character; key qualities that characterized Jesus Himself so that we can know what God is wanting to do in our lives.

Last week: We saw that Jesus is *“selfless.”* This means that instead of being self-centered, He is God-centered, Father-centered.

This week, we’re going to see that Jesus is **loyal**.

I’d like to read a story to you that paints a passionate picture of loyalty:

“Roger Zerbe suffered from early onset Alzheimer’s disease. His wife, Becky, remembers a journal entry he left for her after he had a troubling bout of forgetfulness.

She says, “I picked up the journal on my pillow and read:

‘Honey,

‘Today fear is taking over. The day is coming when all my memories of this life we share will be gone. In fact, you and the boys will be gone from me. I will lose you even as I am

surrounded by you and your love. I don't want to leave you. I want to grow old in the warmth of memories. Forgive me for leaving so slowly and painfully.'

"Blinking back tears, I picked up my pen and replied:

'My sweet husband,

'What will happen when we get to the point where you no longer know me? I will continue to go on loving you and caring for you — not because you know me or remember our life, but because I remember you. I will remember the man who proposed to me and told me he loved me, the look on his face when his children were born, the father he was, the way he loved our extended family. I'll recall his love for riding, hiking, and reading; his tears at sentimental movies; the unexpected witty remarks; and how he held my hand while he prayed. I cherish the pleasure, obligation, commitment, and opportunity to care for you ... because I REMEMBER YOU!'" (Becky Zerbe, "Penning a Marriage")

That is loyalty!

How do we express loyalty to God?

I. Loyalty is Expressed by Worshipping God Alone (Exodus 20:1-5)

OPEN to Exodus 20 (**PAGE** 118)

10 commandments

Exodus 20:2 "**I am the LORD** (God's name, YHWH, not a title)
your God, Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

God is speaking to them personally. He has revealed His name to them, YHWH; possibly pronounced Yahweh. "**I am Yahweh, your God.**"

*"**I am loyal to you.** I promised Abraham that I would bring you out of slavery, and I did. Through Moses I promised you that I would bring you out of Egypt, and I did. I keep My commitments and promises to you. **I am loyal to you.**"*

v. 3: "**You shall have no other gods before Me.**"

You be loyal to Me by keeping Me as your only God.

v. 4-5: "**You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the Earth beneath or in the waters below.**"

5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...”

But, the people of Israel were disloyal; they put other things ahead of God and in His place. They copied the ways of the people around them:

- they worshipped idols made with their own hands;
- they participated in false religions where they engaged their bodies in sexual immorality as an act of worship to a false god;
- they even sacrificed their babies to “gods,” who were really demons, believing that things would go better for them (weather, crops, harvest)

Yes, they did horrible things. Because they became *disloyal* ...

... they gave the loyalty that was due to the true God alone, to things, people and practices that consumed and controlled them.

In the NT Christians are warned to be loyal to the one true God and not to idols: Colossians 3:5 **“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”**

These things can consume us. They can become what we build our lives around, what we live for. They can take the place of God in our lives. That’s why they’re called **idols**.

What we find in Jesus is a life of perfect loyalty to His Father. Loyalty was at the core of His being.

Jesus was loyal to His Father. God was not simply added to Jesus’ list of loyalties. The Father was the One to Whom He was loyal.

How do we express loyalty to God?

II. Loyalty is Expressed by Overcoming Temptation (Matthew 4:1-10)

TURN to Matthew 4:1 (**PAGE** 1499)

READ Matthew 4:1-10

Matthew 4:1 **“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by**

the devil.

The Holy Spirit **led** Jesus from the Jordan River (baptism) into the desert. He led Him according to the Father's perfect will. For Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin, He had to say "no" to sin, which means remaining *faithful* to God, *loyal* to God when He was tempted.

The devil is going to be tempting Jesus to sin; to become self-centered instead of God-centered.

Jesus understands that *sin* is *self-centeredness*. It is choosing what I want instead of what God wants. Do you see how this is a *relational* issue?

It is saying to God, "*I will do what I want rather than what You want.*"

When the devil tempts Jesus, he is seeking to get Jesus to be *disloyal* in His relationship to the Father.

With each temptation, Jesus quotes Scripture. Notice how the Scripture He quotes refers to His *relationship* with His Father, not just a list of dos and don'ts:

Matthew 4:2-4 "After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

3 The tempter came to Him and said, 'If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'

4 Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."'

"The words that are written, are not just words in a book, they are the words of My Father. He and I are in a relationship of mutual loyalty. I choose what He says over what you say."

ILLUSTRATION

"Two young men were toying with doing something wrong that would be disapproved of by their fathers. One of them finally decided he could not go along.

"The other asked sarcastically, 'Are you afraid your dad will find out and hurt you?'

"He responded, 'No, I'm afraid he will find out and it will hurt him.'"

Obedience is about love. It expresses loyalty to God.

Matthew 4:5-7 "Then the devil took Him to the holy city and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple.

6 **‘If You are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.”**

7 **Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: “Do not put the Lord (quoting OT, “LORD” = Yahweh) your God to the test.”’**” (quoting Deuteronomy 6:16)

Jesus is not going to test *God*. That verse was not written so that I could test My Father; treating Him like a genie in a lamp. *“I’m going to do something stupid so that You have to save Me.”*

Matthew 4:8-10 **“Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.**

9 **‘All this I will give You,’ he said, ‘if You will bow down and worship me.’**

10 **Jesus said to him, ‘Away from Me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.”**”

Worship and serve the true God *exclusively*. Be *faithful* to Him *alone*! Be *devoted* to Him *alone*. *“I will not be bribed to turn away from My Father!”*

How do we express loyalty to God?

III. Loyalty is Expressed Passionately (Mark 11:15-17)

READ Mark 11:15-17 (**PAGE** 1573)

Mark 11:15-17 **“On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves,**

16 **and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.**

17 **And as He taught them, He said, ‘Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it “a den of robbers.”’**”

(at the beginning of His public ministry):

John 2:14-17 **“In the temple courts He found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.**

15 **So He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.**

16 **To those who sold doves He said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn My Father’s house into a market!’**

17 **His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for Your house will consume Me.’”**

God's house is where He called His people to meet with Him. It's where His people offered sacrifices to express remorse for hurting God through their sins.

It is where they gave Him offerings of gratitude and thanksgiving to express thanks for His provision and His other acts of generosity and kindness. It was a place where God and people met to restore or cultivate their relationship.

The reason Jesus was so zealous was that people were being ripped off financially under the guise of having the right kinds of offerings for God AND because the only place where non-Jewish people who believed in the one true God could worship was "*the court of the Gentiles*."

The court of the Gentiles was where they were buying and selling. So, there was no place for the Gentile followers of God to worship, to pray.

cf. Isaiah 56:6-7 **"And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve Him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship Him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to My covenant - 7 these I will bring to My holy mountain and give them joy in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."**

The sellers were keeping people from connecting with God by stealing their place in the temple courts.

There is no longer a temple where we are called to meet with God.

The physical body of a follower of Jesus is now the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19)

Within us, the Holy Spirit lives and dwells and leads and teaches and purifies and makes us more like Jesus. In and through this very body. That's one reason our bodies are sacred. Why we present them to God as a living sacrifice. Why we guard what we allow in our hearts and minds. We expose our minds to God's Word, and the helpful words and encouragement of God's people because in that way we are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Where we go, we take Jesus with us. What we view, fills our minds and hearts where Jesus dwells. If we love Him, we don't want to grieve Him.

Is there some passionate act that needs to take place in my life to cleanse God's temple?

I know people who have done these kinds of things:

- put software on their computer to block unsavory sites
- removed a computer from their home
- stopped listening to certain radio programs because it stirred them to unrighteous anger and hatred
- remained faithful to a very sick or distant spouse
- stopped watching some TV programs
- lost friends because they wouldn't get drunk or risk getting drunk any more
- arose early in the morning to meet with God

CONCLUSION

“... there is one relational, irreplaceable role that is eternally sacred, that no human in history can fill. ... There are a million angels who sing God's praise ... Someone else can serve Him and do the things He has given me to do, as important as those things are. But no one else can give Him my love, my worship.” (from Secondhand Jesus)

“Father in Heaven, thank You for being completely loyal to me. Please continue to make me more like Jesus. Amen!”