

“Reflections of Christ’s Influence”

March 30, 2014

Text: John 7:45-52

**In today’s text we see the powerful influence of Jesus’ words
on various people who heard Him speak.**

E.g. a group of Temple guards will say of Him=>

“Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”

**We who know Jesus personally can each testify to the impact
& influence His words have had on us.**

If you’re a believer, you’ve sensed that impact on yourself, not as
coming from a pulpit/preacher, but as coming w/ power
from Jesus Himself—directly to your heart.

E.g. when you hear/read Jesus’ words to the Apostles in the
boat, *“It is I; do not be afraid”* (Jn 6:20), do you not
sense that Jesus cares about you as He did those
Apostles;

That those words are for you too;

That His mighty arm is near/able to save you as well?

Do you sense the power of His words so strongly that you
can agree w/ those Temple guards?=> *“Never has a
man spoken the way this man speaks.”*

**Our Savior spoke words long ago, which we, since we’ve
come to know Him, have embraced, for our own.**

The H.S. has brought them home to our hearts.

By faith, we have been enabled to hear them, not merely as
ancient words from an old historical document;

But as if Jesus' own voice were speaking them
directly to us.

E.g. we have applied X's parable in Mt 18 to ourselves=>

"What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?" (18:12).

We have read that, and said, "I am that 1 straying sheep, and Jesus is that Shepherd!"

When the Spirit first opened our spiritual eyes to our sin, and we despaired that our souls were lost like that sheep, Jesus' words were like a

fresh breeze to us=> *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28).*

Jesus used those words to speak directly to us, through the H.S.

We read of X's words on the cross, *"It is finished!"* (Jn 19:30) & we thought, "He is talking about *my* sins, for which He paid the full penalty by His death, satisfying the Law's demand for my punishment! It's finished for me, the judge's gavel has come down, my case is closed, and I am free."

In the past (before that day), we might have heard gospel invitations that just seemed like the words of men to us.

But on that most important day of our lives, we knew it was Jesus speaking right to us in the secrecy of our hearts.

We knew that He was telling us, “Yield to Me, & stop your rebellion against Me.

“Your soul will die forever, if you don’t.

“Look to Me and be saved, because I have loved you and made an atonement for your sins.”

If you’re not a believer, or if you’re a professed Xn who keeps some distance between you & the Lord, this may sound like religious fantasizing/fanaticism to you.

But I am describing the real communication and communion X has w/ His people, by the H.S.

The Apostle John described it like this: “*Our fellowship is w/ the Father, & w/ His Son Jesus Christ*” (I Jn 1:3).

X Himself explained it, saying=> “*My sheep hear My voice & I know them, & they follow Me*” (Jn 10:27).

We are some of His sheep!

And thus, X has-spoken/still-speaks to us thru His Word by His Spirit.

There are people in this world whose words/lives influence others long after they are gone.

* Some individuals can influence whole rooms of people simply by their presence.

They leave behind a relaxed/friendly atmosphere because they have had such positive/uplifting influence on those around them;

* Others leave rooms full of people who feel cranky & on edge.

* Jesus had such powerful impact/influence on the people of this world that still today (2000 years later) we are meeting in this room to learn more about Him, and to worship Him. And His influence here is as strong as it was in the Upper Room 2000 years ago.

In today's text, Jesus will not be seen directly, but we will see reflections of His influence on 4 kinds of people...

The Impressed, the Bewildered, the Open-minded, & the Mad.

The Impressed

This first group of people is a squad of Temple guards whom the Sanhedrin had earlier sent, to arrest Jesus.

They had now returned to report on the results.

[John 7:45]=> *“The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees [the Sanhedrin], and they [the Sanhedrin] said to them [the officers], ‘Why did you not bring Him?’”*

There may be a connection between this verse & the last one.

It's possible to translate *“Then”* as *“Therefore,”* which would created that connection.

That would mean no one laid a hand on Jesus (as 44 said), & that the guards couldn't arrest Him, because the angry division that had developed among the people we saw last time, was on the verge of becoming a riot.

However, the Sanhedrin's reaction when the officers returned w/o Jesus, shows they felt the guards had fallen under Jesus' spell, & that's why they'd failed to arrest Him.

In the next verse, the officers themselves will testify to the power of Jesus' words.

These were Levites, well-trained in the OT Scriptures—

not a bunch of easily deceived/manipulated simpletons.

They may have been just as divided in their opinions of Jesus' teaching, as all His other listeners had been.

But they were clearly impressed with both Him/His-words.

[Verse 46]=> *“The officers answered, ‘Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.’”*

It's possible that the officers were saying they were in danger of having Jesus' words sway the crowd to turn against them, and that's why they hadn't arrested Him.

But the Sanhedrin's reaction (verses 47-49) suggests the officers themselves had become captivated as X spoke.

In order to understand the power Jesus wielded by His words/teaching, consider how it amazed the Jewish people=>

* Mt 7=> *“When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were **amazed** at His teaching” (7:28).*

* Lk 4:32=> *“They [people of Capernaum] were **amazed** at His teaching, for His message was w/ authority.”*

* Mk 12=> *“Jesus said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.’ And they were **amazed** at Him” (12:17).*

1) X's teaching amazed people **because** He taught deep/profound truth, using words that were clear/easy-to-understand.

He unveiled the mysteries of God, using simple parables about seeds/fish/candles/prodigal-sons/lost-sheep.

It's no wonder that people like Mary wanted to spend all their time sitting at His feet, listening to Him teach.

- 2) Jesus spoke w/ authority about the things He Himself had seen in heaven, & testified to the very oracles of God Himself. He never debated, but simply stated the truth, having been anointed by the Spirit to do so.

But although Jesus spoke authoritatively, He also spoke with deep humility, and from a lowly/gentle heart.

- 3) Jesus' words were always faithful to the truth, even when confronting the scribes/Pharisees' hypocrisy, declaring "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees!"

He impartially reproved both the rich & the poor for their sins.

He proclaimed the horrors of hell w/o equivocation.

Yet, His words were gentle, tender, & spoken out of sincere concern.

He cheered the downcast w/ His genuine/obvious affection for them.

- 4) Jesus' teaching was also full of holy zeal—never cold/dull—so that it burned its way into people's hearts/minds. But His teaching was always tempered w/ prudence. He never lost control of His words because of either temper/enthusiasm.

And He always spoke out of genuine love for people.

There was no syrupy pretense of affection/concern.

5) Jesus spoke to both the mind and the heart.

* Some teachers are masters at stirring up people's feelings, but afterward, their listeners have learned nothing.

* Others can explain the truth clearly/logically, but listeners are no better off for it, even though they know more.

Jesus never appealed to the emotions, except thru reason, nor did He seek to instruct the mind w/o influencing people's hearts/consciences.

Jesus was the master-teacher.

Charles Spurgeon=> "Surely it were worth worlds... to have caught the sound of that serene, soul-stirring Voice—to have beheld for once the glance of those matchless eyes as they looked through the heart, and that heavenly Countenance as it glowed with Love!"

It's no wonder the Temple guards were so impressed, they said of

X=> "*Never has a man **spoken** the way this man speaks.*"

*** The Bewildered**

[Verse 47]=> "*The Pharisees then answered them [the officers], 'You have not also been led astray, have you?'*"

The Pharisees were bewildered w/ the Temple-guards (the "officers"), knowing that they had opened up their minds to Jesus' teaching.

Originally the officers had reported to both the chief-priests/Pharisees (the whole Sanhedrin).

But now the Pharisees had taken over the interrogation, considering themselves theological experts;

And knowing this was ultimately a theological matter.
In their minds, the officers (as Levites) had shown a lack of
discernment, by listening to anyone but themselves.
So the Pharisees' attitude was=> "Can't we at least count
on you men for theological loyalty/soundness?"

Boiling w/ bewilderment/exasperation, these Pharisees,
representing the whole Sanhedrin, launched into a sarcastic
tirade against them which was at heart, a theological attack.
They accused the officers of being "*led astray*," which
essentially meant to be deceived/duped;
In this case, by Jesus, a man they considered a
charlatan.

**Now the Pharisees held up 2 models=> one of spiritual
correctness/wisdom (the Sanhedrin itself); the other, of
spiritual ignorance/cursedness (the crowd).**

They implied the officers had become far more like the
ignorant crowd, than the wise Sanhedrin.

**[Verses 48-49] (Pharisees)=> "No one of the rulers or Pharisees
has believed in Him, has he? / But this crowd which
does not know the Law is accursed."**

**By implication, the Pharisees were saying that, if Jesus really
were the Messiah, they would have recognized Him as
such.**

They implied that the whole Sanhedrin (both the rulers/Pharisees)
had unanimously rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

In their minds, that meant He couldn't possibly be the
Messiah.

If they, the great/learned, didn't accept Jesus/His-teaching,
the whole Jewish nation should reject them.

In reality, the Jewish leadership had become apostate—
unqualified to make any spiritual judgments at all.

There's an irony here, just below the surface of the words.

The "*rulers*" in the Sanhedrin were primarily (if not totally)
Sadducees.

They were the theological liberals of their day, who didn't
believe in angels/resurrection, & who didn't accept
much of the OT.

They lacked credibility w/ the people, who knew they were
corrupt & had compromised Judaism to placate the
Romans, so they could keep their power/positions as
Israel's leaders.

The Pharisees, by contrast, were viewed as purists, and were
admired by the people, because they appeared to be
seriously committed to Judaism, & to the Jewish Scriptures.
Pharisees generally despised Sadducees, as men who had
sold their souls for temporary advantages in this
world.

But now Jesus had taken the Pharisees' place in the people's
admiration, leaving the Pharisees to align themselves w/ the
Sadducees, whom they despised.

The Pharisees accused the officers of sinking to the level of the foolish/untaught crowds.

The religious elite had a very low view of such commoners. This was an unethical/manipulative attack on the officers' pride, implying they had become no different from the common people of the land, who were cursed, due to their ignorance of the truth.

Unscrupulous tactics like this are always used by enemies of the Truth.

Throughout history, when they could no longer keep people from the truth, they have often claimed that anyone who didn't agree with them was ignorant/foolish.

The Sanhedrin's stooping to such illegitimate methods of persuasion was simply evidence of their bewilderment, a/w/a their intellectual/ethical bankruptcy.

*** The Open-minded**

[Verses 50-51]=> *“Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of **them** [a member of the Sanhedrin]) said to them, / ‘Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?’”*

Last Sunday I mentioned what is called “Johannine irony” (John’s habit of displaying people’s foolishness for all to see, but w/o specifically labeling it as foolishness).

You know John is quietly chuckling in the background, but he never actively points out their foolishness, nor mentions his own scorn for it.

Here in our text we have another Johannine irony=> Right after the Pharisees had insisted that none of the Pharisees/rulers believed in Jesus, Nicodemus (the Pharisee) showed that he was open to doing so.

Nicodemus was, in fact, such a prominent rabbi that in Jn 3:10 Jesus referred to him as *“the teacher of Israel.”*

And he had said to Jesus=> *“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”* (3:2).

Nicodemus prob. wasn't yet a true disciple of Jesus at this point, but his mind was certainly open to the truth, & ultimately he seems to have believed in X.

Although he didn't actually defend Jesus, he used his standing w/i the Sanhedrin to point out how unfairly they were dealing w/ our Lord.

In the end, Nicodemus would help Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus' crucified body, when all His Apostles have forsaken the Lord, and fled.

Nicodemus is a wonderful example of a man who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus slowly, on God's schedule, after always having been wonderfully open to the truth.

That is a commendable trait for any man/woman.

Nicodemus' comment exposed the Sanhedrin's readiness to totally disregard God's Law whenever they chose to.

Although he didn't cite any specific Scripture, Deut 1:16-17 required that legal judgments be based on the hearing of specific evidence, & that they be made impartially.

Nicodemus took a courageous stand on these principles.

The Sanhedrin, which should have been the main advocate for the Law, had broken the Law, & was still continuing to do so.

Without even giving Jesus the courtesy of a hearing, they had accused Him of being a deceiver (7:47), decided that He should be arrested as a criminal (7:32), and determined that He should be executed (5:18).

But God had raised up a man named Nicodemus who wasn't yet even a true believer in X, but who was open-minded enough to give thoughtful consideration to His claims & to the evidence about Him.

* **The Mad**

“Mad” can describe either a person's anger, or an insane state of mind.

In the case of the Sanhedrin, both definitions applied, as they became so angry/frustrated/bewildered over Jesus, they temporarily lost their sanity.

[Verse 52]=> *“They answered him, ‘You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.’”*

Nicodemus' accusation that the Sanhedrin was breaking the Law went unanswered & was ignored.

Instead, they turned on Nicodemus himself, attacking him, & trying to intimidate him (as they had the officers), by suggesting that he too might be from Galilee himself, & that's why he was reluctant to judge Jesus.

I.e., that he was as wrong as Jesus/His-Galilean-followers.

These religious leaders had been bewildered/frustrated by their inability to have Jesus arrested, and now they felt that one of their own had broken ranks & turned on them.

They viewed even a single word that might favorably influence Jesus' case as an infuriating act of treachery by Nicodemus.

They felt mad, & they were acting mad, so they claimed that=>

"No prophet arises out of Galilee."

It's a pres. tense verb, meaning, no prophet ever has, & none ever will come from Galilee.

Actually, that wasn't true, since Jonah/Nahum had both come from Galilee, & it's possible that Amos, Hosea, Elijah, & Elisha had also.

The Sanhedrin was saying, Galilee wasn't prophet country.

So the Messiah certainly wouldn't come from there.

When you're as mad as the Sanhedrin's members were, objective truth can easily be ignored, as you lose any concern for reality.

They were prob. making these false statements just to show their contempt for Nicodemus, & to stigmatize him as no better than a despised Galilean, who didn't even know his Israelite history.

When people get like this, they act as if their saying something is true, actually makes it true.

The Sanhedrin was were speaking/acting as if they'd gone mad—psychotically mad.

It might seem strange that X's influence had turned the Sanhedrin's bewilderment into temporary madness.

But when people know that what they're doing directly opposes God's will, but they continue to do it, practical madness is the result.

James 4=> *“To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin”* (4:17).

And we might add, that it's also self-destructive madness.

Pharaoh is a prime example of this, in that he had defied God's will, refusing to let the Israelite slaves go free, after his country had suffered 10 devastating plagues at God's hand because of it.

At that point you would think he would have given up & emancipated the Israelites, w/o further resistance.

But instead, after letting them go, he chased them down w/ his chariots, intending to recapture them.

As a result, he lost his whole chariot corps. (& possibly his own life) when he pursued Israel into the Red Sea, & great walls of water collapsed in on them.

Satan himself, knows that his defiance of God, will end w/ his being cast into the Lake of Fire.

But sin's slavery forces even him to keep on defying God.

When we knowingly defy God's will, we're stepping into very dangerous territory that will finally swallow/destroy us.

We are playing a game we cannot win, against an omnipotent Opponent whose mighty voice will always prevail.

Scripture says His voice shakes the earth, breaks the cedars of Lebanon, & makes them skip like a calf.

And someday, if we persist in rejecting His gracious offer to save our souls, that terrible voice will address us directly/personally, saying=> *"Depart from Me, accursed one, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Mt 25:41).

Even though we may choose to live our lives in defiance of His will, & to die as strangers to His mercy/grace, we will someday be forced to feel the power of His voice.

We will bow before Him with every other creature, & say w/ a heart full of fear that won't ever go away=>

"Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

On the other hand, there are 2 sides to the story of this voice, because it's the voice of the Son of God.

Psa 2:12=> *“Do homage to [kiss] the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How **blessed** are all who **take refuge in Him!**”*

Instead of resisting X’s voice, we can take refuge in Him.

To those who yield to Jesus by faith, He says, *“Do not fear, for I am w/ you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”* (Isa 41:10).

Although Jesus is a Lion to those who refuse His grace,
defy His will, & spit in His face w/ their
contemptuous unbelief;

He is a Lamb to those who place their trust in Him—
a Lamb who has died to save them from the
death that inevitably results from sin.

Someday they will leave this world, & go home to their Savior,
where He will welcome them w/ some warm/affectionate
words, that will bring peace/joy to their hearts, such as they
have never before experienced.

And they will say, “Those Temple guards were right.

Never has anyone spoken the way this Man speaks.”

Then on some later day, they’ll be among those who hear the
voice of the One who said, *“I am the **resurrection** & the
life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies”*
(Jn 11:25).

They personally will feel the power of that voice full-force,
as it calls them from the dead, and their bodies are
resurrected back to life in renewed form.

They, along with all the righteous.
And they will love that blessed Man, w/ His blessed voice,
as they have never loved anyone before.

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1. Our Savior spoke words long ago which we, since we have come to know Him, have embraced for our [8 own].

Jn 6:20; Mt 18:12; 11:28; Jn 19:30; 1 Jn 1:3; Jn 10:27

2. Christ has spoken and still speaks to us through His [10 Word].

In today’s text Jesus will not be seen directly, but we will see reflections of His influence on four kinds of people...

The Impressed

[John 7:45]

3. The Sanhedrin’s reaction when the officers returned without Jesus shows they felt the guards had fallen under Jesus’ spell, and that is why they had failed to [14 arrest] Him.

[Verse 46]

Mt 7:28; Lk 4:32; Mk 12:17

4. Jesus’ teaching amazed people because He taught deep, profound truth using words that were clear and [10 easy] to understand.
5. Jesus was the [14 master] teacher.

*** The Bewildered**

[Verse 47]

6. The Pharisees were bewildered with the officers knowing that they had opened their minds to [14 Jesus’] teaching.

[Verses 48-49]

7. By implication, the Pharisees were saying that, if Jesus really were the Messiah, they would have [22 recognized] Him.
8. The Pharisees accused the officers of sinking to the level of the foolish, [18 untaught] crowds.

* **The Open-minded**

[Verses 50-51]

Jn 3:10, 2

9. Nicodemus is a wonderful example of a man who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus slowly, on God's schedule, after always having been wonderfully [10 open] to the truth.

Deut 1:16-17; Jn 7:47; 7:32; 5:18

* **The Mad**

[Verse 52]

10. These religious leaders had been bewildered and frustrated by their inability to have Jesus arrested, and now they felt that one of their own had [14 turned] on them.

11. When people know that what they are doing directly opposes God's will, but they continue to do it, practical [16 madness] is the result.

Jms 4:17

12. When we knowingly defy God's will, we are stepping into very dangerous territory that will finally swallow and [16 destroy] us.

Mt 25:41; Psa 2:12; Isa 41:10

13. Although Jesus is a Lion to those who refuse His grace, He is a Lamb to those who place their [12 trust] in Him.

Jn 11:25

14. They will feel the power of that Voice full-force as their bodies are resurrected back to life in [16 renewed] form.