

March 15, 2020

Tackling Touchy Topics - Jesus is the Key

Some people use this as an air filter; you set it on your end table and let it collect dust. Some people use it as a diet book. Some people use it as a step ladder to climb their way up to God. Some people use it as a high horse from which to look down on other people. Some use it like a life preserver or fire blanket; you tuck it away just in case. Well, it is none of those things.

No, this, my friends, is a God-gun, a God-gun for tackling touchy topics. You see someone sinning. You hear someone on the wrong side of a touchy topic. Lock and load. Ready. Aim. Fire. “Thou shalt. Thou shalt not. Do this. Don’t do that.” “Hear me and behave! Hear this and be judged!” But what’s wrong with this as a God-gun? Sometimes it back-fires and hits us. Sometimes it makes a lot of noise and smoke and doesn’t seem to do anything. It doesn’t do what we want; it doesn’t make people behave like we want. Sometimes when we shoot this off, it just makes people angry.

So this is not an air filter, a diet book, a step ladder or a high horse, a life preserver or a God-gun for touchy topics. So what is this? For some people this is a book of touchy topics - a for abortion, b for birth control, c for creation (or is it cc for close communion?), d for demons, e for election (not just the presidential election, but a far more important election, your election - God choosing you to be his), g for God or g for gender (both can be touchy topics), h for hell, I for immigration We want to skip ahead, don’t we? S for sex and sexuality, y for “Why, God? Why? Why? Why?” Yes, this [Bible] speaks to all those touchy topics. Not just the thoughts of a bunch of grumpy, old, dead men, but this book speaks God’s Word, God’s Truth. So what do we do? We thank God for his Word, and we search God’s Word to know God’s right and wrong, to know God’s wisdom and ways. Why? Not just so we can be blessed with God’s wisdom and ways, but so we can bless others with God’s wisdom and ways.

But sometimes we get stuck on this as a book of touchy topics. We get stuck arguing with ourselves. We get stuck arguing touchy topics with other people. And we miss out on the key to this [Bible]. We miss out on its power and promise and purpose. And missing out on the key to this [Bible],

we miss out on the key to life and all its touchy topics.

So what is this about? A month ago we were at the beginning. Adam and Eve in God's perfect world, until Satan stepped in and turned Adam and Eve against God. But God didn't give up on us. God stepped in to win Adam and Eve back to him. He stepped in to win us back to him with Jesus. Today, we heard the end. In between we hear a back and forth battle between good and evil, a back and forth struggle as God calls his people to turn back from evil to turn back to him. In the back and forth it can be easy to get lost, to get confused and distracted. So in the end, what do we see? On the one hand, we see so many in this world set against God, determined to live life their way instead of God's way. We see them set against God and sent to the fires. On the other hand, we see Jesus and his bride, Jesus and his church celebrating life and love together forever! God and his people forever together with "no more death or mourning or crying or pain." Sounds good, doesn't it?

What will be the key? Jesus Christ. **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Whoever does not believe will be condemned."** Whoever believes in Jesus, God applies to them, to you, the work, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through faith in Jesus, God forgives the times you sided with the world against God. Through faith in Jesus, God gives you the life of Jesus, always living God's life God's way. Through faith in Jesus, God sees you siding with him, right with him. And he works in you the power of Jesus' resurrection to live the life God has for you.

What does that mean for us? In times like we're living right now ... With Jesus, we get to face the world - **"in all things God works for the good of those who love him!"** With Jesus, we get to face the world - **"If God is for us who can be against us!"** With Jesus, we get to face the world: **"There is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus."** Yes, with Jesus, we're ready for "come what may." And the key to all that is Jesus - being connected to Jesus through faith in Jesus.

What does that mean for the touchy topics of the world? Some say that as long as you have Jesus, it doesn't matter what you do with the touchy topics. In other words, as long as you have Jesus, it doesn't matter how you live. Is that what Jesus says? In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes it clear - Jesus isn't taken in by pretenders, people saying nice things about him as they go off and do their own thing. Jesus himself says: **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”** Faith does more than pay lip service to Jesus. Faith does more than claim to follow the heart of Jesus. Faith embraces Jesus by embracing the Word of Jesus.

But what about the world out there? What about people struggling with the touchy topics? We can't expect them to embrace the Word of Jesus without knowing Jesus. We can't expect them to see things the way we do ... we can't expect people to see things the way Jesus does, until and unless they first see Jesus as Lord and Savior. Oh, we can talk and talk about the touchy topics, we can argue and debate, we can use our best logic, we can use the Bible's best logic. We might even score some points. But unless and until we point to Jesus we can't win and we won't win a thing. That's doesn't mean we hide the touchy topics. It does mean this - we show off Jesus, because from beginning to end, in life and in death, today and forever - Jesus is the key. Amen.