

Honour and Wisdom

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing up for what is right, even when it's difficult or unpopular, and seeking wisdom from God to make decisions with honor.

Duration: 31:18

Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:30, Matthew 15:8, Acts 5:29, Acts 17:7, Revelation 2:13, Revelation 3:14

Topics: "Honour"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not compromising one's faith in Jesus. He encourages the audience to consider what is in it for them, how people will respond, and what it will cost to stand for their beliefs. The preacher references Matthew 15 and 1 Samuel 2:30 to highlight the need to honor God with both lips and heart. He shares a powerful testimony from a young man named Harrison, who spoke about the challenges of being a Christian in a secular high school. Overall, the sermon urges listeners to build the character of honor and to prioritize honoring God above all else.

Transcript

I bid you good morning. Last Sunday we had an ice storm and we didn't know whether to cancel this service or not, but we didn't have time to do anything and amazingly a number of you came out. We had already planned for Pastor David to give testimony as to this day and pray that we can actually pray over him as he begins his new job today at the Bowery mission.

But out of it came spontaneous witness and testimony. People just simply had to rise to the moment and give witness and none was more powerful I think outside of David and everybody else than Harrison. I believe is here today.

Would you raise your hand young man? Thank you so much. Who testified of what it's like to be in high school, a secular high school and bear the name of Jesus and the suffering he's going through. Now, I didn't give the message that day but this message is what I was going to say.

He stole it from me and he's going, you're gonna find out if you're here, he did a far better job than I'm about to do. I'm simply going to give some biblical foundation to what Harrison, that young man, testified to us. Why is that? Well, you've just heard our Lord say Matthew 15 8, are you a people that honor me with your lips and your heart is far from me? Do you honor me with your lips? Is your heart far from me? Or are we a 1st Samuel 2 30 people that wonderful passage where he says those who honor me I will honor.

Those who honor me says the Lord. Those who honor me I will honor. Now, it's easier said than done because it costs something to stand in a culture and honor the Lord first.

If we pray together, Lord, build the character of honor in me. Build the character, your honor, that I might live to your honor. Almost every single time in every single situation, we're going to evaluate what that means.

And we generally have three criteria. I'll give you those criteria. They come from the Bible.

They're simplistic. Some of you may think me too simple to say it. I'll say it very simply.

First criteria is what's in it for me? The second one, how will my peers respond to it if I do something? That breaks what's going on. Number three, what's it going to cost? What's in it for me? How will people respond? What's it going to cost? This is exactly what we see in the context of John 12 42 and 43 where many of the Jews believed in Jesus. They believed in Jesus, but they were unwilling to confess Jesus.

Because if they confessed Jesus publicly, they'd be thrown out of the synagogue. Which was the highest place of status in a community. They'd be thrown out if they confessed him.

They believed upon him. They would not confess him because it would cost something. And the gospel writer simply says they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

It costs something. It costs something. And always the criteria that we base it on is what is in it for me? How will my people around me respond to me? What's it going to cost if I break from the crowd? And that's the testimony Harrison brought to us.

Here I am in a secular school. This is what's going on. If I stand for Jesus, I shall be mocked and ridiculed.

And yet I choose the cost. And for those of us who were here last week, we heard the pain he was suffering. And we got a chance to come around him and to pray for him.

But my friends, what he talked about is what everybody goes through. And especially as this culture continues to turn darker and darker. Are you with me? We've been taking some glimpses out of the book of Esther.

Have I ever told you how much I love the book of Esther? You see what happens in every situation is it requires humility, obedience, and wisdom. To know what to do, when to do, and how to do what the Lord is calling us to do to honor him. If only the first two chapters of Esther... Let me just give some biblical rooting for this.

If only the first two chapters of Esther were the entire story. These two exiled Jews, Mordecai, who is acting as father to the orphaned Esther, Hadassah. They are marginalized, exiled.

They're Jews. She's orphaned. And what you see by the end of chapter 2 is that the Lord has taken the humble and exalted them.

She is made queen of Persia. Mordecai, we learn, is a descendant of Kish, meaning he comes out of the royal line of King Saul. He's got royalty in his blood from King Saul.

And he's at the king's gate. Which means, as you see in the scriptures, as you see it in Boaz, and in Job, and in Lot, and in others, when you're at the king's gate, when you're at the city gate, you're in the government. You're part of the legal story of how the government is run.

And so he's got a government position. Queen Esther and Mordecai have got position in a strange and foreign land. If only the book ended there happily ever after.

Great story. But in chapter 2, we begin to find that Mordecai is willing to stand for the truth always. He hears rumor of an assassination plot against the king.

And he weighs the criteria of what to do. And he knows the thing to do is to honor the king and do what's right. And he testifies.

He testifies of the assassination plot. They find it to be true. And the two who are going to commit, their names are actually named.

They're found out and they're discovered. And justice comes to them. Nothing happens to Mordecai.

He is not recognized for this, at least not yet in the story. But what you do find is that this man has got honor in his soul, in his character. And then chapter 3 begins and we see the drum roll of great storytelling.

This man Haman becomes the prime minister. That's the way that I would use the language. He becomes second in command.

The king elevates him. In the Septuagint version of the Bible, it actually says the king glorifies him. In another version, it says the king made Haman great.

He's exalted. He has authority like no other. He's second unto the king.

But the second thing that happens is the king sends out an edict that whenever you behold Haman, you shall bow down and pay homage. And so Haman comes out in all his royalty. And everybody bows down.

And Mordecai is faced with a decision. He needs wisdom. What does he do now? What does he do? If he wants to keep his position in the government, what does he do? He's got to weigh this situation.

And that's how chapter 3 begins. What's he going to do? Because it does say in Bible many times there is nothing wrong with paying homage and respect. I grew up with this.

When an adult entered the room, we stood as kids. Yes, I am that old. This is true.

No, if an adult came in, we stood out of respect. In many cultures, you find this. When you honor the elderly, when you honor those with position, you bear honor to the person.

Some government positions, for example, in England, they're called honorable sir, honorable madam. It's part of what you do. You pay respect.

And many times you'll find in the writing of Old Testament, there is a bowing of respect. Absolutely. Is that what this is? That's what Mordecai had to weigh.

Because what Mordecai finds out is that this is not an act of respect. For Mordecai, in his discerning processes, he comes to the understanding that he's going to bow down to him. It is an act of worship.

And the Scriptures are clear and God is clear. No one is to be worshipped but the Lord himself. When do you move against the king's edict? Because the king's edict overrules the king's edict.

Did you follow me? How do we with honor disagree? How do we with honor disobey? How do you do that? Do you know the cost that Mordecai would pay if he doesn't do this? Would he lose his position? What would happen if he doesn't bow down and worship? And that's the choice that Mordecai faces. You'll find it in the Bible many, many times. When it comes to your mind, think about it.

Don't you love the story in the book of Exodus where the king orders the midwives to kill the babies of the Jews to eradicate the males? We actually know their names, Shipra and Pua. The Bible tells us their names. When do you disobey the king's edict? And it says right in Exodus chapter 1 that they feared God and disobeyed the king.

When do you do that? When does your conscience prick you so deep that in the culture that you're in, you cannot do what's being told for you to do? Are you ready to pay the cost? That's the question that Harrison brought to us last week, isn't it? This was the message I was supposed to preach last week until he came. He and the ice. It's the same story though that underneath it, we are given that choice.

You'll find this in Daniel twice. Once in Daniel chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. What's their story? If you do not bow to the image of the king, you are thrown in the fiery furnace.

That's the story. And these three men would not bow in worship. They cannot because you cannot compromise the honor that we are called to live in this life to bring glory to God.

When does that decision come? And that wonderful testimony, isn't it? Of the Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego. Fine, cast us into the fire. We still cannot worship.

We have another king that we worship. Later on, you'll find in Daniel 6, it's the same story. They make an edict.

The king puts out an edict that you will worship him. And anybody who doesn't will be thrown into the lion's den. And Daniel cannot do this.

There are times and records in Old Testament where we find this story to be true. Naaman the Syrian is a great example. He finds that God is, in fact, the God of Israel is the only God to be worshipped.

He goes over to Elisha and says to Elisha, I need wisdom. 2 Kings 5. I need wisdom. What kind of wisdom? Well, my master, I have to walk my master into the God of such and such and bow to that God, but my heart won't.

What do I do in a situation like that? What's the story? How if my boss is making me do this, do I do this or don't I do this? How do I do it? He needs wisdom. Does that make sense? Have I lost you? When do you disagree with honor? When do you disobey with honor? How does this thing work? How is it played out? For Mordecai, Mordecai knew he couldn't bow. And so what happened, you'll find in this chapter of Esther, chapter 3, what you're going to find is that they begin to investigate him.

They begin to ask him all kinds of questions as to why he is not going to bow down and pay homage. The king's servants, verse 3 says, the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, why do you transgress the king's command? And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to

them, they told Haman in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand. For Mordecai had told them he was a Jew.

He told them. He revealed the secret. He was a Jew.

He's under another king and that king will not allow him to obey this earthly king. Are you willing to pay the cost when that happens? That's the questions at hand. And for Mordecai, it would mean his position.

If anybody found out he was related to the queen, it could be harmful to her. Did he know what this was going to cost by not doing this? Did he understand the ramifications? But at some point, the conscience pricks and you've got to do the right thing. I serve a king.

I must honor him. And with all humility, I cannot obey you. I can't follow you.

I can't do what you're asking me to do. How does that work? How does it work when that happens? We heard the testimony of Harrison last week that the mocking, the ridicule, the shame, the hurt, being isolated, being marginalized. Do you know what it's like to date in this culture as a Christian? And the pressures, let me say it as kindly as I can with the ears that are here, to have relations.

The pressure. It's on if you do and it's off if you don't. And you will and you must.

What does it mean to be a young person trying to date in a culture that we're living in, in college in their 20s? The pressures today. Are you going to stand for the Lord? In high school, they're now actually giving, is it silver rings? Somebody can throw silver rings upon. I'm going to declare myself that I'm going to honor the Lord with my body and my heart and my soul.

I'm going to do what's right. Do you know what it costs to do what's right? And yet, every one of us is facing these things today. And it's happening in the marketplace more and more and more when we're in these corporate, secular businesses where our teams and our bosses are doing things that are dishonest.

Dishonest. They say one thing in the board meeting, but they do another. They say it's in the board meetings and the team leaders' meetings, but they're doing something else.

They're being dishonest. They're lying. And you're part of it.

What are you going to do? Do you comply? Yes, but I've got to have a job. If I don't comply, I'll lose my job. I've got a mortgage.

What do I do? What do I do when it's dishonest? What do I do when it's illegal? When money's not being put on the books but it's going under the table, what do you do then? Do you stand? Don't you stand? How do you know? We need wisdom by the Spirit of God to face the culture as Christians we are today. What do you do when it's immoral? When you're watching those in power harassing people who don't have power? When injustice is happening? When people are being treated unfairly and unjustly with pay and with words and with comments? What do you do when in the evening you're supposed to go out and curse like they curse and drink like they drink and do what they do? Because you've got to keep your job. This is not an easy story.

When Harrison was sharing with us in high school, we're all facing this. All of us are facing this. I was one of the ringleaders.

As a Barnum, I should have been. In sixth grade, the key when the teacher left was to take the big pen and take the inside out. Best pea shooter ever.

And guess who led the pea shooting world? I was good. And if you didn't pea shoot, we mocked you. Are you going to do what your teacher wants you to do? Those were my old days.

Those things have well past. See, underneath it, the pressures are from the earliest times because all of us want what's best. We want to be accepted by our peers and we don't want to pay the cost.

All of us have to look at, all of us have to face this kind of story. We have with us today Annie Lawrence. And Annie's dad is my colleague.

He is a fellow bishop in the Anglican Church, but he's also my hero. If anybody here read Never Silence, a book I put out in 2007 telling the story of our journey. Quig, her father, is a huge part of this.

By the grace of God in Roanoke, Virginia, Quig began a church, I think, in the living room. I mean, I think it started in your house. And by the early parts of 2000, he was building buildings.

There were 700 in attendance. The Lord was honoring it. And the bishop came down and the bishop said, you will comply with me.

You will sign. And this man had gone off way into heresy. And this bishop was pressing down that Quig and his leaders had to comply.

Had to comply with money and had to write actual statements that conformed to this bishop's new doctrines that were out there that were crazy. And if they didn't comply, they would confiscate the building and throw them off what Quig called the Episcopal train. Quig came back to his leaders and he said, I'm not even doing anything.

I'm just standing here. And they're coming against us. And they're ordering me to obey the bishop.

Because when we made our ordination vows, listen to this, when we made our ordination vows, we promised to obey our bishop. But, but, that was our second promise. Our first promise was to be loyal to the doctrine and discipline and worship of our Lord Jesus Christ as it's been passed down for 2000 years.

I love the Pentecostals. You can always find the Pentecostals. Hallelujah.

They're always in the back with the Anglicans. So, the thing that was stunning to me is that we're going to obey the doctrines of Jesus. We're going to honor Jesus and we're going to come under the authority of our bishops who we believe are honoring Jesus.

But what if our bishops don't honor Jesus? Does the second promise overrule the first promise? And a movement began in September of 1997 called First Promise. We've got to obey our first promise. We don't know what else to do.

We've got to obey our first promise. And so, the bishop in Roanoke or wherever he was over Dad's church, they began to amass their legal force to confiscate the building. And there was a clause somewhere in the contract.

I don't know how it was done, but the church that was built in Roanoke that Quig was founder and pastor of had a clause that the bishop had to obey the first promise. And the bishop's lawyers couldn't touch. And they got the building when they got kicked off the Episcopal train because he said in all humility, Bishop, I'm willing to honor you, but you have to honor Jesus for me to honor you with all humility.

Quig taught us how. Quig taught us how to honor and disobey. That's a hard piece to put together.

To do it respectfully. To do it with dignity. To do it with honor for the other person.

But to say, I can't. I can't go with you. Those who honor me, I will honor.

That's the whole story in a nutshell. When you read through the Gospels, that's what you're finding. Our Lord Jesus Christ honors His Father in everything He does.

And the problem is that the Jews and the religious leaders of Jesus' day had erected new laws. A new way of interpretation. And they wanted to force Jesus into their understandings.

And He didn't fit. You want to read the Gospels? This is the Gospels. Why do you disobey our traditions? That was the Gospel reading day.

Why do you disobey our traditions? And Jesus responded back. What did He say? Well, why do you disobey the Bible? We are told to honor our fathers and mothers. That's what the Lord said.

But what you say is don't honor your mother and father, but rather give the money to us that you would have given to your parents. And you invalidate the Word of God by your tradition. Their response? They were furious.

The book of Esther? Haman's response? He was furious. Haman does what Haman does. Haman comes from a royal line also.

He's an Agagite. He comes from King Agag. King Agag of the Amalekites.

He's got royal blood in him too. And when he finds out that Mordecai is a Jew, the Amalekites have always been the enemy of the Jews. And he comes against them.

What does he do? He goes to his gods. He casts divination lots to find out what his gods want to do. He sets a date for the extermination and the genocide of all Jews in the whole province.

Haman is furious. He's going to come against Mordecai. And not just Mordecai, but Mordecai's people.

He's going to eradicate them from the entire face of the earth. He gets the king. I don't know how the king did it.

He had obviously abdicated all authority. King gives him the ring, seals a document that has a date set based on divination for the genocide of all the Jews. And the book of Esther, chapter 3, ends with the king and Haman having a feast.

Celebration and joy as the city of Shusha and the provinces around spin in confusion. And the next image you have is Mordecai ripping his clothes. I won't do this for you to save you.

Nothing worse than seeing an old man with no clothes. He rips his clothes into pieces, throws dust and sackcloth and ashes. He doesn't turn to divination.

He turns to prayer. Prayer and fasting, like all wills do in times of conflict. Prayer and fasting.

Coming before the Lord with humility. Lord have mercy upon us. What do we do? This is the story.

And it's what happened to our Lord the moment our Lord started to break down the walls of the Jews. What happened? Fury to kill him. Fury to eradicate our Lord from the face of the earth.

And what happened to his followers? Have you read the book of Acts? We charged you, Peter and John, not to preach in that name. What did Peter and John say? We must obey God. Did we not charge you in Acts 5? Did we not charge you not to preach in the name of Jesus? Whether you charged us or not, sir, we must obey God.

And with that, they were flogged. By Acts 17, they are charged, the Christians are actually charged, sir, they do not worship Caesar. They have another king they call Jesus.

By the time you get to the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3, the church in the middle of a dark culture, there are compromises happening. Christians are bowing down to idols, sacrificing to idols, eating the food sacrificed to idols, because if they don't, it will cost them their jobs. Many of you have read Revelation.

I know that. And many of you have question marks over the book of Revelation. I know that.

I won't solve them for you. Not here, not now. But some of you know the story.

In Revelation 13, the kingdom of darkness rises up. And the same image you got in the Bible now stretches into that period when evil reigns. There is an image set up.

And those who worship the image are given the mark of the beast. You know this, right? 666. You know that story.

And if you do have the mark, you can buy or sell. You are free to make money in the culture. If you don't, you are marginalized, isolated, and slain.

It costs something to be a Christian. Oh, I'm sure this isn't a great message for you, and I'm sorry. Except this is the story we live in.

Do you know today Christians all over the face of this earth are facing that darkness right now? You've heard of the underground church? People are living, needing the wisdom of Jesus today. What do I do? How do I do this? Do I proclaim Him? Do I not proclaim Him? When do I proclaim Him? How do I proclaim Him? How do I do it with wisdom? How do I do it by the Spirit? Am I compromising Him? There are places today in the face of this earth, especially, you've heard this in the past years, in places in China and other places where missionaries today, they're doing underground churches and they're praying for the Lord to give them strength to reach out to the community and to bring people to Jesus, but knowing that they come to Jesus, that they might die if they confess Jesus. That it costs something to be a Christian.

My friends, you and I are given a great privilege, great privilege. We live in a culture where we can still mention His name, but the culture is growing darker and darker and darker and we've got choices to make

of how we do business in this culture. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

We need to know what to say, when to say, how to say. That's what we were praying for Harrison last week, but not just for Harrison, it's for all of us. How do we honor where we are and the people we are in the midst of with respect and with humility, and yet with all reverence, I must choose Jesus.

I must honor Jesus. I must do what Jesus is calling me to do. Does that make sense to you? I want to have our criteria, not the what's in it for me, how will my peers understand it, will I lose my job, what's it going to cost me? I want it to be this, Lord, in this situation, I need to know how to honor you.

Friends, if you're in that position, grab people around you, people to pray with you. That's the first application point. Please don't go alone.

Please don't be arrogant in this. Have people around you. That was the joy of last Sunday, was it not? That we could come around Harrison, that we could pray with him.

We need it together. We need to be together in this. Am I not right? And the next piece is that we need the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

What to do, when to do, how to do, what to actually... sometimes there's battles and sometimes there are wars. Maybe not fight this battle, maybe fight this war. How do you know the difference? When do you know the difference? Well, I can say only this.

Please, my dear friends, let's not compromise our Lord. No matter where we are, no matter what we're doing, don't compromise Jesus. Am I right about that? Don't compromise Him.

We need to be together on this. Don't compromise Him. No money under the table.

No dishonesty. No illegality. Say that three times.

Illegality. No immoralities. No things that are unjust.

We need to learn when to stand, how to stand, and let the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, teach us to do it with humility and respect and not in arrogance and self-defiance. Oh, my goodness. Harrison preached this message last week.

I've simply repeated it to you. He's going through it. Are you? He's going through it in high school.

Are you? Are there places that you need to say, Jesus Lord, I've been embarrassed to mention your name in front of such and such and such a people because I don't want to be out of their approvals? Are you dishonoring Him in any place of your life? Then please repent of it, come to grips with it, gather people around you, and let us ask the Holy Spirit of God to give us courage. Hallelujah.

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