

“Holding it Between the Ditches”
Wednesday, October 21, 2020

- * My granddad would allow me to drive a Volkswagen Beetle through the fields between our houses when I was young. He would often say “hold it between the ditches” as I was driving because I would look down to see what gear I was in and would “run off the path”!

- * This is what I believe many in The Church are doing today in a politically charge society!!! We need to “hold it between the ditches”!

- * Let’s take a “journey of thought” for a few minutes!

Matthew 3 (TPT)

1 It was at this time that John the Baptizer began to preach in the desert of Judah. His message was this: 2 “The realm of heaven’s kingdom is about to appear—so you’d better keep turning away from evil and turn back to God!” 3 Isaiah was referring to John when he prophesied: A thunderous voice! One will be crying out in the wilderness, “Prepare yourself for the Lord’s coming and level a straight path inside your hearts for him.” 4 Now, John wore clothing made from camel’s hair, tied at his waist with a leather strap, and his food consisted of dried locusts and wild honey. 5 A steady stream of people from Jerusalem, all the surrounding countryside, and the region near the Jordan came out to the wilderness to be baptized by him. 6 And while they were publicly confessing their sins, he would immerse them in the Jordan River. 7 But when he saw many coming from among the wealthy elite of Jewish society and many of the religious leaders known as Pharisees coming to witness the baptism, he began to denounce them, saying, “You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to slither away like snakes from the fire of God’s judgment? 8 You must prove your repentance by a changed life. 9 And don’t presume you can get away with merely saying to yourselves, ‘But we’re Abraham’s descendants!’ For I tell you, God can awaken these stones to become sons of Abraham! 10 The axe is now ready to cut down the trees at

their very roots. Every fruitless, rotten tree will be chopped down and thrown into the fire. 11 Those who repent I baptize with water, but there is coming a Man after me who is more powerful than I am. In fact, I'm not even worthy enough to pick up his sandals. He will submerge you into union with the Spirit of Holiness and with a raging fire! 12 He comes with a winnowing fork in his hands and comes to his threshing floor to sift what is worthless from what is pure. And he is ready to sweep out his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his granary, but the straw he will burn up with a fire that can't be extinguished!" 13 Then Jesus left Galilee to come to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But when he waded into the water, John resisted him, saying, "Why are you doing this? I'm the one who needs to be baptized by you, and yet you come to be baptized by me?" 15 Jesus replied, "It is only right to do all that God requires." Then John baptized Jesus. 16 And as Jesus rose up out of the water, the heavenly realm opened up over him and he saw the Holy Spirit descend out of the heavens and rest upon him in the form of a dove. 17 Then suddenly the voice of the Father shouted from the sky, saying, "This is the Son I love, and my greatest delight is in him."

- I. It has always bothered me that John recognized Jesus when the Pharisees and teachers of the Law did not! WHY?
 - A. I believe a quick look and understanding of "who John was" will give us a hint!
 1. It is believed that John was an Essene.
 2. Essenes were a group of people who lived in the desert.
 3. They dedicated their lives to God, praying long hours during the day and studying scripture.
 4. The central part of their belief was purity and included "baptism of repentance" which was a ritual washing as someone renounced a life of sin!

B. In other words, for our thoughts tonight, it seemed that John recognized Jesus the Son of God, because he was FOCUSED ON LOOKING FOR HIM!

1. What are we “focused on?”
2. What do we spend “hours in the day” focused on?
3. This is what I want to stress tonight!

II. The Pharisees had allowed their religious convictions and the very true and legitimate teaching of their faith to be turned into a social and political system of power!

A. This disallowed them from recognizing The Son of God!

1. Remember the Essenes focused on prayer and scripture and good works!
2. How does this apply to us? You consider that!

B. Let’s not allow our current environment to “knock us off course” from being “Salt and Light” to the world!

1. A.W. Tozer said this in the 1940”s:

One thing must be kept in mind: We Christians are Christians first and everything else after that. Our first allegiance is to the kingdom of God. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are grateful for political freedom. We thank God for democracy as a way of life. But we never forget that we are sons of God and citizens of another city whose builder and maker is God. For this reason, we must not identify the gospel with any political system or make Christianity to be synonymous with any form of government, however noble. Christ stands alone, above and outside of every ideology

devised by man. He does not join any of our parties or take sides with any of our great men except as they may come over on His side and try to follow Him in righteousness and true holiness. Then He is for them but only as individuals, never as leaders of some political faction. The true Christian will be loyal to his country and obedient to those in authority, but he will never fall into the error of confusing his own national culture with Christianity. Christianity is bigger than any country, loftier than any civilization, broader than any human ideology.

2. We MUST keep this focus if we want to reach the world for Christ!
3. Do you “see the Son of God” or do you see a particular political party? Do you see a partisan argument or do you see the Kingdom of God?

C. John Wesley said this in 1774:

“I met with those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them: to vote, without fee or reward (freely), for the person they judged most worthy; to speak no evil of the person they voted against and; to take care their spirits were not sharpened against those who voted on the other side.”

1. If this is not our attitude we will thwart all hope of reaching those we disagree with with The Gospel!
2. Rather, we MUST focus on The Gospel and ONLY THEN WILL WE BE ABLE TO SEE WHERE JESUS IS WORKING AND MOVING in our society!