**Best Friends: Disagreement - Sept. 4th, 2022**

**SLIDE 1 - TITLE**

Today, we continue to take a look at our relationship with Jesus who tells us plainly that he is our best friend. To anchor us in the discussion, we have been reading and memorizing, John 15: 9-17. Which I would love to begin with: READ

**SLIDES 2-4 – SCRIPTURE - John 15: 9-17.**

One thing we need to discuss when it comes to any friendship, is the issue of disagreements. They are bound to happen, sometimes out of the clear blue. It could be circumstantial, a mere surface problem, it could be one or both of you are feeling under the weather or overly hungry, or just in a bad mood. Sometimes disagreements run much deeper.

**SLIDE 5 - ARGUMENT**

We need to distinguish between the two. My wife and I for example are best friends, but there is much that we disagree on. If we are taking a long drive, do we listen to music cranked up loud, or do we sit in silence so we can chat. Do we watch the action-adventure movie or the romantic comedy? Do we simplify life and stay home, or do we make elaborate plans that require lots of juggling to pull off? These are all matters of disagreement that we tend to revisit over and over again, but these are also matters of preference. Either choice is fine in the end. There is no harm done, although an argument might ensue, depending. But preferences can be massaged…they are gray areas in our lives. If I hate country music, I will not choose to listen to it, but I can easily set aside my preferences at any given time and find a happy place if need be.

What really, truly allows my marriage to my wife to work so swimmingly is not that we prefer the same things all the time, but rather we share the same worldview. We agree on the big questions. We hope and pray for the same things. We are united under the authority of God’s word, and we seek to raise our kids with the same goals. Not every marriage has such commonality and so disagreements are harder to navigate. Last week, we looked at Batman and Robin, the dynamic duo. These characters have the same worldview. There is good and evil, right and wrong. We are the good guys, and we fight against the bad guys. It’s simple and direct. But imagine if Batman and Robin held differing views of what was right and what was wrong? Their mission would be in trouble!

Fox Mulder and Dana Scully were two long-running TV characters made known to us on the X-files. They were specialized FBI agents who investigated paranormal cases. These best friends worked together for 11 seasons, but one of the notable things regarding their relationship was their divergence of worldviews. There are probably many clips that illustrate this dynamic, but the one I have picked should do. Watch and notice their difference of approach to the case they are working on. WATCH.

**SLIDE 6 – VIDEO CLIP**

**SLIDE 7 – MULDER / SCULLY**

We can see Mulder is open to supernatural explanations. He is willing to admit there are things that go on that we cannot understand. Scully is tied to science. She looks for medical or physiological reasons as to why things happen or are perceived a certain way. In the midst of this conflict, they manage to work together and remain committed to one another, but when it comes down to it, they cannot both be right. If there really is a supernatural realm, Scully’s scientific worldview is inadequate. If there are no ghosts, then Mulder is a superstitious fool. One of them is wrong.

**SLIDE 8 – PAUL and PETER**

The pages of Scripture allow us to be witnesses to one such disagreement that occurred between two giants of the faith and pillars of the early church: Paul and Peter. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul recounts this disagreement. But we must remember, both of these men have been sold out to Jesus. Both of them have dedicated their lives to the work of the gospel. We summarize their efforts by referring to Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles, which is a term that denotes anyone who is not Jewish. But Peter as the apostle to the Jews…The understanding had been that if you were born into a Jewish family, then you were a part of God’s chosen people. This goes way back to the Old Testament when God makes promises to Abraham and to Abraham’s family…Now if you were born into a Jewish family, then you were certainly circumcised because that was the rule! Circumcision was a physical sign of the covenant God had made with Abraham; it was proof that you were a part of God’s chosen people. So, if you were a Gentile, you were out of luck…your were born into the wrong family and you could not be a child of Abraham or a part of his chosen family. So that is the background we need to understand in broad strokes. Now we jump to the New Testament. And after Jesus is crucified and rises again from the dead he ascends into heaven and then what? We get the book of Acts! Its longer title is usually the “Acts of the Apostles” but if it were up to me, I would have called it the Acts of the Holy Spirit. He is everywhere in this book, and throughout Acts the Spirit is teaching and revealing and demonstrating to Jesus’s followers that salvation is not found in your genetics. That anyone, including Gentiles, can be a part of God’s chosen people. The blood that ran in your veins used to define you, but now it is the blood of Jesus that makes us who we are. So, this was a radical new way to think about how God worked and the disciples were trying to teach, Peter to the Jews and Paul to the gentiles, that physical circumcision was nothing…it’s importance died when Jesus did. What mattered now was having a heart that could love God and trust in the sacrifice that Jesus has made for us.

Okay, are you all following me? Well, the story goes that everything is going well, until some Judaizes show up…these were people still committed to circumcision and still teaching that it was mandatory. And Peter was a bit intimated by these guys. He did not want to get into debates with them and so he began to separate himself from the Gentile folks within the church. He would no longer share meals with the Gentile Christians. And as he put space between himself and these other Christians, other leaders in the church followed suit and began to follow Peter’s example. Well, Paul saw this and he would have none of it! He confronted Peter to his face, face to face mind you, not Facebook to Facebook. And he basically calls Peter a hypocrite, because he was acting in ways that went against the truth he was teaching. He was not living according to the truth of the gospel, but rather living according to the opinions of this certain group of people. Does that preach to anyone out there? Do we ever find ourselves acting and speaking at the behest of someone or some group that is not in line with our beliefs? I am sure we have all felt that pressure at one time or another.

Paul goes on to drive home his point: if circumcision still matters, then the Law is sufficient and if the Law is sufficient, then Jesus died for no purpose. Now Paul and Peter were brothers in Christ. They would have died for one another. They greatly esteemed the other. But even they had to navigate disagreement. Peter was in the wrong and Paul had to call him out on it. And the reason their relationship could withstand such a blunt confrontation is because they were both committed to the Gospel of their best friend, Jesus Christ. They wanted everyone, Jew and Gentile, to become acquainted with and find faith in Jesus. There was no room to stray to the left or the right…. the gospel was at stake! People needed Jesus! And what has changed since then? Nothing!

**SLIDE 9 - People still need Jesus**

People still need Jesus, and we still have no wiggle room when it comes to offering the gospel. The gospel is not a matter of opinion! If we cave to the pressures of other groups or teachings, then, as Paul says, Jesus died for no purpose.

Mulder and Scully often find themselves in situations where one needs to correct the other, the same is true even for Christian brothers like Peter and Paul. And as we field disagreements in the midst of our lives, we need to keep in mind this rubric

**SLIDE 10 - Is this a matter of opinion or a Gospel imperative.**

“Is this a matter of opinion or a Gospel imperative. We don’t get to determine which is which. We consult the book! We study it, we discuss it, we let it define for us what the gospel is, we let it tell us where we can compromise and where we are to stand fast…and sometimes that means disagreeing with someone else.

**SLIDE 11 – John 15:16**

Verse 16 in our home passage here, in John 15 is very important. Jesus says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” …okay, well what does that mean? What was I chosen to do? And Jesus says, “You were chosen so that you could go and produce fruit.” Have you ever been chosen by a friend? We always tell our kids to choose friends wisely, but sometimes it happens the other way around. Sometimes a friend chooses you. And once that happens, you have to decide am I going to reciprocate? Am I going to take a step towards this relationship? How invested should I be?

Well, by God’s grace, by the power of the Gospel, you have been chosen as a friend. You have been chosen for a purpose: To produce fruit, to be a disciple who makes disciples. And with this purpose, like Peter, you have to be open to correction. Best friends may disagree on matters of opinion, but when it comes to matters of the Gospel…I need Jesus to help me stay true.

Church, we live in a world of compromise. We live in a world guided by feelings. We live in a world that is constantly trying to squelch and dilute the power of the gospel story. We cannot capitulate to prevailing opinions and popular positions.

**SLIDE 12 - We don’t get to choose…we have been chosen.**

We don’t get to choose…we have been chosen. But we do need to decide if we are going to remain true. May we take correction like Peter, may we be bold like Paul, and may we find ourselves to be faithful and fruitful disciples who live in service to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.