

JUDGED ALREADY—LIFE ETERNAL ALREADY

(John 3: 14-21)

Intro: It wasn't an everyday occurrence.
-But it wasn't uncommon, either.

When I went onto the floors at the St. Louis County Jail.

-There would sometimes be clusters of staff.

#Standing around.

#Talking.

-But as soon as I came onto the floor.

#There would often be an awkward silence.

#Or a voice would say:

*Loud enough for all to hear.

+ "Hi, Rev."

+ "Reverend Dake on the floor."

= "Watch your mouths."

+ "Sorry, Rev."

= "Didn't see you there."

-Some of the staff.

#Many of whom I had known for 15-20-25 years.

#Looked very:

*Uncomfortable.

*Embarrassed.

+As though I had somehow:

=Judged them.

=Criticized them.

+But I hadn't.

=I hadn't given them a dirty look.

=I hadn't said a word.

+I didn't need to.

=They had judged themselves.

I. It Happens With Us.

A. Our Gospel Lesson Contains One Of The Most Memorable Scriptures Of All.

1. John 3:16.
2. We see it on:
 - a. Plaques.
 - b. Greeting cards.
 - c. Placards.
 - Held up behind the goal posts.
 - #At football games.
3. Most of us probably have it memorized.
 - a. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life."
 - b. It is:
 - Gospel in a nut shell.
 - Great good news.

B. But What Comes After John 3:16?

1. I asked that question.
 - a. One day.
 - b. In my Sunday morning Bible class.
2. I think it was Ron Peters who answered:
 - a. "John 3:17."
 - b. Have I got a sharp class, or what?
3. It's John 3:17-18 that I want to rub our noses in.
 - a. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."
 - b. "Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the only Son of God."
4. Greek word.
 - a. krino.
 - From which we get the English words:
 - #Crisis.
 - #Critical.
 - #Criticize.
 - b. Can mean:
 - Condemn.
 - Judge.

5. God so loved the world.
 - a. That God gave Jesus.
 - To be born in the flesh.
 - To be lifted up on the cross.
 - To be lifted up from the grave on the third day.
 - b. To save the world.
 - Not to condemn it.
 - Not to judge it.
6. But there is judgment.
 - a. So we confess.
 - Apostles' Creed.
 - Nicene Creed.
 - #Jesus will "judge the living and the dead."
 - b. But Jesus didn't come into the world.
 - To judge.
 - To condemn.
 - #Anymore than I went on those floors.
 - *At the St. Louis County Jail.
 - +To judge.
 - +To condemn.
 - c. Those jail staff.
 - Who thought their conversation.
 - #Was inappropriate in the presence of the chaplain.
 - Judged themselves.
 - d. One of the things we'll be doing at Ascension in the near future.
 - Updating our membership roster.
 - #Identifying:
 - *Inactives.
 - *Those who may be removed from the membership rolls.
 - But who makes that decision?
 - #Me?
 - #Church council?
 - #Is it one that's already been made by the people themselves?
 - *Who haven't worshipped with us in a very long time.
 - *Who haven't communed with us.
 - *Who haven't supported the ministry of this congregation.
 - e. We judge ourselves.
 - By what we say.
 - By what we do.
 - By what we believe.
 - f. Jesus' judgment at the end of time.
 - Affirmation.
 - Confirmation.
 - #Judgment we have already made for ourselves.

II. It Is A Matter Of Life And Death.

A. There Are Two Words In Greek For "Life."

1. Bios.

a. We get English words like:

-Biology.
#Study of life.

-Biography.
#Story of a life.

b. Bios.

-Natural life.
-Always ends in death.
#End of the biology.
#End of the biography.

2. Zoe.

a. Maybe you know someone by that name.

-We had a social worker at the St. Louis County Jail.
#By the name of Zoe.

b. Life that is not:

-Defined.
-Confined.
#By death.

c. Not simply a matter of the quantity of life.

-Eternal.
-Life that has no end.

d. But a matter of the quality of life.

-Life defined by:

#Faith.
#Joy.
#Love.

-Life that is not simply future.

#In heaven.
#In the next world.
#In the next life.

-But life that has already broken into the present.

#With faith.
#With joy.
#With love.

-In a sense.

#We have not only been judged already.
#We have eternal life already.

*"I have come that they may have life (zoe),"

*"And have it abundantly."

+John 10:10.

B. It's A Matter Of Love.

1. God's love.

- a. God so loved the world.
- b. That he gave his only Son.

-Why?

#Because there was a problem.

#We were the problem.

*Lucy once said to Charlie Brown:

+ "Discouraged again, eh, Charlie Brown?"

+ "You know what your whole trouble is?"

+ "The whole trouble with you is that you're you!"

*Charlie Brown said:

+ "Well, what in the world can I do about that?"

*Lucy answered:

+ "I don't pretend to be able to give advice."

+ "I merely point out the trouble!"

#Maybe we have a hard time admitting we are the problem.

*On another occasion Lucy said to Charlie Brown:

+ "You know what the whole trouble with you is,
Charlie Brown?"

*Charlie Brown answered:

+ "No, and I don't what to know."

+ "Leave me alone!"

=Charlie Brown walked away.

*Lucy shouted after him:

+ "The whole trouble with you is you won't listen
to what the whole trouble with you is!"

-People of Israel.

#Had a snake problem.

*So they put a bronze snake on a pole.

+Numbers 21:6-9.

*Symbol of the American Medical Association.

#If they had had a problem with Brazilian Wandering Spiders.

*In their manna.

*They probably would have put a bronze spider on a pole.

-Human on a pole.

#Means there is a problem with humans.

-Jesus on a cross.

#Means there is a problem with us.

2. Problem with us is one of love.

- a. It's not that we don't love.
 - According to John's gospel.
- b. It's that we love the darkness.

- Daylight Savings Time is a mixed blessing.
 - #I love the daylight at the end of the day.
 - *I can ride my bike before it gets dark.
 - #But I hate getting up in the dark.
 - *We had just gotten to the point.
 - +Where I was getting up in the light.
 - *Now I'm back to getting up in the dark.
 - +Not just on Sunday morning.
 - +But every morning.
 - *Turning the light on in the bathroom in the morning.
 - +Downright painful.
 - +Hurts my eyes.
- That's the way it is with us.
 - #Our human natures.
 - #Our sinful selves.
 - *We love the darkness.
 - *Light hurts:
 - +Our eyes.
 - +Our hearts.
 - *We don't like to see that the problem is us.

3. But God so loved:

- a. World.
- b. Us.

-Even in the darkness.

4. That God sent his Son.

- a. Light of the World.
- b. Light shines in the darkness.
 - And the darkness has never put it out.
 - #John 1:5.
 - Not even the darkness:
 - #Of our sin.
 - #Of the cross.
 - *Has put out the light.

5. So that whoever believes in him.

- a. May not perish.
- b. But may have everlasting life.

-Zoe.

- #Life of faith.
- #Life of love.
- #Life of joy.
 - *Here.
 - *Now.
 - *Already.

Concl: We have been judged already.

We have been given new life already.

-In water.

-In bread and wine.

#You can see it.

#You can taste it.

#You can believe it.

#You can live it.

