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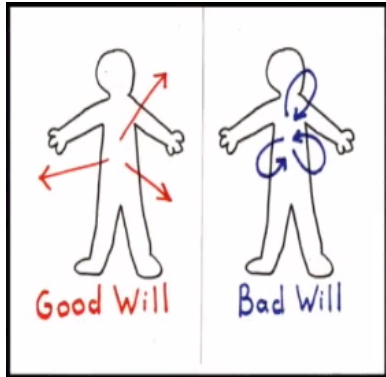
***Jesus in the Land of Ghosts II
(How He Sets Us Free)***

John 8:12-37

Peter Hiett @ The Sanctuary Downtown

September 12, 2010

As I think most of you know, we've been preaching through the Gospel of John. We took a couple of breaks in the summer, but back in June we preached through Chapter 7 ... and we realized that a "good will" is a will that wants to glorify God and others, and a "bad will" is a will that wants to glorify itself.



A bad will is a trap that traps you in yourself... for you can't want to glorify God by wanting to glorify self. You can't will a good will with a bad will. In other words, we can't simply choose to love. And that means Love in us is a miracle – Love is of God and God is Love.

In Chapter 8, God creates that miracle in a woman caught in adultery. As she is stripped of all her own glory and thrown at the feet of Jesus, He creates new life as He speaks: "Neither do I condemn you. From the now, go and sin no more."

That is His judgment.

That is Grace.

The Pharisees hate His judgment and leave His presence.

The Pharisees leave the Light.

[John 8:12]

Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I AM the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

We read that verse last week. Last week's message was really the start of this week's message – a long conversation that Jesus has with the Pharisees (verses 12-59). We could preach several sermons on each verse, but we might never finish John, and we might not get the big picture.

And last week, in order to set the stage for this message, I showed you a video of this room, taken by my friend Robert Gelinas on his cell phone.

This is the video.

[A video of a shadowy figure flying across the sanctuary is shown. You can watch the video on our website under this sermon title at about 24:00 minutes]



See? This dark shadow suddenly flies across that northeast window. I didn't concern myself too much with that, until a few days later when a new couple informed me that they had both seen this dark shadow fly across the northeast window during a worship service.

Last week, I shared how my wife Susan and I prayed through the building, and that – among other things – she heard a voice that kept going, “Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh.” We took authority over it in Jesus' name. Its name was “Secrets.”

We suspect that “Secrets” had to do with a religious authority in the distant past that abused people and bound them to secrets. After we commanded “Secrets,” and the other demonic entities that had attached themselves to the old building... after we commanded “Secrets” and lies to leave in Jesus' name ... I commanded anything else not in subjection to Jesus to reveal itself. And at that point, I believe Susan and I encountered a ghost. Her name is Elise.

Now listen. About 46% of you think I'm insane. 46% of the Baby Boomer generation think I'm nuts, according to a recent survey cited in *AARP Magazine*. However, 62% of those over 70 think I'm insane. You see, the old materialistic view of reality is fading.

Yet, when I was a child, we heard it all the time:
“Everyone knows there's no such thing as ghosts.”

But today, 38% of society thinks they may have encountered a ghost or spirit, and many more think they exist. We heard, "There's no such thing as ghosts." And yet Scripture clearly indicates that there are such things as ghosts. When Jesus came to the disciples, walking on water in the storm, the disciples freaked out and cried, "It's a *phantasma*." That's Greek for "an apparition... a ghost." Jesus doesn't say, "There's no such thing as ghosts." He says, "I AM... Have no fear."

Consultation with ghosts is strictly forbidden in Scripture, not because "There's no such thing as ghosts," but because ghosts are lost. If New Agers say they channel the ghost of an ancient buffalo hunter, the problem is not that the ghost doesn't exist ... the problem is that it's lost, and you shouldn't ask the lost for directions. Unless, perhaps, you're trying to hunt buffalo several hundred years ago. Even then, don't ask "the lost" ... ask "The Way", Who is "The Truth and the Life."

In 1 Samuel 28, King Saul has turned from God, and now God is silent when Saul asks for direction. And so, in fear, Saul goes to a necromancer, the witch of Endor. She attempts to contact Samuel the prophet in the grave ... Sheol. Amazingly, she does. But when she does, she screams, for Samuel doesn't look like a ghost, but a god "coming up from the earth."

Samuel says to Saul, "Why are you bothering me? Tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me." And the next day, Saul and his sons are killed in battle. According to Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:20, "All go to the same place: the dust." That is, Sheol ... Hades ... what old versions used to translate as "Hell." All go to the same place, or used to ... until the Son of Man was lifted up on a tree, and the tombs were opened (Matthew 27).

Well, please believe what you want about my weird experiences. I'm just saying that it may be worth asking:

1. What is a ghost?
2. How does one become a ghost?
3. Is there any sort of cure?

Whatever the case, I don't think we can really get John 8 without a ghost story, and this will become even more evident next week. But John 8 is a ghost story ... or an *anti-ghost* story. Jesus says, "I AM the Light of the world ... Follow and live."

[verse 13]

So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me."

Jesus is the Judge who judges by not judging. In other words, Jesus doesn't judge. Yet, He Himself is the Judgment. He is "the Light," and He's already told us the Light is Judgment.

John 3:19 – *"This is the Judgment: the Light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

Ghosts hate the light. That is, they hate the Judgment of God.

"In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Jesus is the treasure in the temple, and we are His temple.

Jesus is the fire, the light, the truth in the temple.

Truth in us is called honesty.

So, when we are dishonest, we reject the Truth and turn off the Light.

Rejecting the Truth is rejecting Jesus, which is rejecting God's Judgment.

It is sin.

So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

They believed a [person who committed] suicide trapped himself or herself in condemnation, and I think they were right. Ironical. They thought Jesus was descending to Hades by means of suicide.

He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM he (The He is supplied by the translator), you will die in your sins." So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.

"Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins."

Sin is a lie and Jesus is the Truth.

"Unless you believe the Truth you will die in that lie."

Perhaps to die in that lie is to be trapped in that lie. It is to become a ghost.

Last week, we preached that if you listen to lies and speak lies, you begin to become a lie – that is, an apparition, an "appearance" ... in Greek, a "*phantasma*"... a ghost. All sin is believing a lie, but the worst sin is lying about the lie.

Just like the adulterous woman, these adulterous Pharisees sinned ... but unlike the adulterous woman, they would not admit their sin. They were hypocrites – "*hupocritos*" in Greek ... literally, "actors." To die in their sin was to become their act – an appearance, a phantom ... to be stuck as a white-washed tomb.

Matthew 23 – Jesus says, “You Pharisees travel land and sea to make one convert ... and you make him twice a child of hell.” When we preach a religion of human effort, we teach people to be actors. We teach people to hide their shame in secret and become a ghost.

You know, I don’t want my kids to sin. I don’t want them to skip class, get drunk, watch porn, or sleep around or get abortions ... because it hurts them, hurts God, and hurts me. Yet I can forgive all of that, and God has forgiven all of that. But what terrifies me, far more than all of that, is a lie to me about any of that. And it really doesn’t matter what they lie about – nothing is worse than the lie; for the lie cuts them off from me.

I’d rather that they not get dirty at all, but we can deal with the dirt.
Yet if they hide the dirt, they hide themselves, and I lose them, and they lose me.
And you see, they themselves are my treasure, and I myself want to be theirs.

Do you remember the first thing that God said after Adam and Eve sinned?
It wasn’t, “Why did you sin?”
It was, “Where are you? Where are you?”
You see? He wants You ... like I want my kids.

And where were Adam and Eve? They were lost, hiding in a lie. They were hiding their bad judgment from God’s good judgment. They were hiding their shame in fig leaves and hiding their sin in secrets and lies. They were Pharisees turning themselves into ghosts – an apparition, an act.

Someone wrote, “The chief punishment of the liar is not so much that he is not believed, but that he can no longer believe.” If you can no longer believe, you are alone in outer darkness. If you reject the truth, you can no longer believe in truth – no longer see, hear, or believe truth. You are alone in outer darkness, trapped in your own bad judgment.

Years ago, on my day off, in the Pep Boys parking lot on Wadsworth, I got mad at Elizabeth for some bad judgment. I still can’t remember what. We were walking across the parking lot, and I was issuing my judgment, “Elizabeth, be nice to your sister...”

I turned around and saw this:

5-year-old Elizabeth with her fingers in her ears... her eyes frantically glancing away from mine, as she sang loudly to herself, *“It’s a small world after all; it’s a small world after all; it’s a small world after all; it’s a small, small world!”*

I hate that song. And it actually terrified me that she’d sing it. She was hiding her judgment from my judgment. If she kept it up long enough, she’d become a ghost to me, and that small world would become hell for her. For not only would she no longer hear me say, “Elizabeth, be nice,” she would no longer hear me say, “Elizabeth, I love you. And I will never stop loving you. I will gladly die for you, Elizabeth.”

Years ago, I took Susan away for a romantic evening in Breckenridge. We went to a very nice restaurant in a very old building. All evening, Susan kept hearing crying, which really bothered me, because I was hoping for some whoopee later in the evening. At one point, Susan excused herself to go to the restroom. She came back visibly shaken.

Now, I'm not asking you to believe this, and Susan worries she'll look like a freak. But my wife has a gift... a gift that sometimes feels like a curse. In the restroom, she encountered a young woman, dressed in clothes from another time. The woman was inconsolable. She wouldn't stop crying, "Where's my baby? Where's my baby? Where's my baby?" Finally, Susan said, "Ask Jesus. Go to Jesus. He has your baby." But it was like the woman couldn't hear, as her eyes frantically glanced about, looking for her baby.

It was like she had her fingers in her ears.

She was trapped in a lie.

And this was the lie: She had to save her baby... which meant, she had to save herself... which meant that she was the savior, and she could not hear "God is Savior ... the name *Jesus*."

She couldn't hear God's judgment, for she was trapped in her own judgment.

We asked the waiter, "What did this building use to be?" And he told us, "This was the Breckenridge town brothel." Susan told me, "Peter, I think she was a prostitute who had a baby, and the baby died, and she took her own life." She was a ghost.

Well, you certainly don't have to become a prostitute or kill your baby or murder yourself to become a ghost. All you have to do is believe a lie.

And this is the lie: "God is not good. So you must judge, and you must save yourself, and your world."

One other time, years ago, Susan encountered a ghost at the Stanley Hotel. She was a little old lady looking for her husband Herman. And Susan said, "Go to Jesus." But she couldn't hear it. She was lost in the lie that she had to save Herman, or Herman had to save her.

But...

She needed to lose Herman in order to find Herman;

She needed to lose her life in order to find it;

She needed to die to her lie to live in the Truth...

Die to her small world to live in God's world.

This week, for the 3rd time, I re-read one of my favorite books: "The Great Divorce," by C.S. Lewis. It's fiction, but profoundly Biblical. It's about a group of ghosts that take a bus ride from Hades to the edge of Heaven, where the solid citizens of God's Kingdom meet them.

In a Biblical cosmology, the heavens above are most solid, for they are filled with light and the glory of God, whereas the earth beneath is empty of light and filled with the absence of life – filled with nothingness; that is, death, darkness, and lies.

Well, the ghosts on the bus came from all walks of life. There's an artist, a theologian, a mother, and various others, each vastly different and yet all believe the same lie – the lie that they are their own judge, so their judgment is supreme.

The artist would rather paint the light than see the light.

The theologian would rather read a paper about God than know God.

The mother thinks she must save her son, and so wants to keep him from the Savior. Each of them wills their own glory and so creates an apparition... an apparition that is a lie, in which they're trapped ... terrified of the Light ... the Truth ... Grace.

One of the ghosts is a well-dressed woman, terrified of how she appears in the presence of the solid people. So, like the others, she longs to go back to hell. She longs for darkness, terrified of how she appears in the light. She whines to the solid spirit who begs her to stay:

"I'd have never come at all if I'd known you were all going to be dressed like that."

"Friend, you see I'm not dressed at all," answered the solid one.

"I didn't mean that. Do go away," replies the ghost. "How can I go out like this among a lot of people with real solid bodies? It's far worse than going out with nothing on would have been on earth. Have everyone staring *through* me."

"Oh, I see," says the citizen of Heaven. "But we were all a bit ghostly when we first arrived, you know. That'll wear off. Just come out and try."

"But they'll see me."

"What does it matter if they do?" asks the shining one.

"I'd rather die."

"But you've died already. There's no good trying to back to that."

The ghost made a sound something between a sob and a snarl, "I wish I'd never been born," it said. "What are we born for?"

"For infinite happiness," said the Spirit. "You can step out into it at any moment ..."

"But I tell you, they'll see me."

"An hour hence and you will not care. A day hence and you will laugh at it. Don't you remember on earth there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it – if you will drink the cup to the bottom – you will find it very nourishing; but try to do anything else with it and it scalds."

"You really mean? ..." said the ghost, and then paused.

Suddenly the ghost cried out: "No, I can't. I tell you I can't. For a moment, while you were talking, I almost thought ... but when it comes to the point ... You've no right to ask me to do a thing like that. It's disgusting. I should never forgive myself if I did. Never, never. And it's not fair. They ought to have warned us. I'd never have come. And no – please, please go away!"

"Friend," said the spirit. "Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not yourself?"

A ghost is a mind stuck on itself ... a will that seeks its own glory ... the creation of our bad judgment – the judgment that each is his own judge and creator.

The angel pleads with the ghost: "Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not yourself?" Then suddenly there is a glorious and terrible stampede of giant unicorns. It's meant to get the ghost's mind – for at least a moment – fixed on something other than herself.

We are – or have been – ghosts. But God has given us far more than a stampede of unicorns. He's given us a terrifying and glorious revelation of unspeakable beauty. When you see it, it will change you.

[verse 28]

So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM."

"The Son of Man lifted up."

"Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is the revelation of the Glory of God, and the Light of the world. Some will run in terror at first, yet in chapter 12, verse 32, Jesus says, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself."

"Jesus Christ and Him crucified" IS the judgment of this world.

"Then you will know that IAM, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

John 3:36 – "Whoever believes in Him has eternal life – like a seed begotten from above."

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

(You see? Our will is in bondage to sin.)

"The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you."

Now this is confusing, 'cause John just said that these are the Jews who "believed in Him."
It's like they believe and don't believe... like they're two people:

A new man, and an old man.

A new man, born of God, but trapped in a ghost.
True self buried in a false self.
A good will trapped in a bad will.
A seed of faith planted in a ghost.

If I were honest, I think that's where most of us find ourselves:
We've had moments when we truly forget ourselves...
Believed grace, wanted the glory of God...
Moments we worshipped in freedom.

We were saved by Grace, but then we try to sanctify ourselves with ourselves.

So...

We've had moments, but most moments we are acting. I mean, we're really seeking our own glory by trying to seek God's glory. That is, we love because we "should," and not because we want to. So we don't love. We use love to glorify ourselves. In those moments, we create the ghost. The ghost is an apparition. The ghost is my false self, created with my bad will. The ghost is a lie.

Jesus tells these Pharisees that their father is the Father of Lies.

His lie is this:

"God is not good. So you must judge yourself and save yourself. You must create yourself."
But that self is an apparition – a ghost.

Well ... how do we give up the ghost, and live free?

By simply choosing to live free? Willing to live free? Trying to live free?
By acting free when our hearts aren't free?
That's the ghost.
Satan is the father of ghosts.

Jesus said, "Abide in my word and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
A law won't set you free.
A program won't set you free.
Your judgment won't set you free.
Your judgment is what you need to be freed *from*.

"The Truth will set you free."

Jesus is the Truth, and the Truth is the light, and the light is the glory and the glory is revealed when Jesus is lifted on the cross.

The glory is Grace.
God's judgment is Grace.
God's judgment frees you from your judgment.
That is, the light destroys the ghost.
The Truth sets you free from the ghost that is your old self,

And the Truth in you is your new self.

A friend here at church wrote me and said, "I've experienced that lie ... and yet I can't really choose it or will it ... SO WHAT DO I DO?"

That's such a great question: "WHAT DO I DO?"

Maybe I'm to do nothing ... very well.

Maybe first and foremost, I am to NOT RUN from the Light, but remain in the Light and let it judge me. For the Truth will set me free.

If we see the Light and then run from the light...

If we experience a little bit of truth and then run ...

If we experience a little bit of truth ...

we'll take a little bit of shame, and then we'll try to hide that shame with an act.

But the act is a lie, and we turn ourselves into ghosts.

But if we abide in the Light and surrender to the Truth, the Truth burns away the ghost and gives birth to life.

The Truth reveals that my judgment nails the Truth to a tree and His judgment is to let me nail Him to a tree. The Truth is Grace. The Truth causes me to hate my sin and love God's Grace. The Truth causes me to love Love.

So, "What should I do?"

With the truth and love I have...

With the grace I have ... I should walk my ghost into the light every morning.

So, "What should I do?"

I should abide in the Light, and then do what I want. For what I want will be what I should do. That's freedom.

"What should I do?" I should love God, and do as I please.

See? Jesus is the Truth, and I will love the Truth when I see that the Truth loves me.

The Truth loves me, and hates my act. He sees right through the act and loves me... the real me.

The Bridegroom longs for me, and not my act.

He loves me and now how I dress myself.

I like my Bride naked, so I can clothe her with myself.

Think... a woman spends her life hiding her shame, and her secret places.

But on her wedding night, the groom wants nothing more than surrendered shame.

He wants her, and not an act.

Jesus wants you and not a ghost... not your vain glory.
He wants surrendered secrets.
He wants the *you* that lies hidden underneath.

Last winter, I told you about Post Secrets – the book and website where people mail in their secrets on postcards to a man named Frank. One woman sent Frank this letter:

“Dear Frank,
I have made 6 postcards, all secrets that I was afraid to tell the one person I tell everything to – my boyfriend. This morning, I planned to mail them, but instead, I left them on the pillow next to his head while he was sleeping. 10 minutes ago he arrived at my office and asked me to marry him. I said yes.”

Well, last May, Susan and I prayed through this old building, bound “Secrets,” and commanded it and other nasty things to leave. I think they were evil spirits, invited there by some person in the past... probably a religious authority who abused people and trapped them in secrets, afraid of the light.

All human religion abuses people and traps them in secrets – afraid of the Light, afraid of God’s judgment ... and so the Bride hides her shame in secret, afraid of God’s judgment, who is her Groom – Jesus the Christ.

Well, we cast out “Secrets,” and then I commanded anything else not in subjection to Jesus to reveal itself. Susan said, “Someone’s here. Her name is Elise. She’s a little old lady, and she’s scared.”

As I told you last week, I stopped commanding things, and I said, “Elise, you need to go to Jesus. He’s not like the bad men. He’s not like the others. Jesus loves you, Elise.” And she was gone.

Upstairs, a few minutes later, Susan heard Jesus clear as a bell. He said, “Welcome home, Elise.” And she heard Elise say, “I was lost.”
Derived from Hebrew, the name *Elise* means, “God is my vow.”

Now, you don’t have to believe my story.
But I think Elise was a ghost ... but not anymore.
She is the bride of Christ.
And whatever shame she hid now reveals the glory of God.

And I suspect there is a prostitute still looking for her dead baby.
She hides her shame, believing a lie.
When she surrenders her shame, it will reveal the greatest glory: Her Creator is her husband, and her life, and He has her baby.

And I suspect there’s an old woman looking for Herman.
When she surrenders her lie – that she’s in control – she’ll lose her life, and find all things ... including Herman.

I suspect there are some old Pharisees – Sons of the Kingdom, as Jesus called them – still gnashing their teeth in outer darkness.

They're ghosts.

But I suspect that one day, those dry bones will live, and their shame will be transformed into glory by the breath of Jesus, the Son of Man.

They will surrender their judgment to God's Judgment, who stands in the dust before them.

When Jesus was crucified, He descended into the "depths of the earth," says Scripture.

I suspect He even descended through my words spoken to Elise.

Psalms 138:6 – "Before Him shall bow all who go down to the dust."

Now, I realize that this is all controversial. And I should mention, we still haven't finished this sermon. We'll have to finish it next week.

But this is my point: Don't die in your sins.

Don't be a ghost.

Don't be trapped in your ghost.

Surrender your ghost, and be free.

You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free.

This is the Truth.

[Communion]

Come to the Light.

In the name of Jesus, come to the Lord's table, and cast your ghost into the Consuming Fire.