

# Life Church Message 2013-07-28 - The Gospel - Accept No Substitutes (Part 11)

- **The Gospel - Accept No Substitutes (Part 11)**  
Rocklyn Clarke Sr. - Sunday July 28, 2013  
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<http://www.LifeChurchBoston.org/>
- **The Gospel - Accept No Substitutes (Part 11)**
  - **Preparation**
  - **Introduction**
    - Welcome to another church meeting at the Hampton Inn & Suites.
    - Welcome Cards -
      - “I want to call your attention to the Welcome Card that you were given on your way into the auditorium”
      - These cards do two things for us:
        - They help us get to know our new visitors better.
        - They also give anyone (visitors or members) a chance to express a need or to give us feedback.
        - By filling it out you will help us to better serve you.
      - We're going to provide time for you to complete the cards at the end of our service, but we encourage you to start filling them out now.
        - **Please use this card:**
          - if you're a **first time visitor** or if you've **never** filled one out before,
          - to tell us about a **decision you made** today,
          - to ask us for more information, or to give us **feedback**.
      - **Please include your contact information** unless we already have it. At the **end of service** we'll ask you to complete the card and then place it in the designated box or give it to someone from our staff on your way out.
    - Regularly Invite People To Join Life Church
  - Transition
  - Review what it means to be a Christian.
    - What does it mean to be a Christian?
      - "Christ" = "anointed one" - effectively "king".

- The Disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch - Acts 11:19-26  
Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. **The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.**

- "Christian" = "belonging to Christ".
- Christians follow Jesus
  - Jesus' people know his voice and follow him - John 10:22-30  
Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."  
Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."
  - Remind them of how we illustrated "following" with "Simon Says".
- As followers of Jesus, we gather on Sundays (The Lord's Day) to celebrate him.
- Review two-stage process of divine revelation.
  - Think about two-stage journeys:
    - Fly to Florida to take a cruise.
    - Taxi to airport to catch a flight.
    - Jesus' contemporaries were flying from LaGuardia.
    - We're flying from Logan.
  - The words "Father", "Kingdom", "good news", etc. are the first leg of the journey. We then use stories to take us to a more complete understanding.
  - Other people's stories will control you unless you establish the story that God wants you to tell.

- **Stepping Up Your Game**

- Naaman dipped 7 times in the Jordan (2Kings 5). Why can't we read a Bible passage 7 or more times for greater understanding?
- Reading passages multiple times causes them to linger in our minds.
- When passages stick in our minds we can more easily meditate on them.
- As we ponder passages throughout the day we come up with both questions and insights. This strengthens our understanding of the Word.

- **Read the Passage: Galatians 4:21-31**

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

- **Exegetical Idea**

As sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus we are called to freedom rather than slavery.

- **What does this mean?**

- Abraham had two principal children: Isaac and Ishmael.
- Ishmael was born in the ordinary way - the result of Abraham's union with Sarah's servant Hagar.
- Isaac was born as the result of God's promise - through Sarah herself.
- Hagar represents the covenant from Mount Sinai and earthly Jerusalem - she is in slavery with her children.
- Sarah represents the new covenant through Christ Jesus and the heavenly Jerusalem - her children are free.
- Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the Jews persecuted the early church.
- Only one of Abraham's children received the promised inheritance - Isaac.

- **Is it True? Do I believe it?**
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- **What difference does it make? So What?**
  - God has redefined what it means to be part of Israel.
  - Those who exercise faith in Jesus are in Christ and part of the redefined Israel.
  - Our inheritance is through Jesus - not the law and not anything else.
- **Formulate the Homiletical Idea:**  
Give us free!
- **Determine the Purpose of the Sermon (what listeners should do)**
  - Learn to find your identify in Jesus and no one or nothing else.
  - Learn to express Jesus rather than other substitutes.
- **Learn to find your identify in Jesus and no one or nothing else.**
  - Review last week's temporary separation of those who speak in tongues.
  - What counts:
    - Faith (believing) in Jesus
    - Following Jesus
  - What doesn't count:
    - church membership
    - denominational distinctions
    - ministry associations
    - All of these are like training wheels on a bicycle.
  - Identify with others who follow Jesus.
- **Learn to express Jesus rather than other substitutes.**
  - Talk about Jesus before you talk about church.
    - Jesus is Lord (i.e. "king", "boss", etc.) - say so!
    - Jesus is laying claim to you, your family, your community, your job, etc.

- Don't use church or other ministry activity as a crutch.
- Acknowledge Jesus before, during, and after you interact with outsiders.
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- **Discussion Questions**
  - Are you part of God's family yet? How do you know?
  - What's easier for you to discuss with outsiders - Jesus or church? Explain.
  - How do you relate to Christians and non-Christians who are "other"? What is God saying to you about this?
  - How do ethnicity, culture, class, and gender affect you as a Christian?
- **Conclusion**
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- **Scriptures / Life Group Material For 7/28/2013 Life Church Sermon**

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**Mark 1:14-15**

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. **“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”**

**Galatians 4:21-31**

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**Genesis 15:1-6**

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” **He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”**

**Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**

**Genesis 12:1-7**

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; **and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**”

## **Genesis 16**

**Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."**

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

"Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

## **Genesis 21:1-13**

Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. **But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."**

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

## **Discussion Questions**

- Are you part of God's family yet? How do you know?
- What's easier for you to discuss with outsiders - Jesus or church? Explain.
- How do you relate to Christians and non-Christians who are "other"? What is God saying to you about this?
- How do ethnicity, culture, class, and gender affect you as a Christian?

## **Life Church Mission Statement**

Our mission is to teach people:

to enjoy knowing Jesus without fear, inadequacy, guilt, or shame,  
 to follow him together as his family,  
 to function together as his body,  
 and to work together to expand his kingdom.

## **Understanding The Bible**

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Here, for your convenience, are the Bible passages for today's sermon at Life Church. We use mostly the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible so that you can read it in modern English. You may have been accustomed to reading or hearing the King James Version of the Bible, which uses older English (with words like "thee" , "thou", "thine", "believeth", etc.). Don't be alarmed - the passages are really from the Bible!

The Bible was originally written in three ancient languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. None of the people in the Bible, and none of the people who God used to write it spoke English. In fact, English did not even exist as a language when the Bible was written. The King James Version, first published in 1611, was a translation of the Bible from it's original languages into the every day English that people used back then - almost 400 years ago! They didn't just speak that way in church - they spoke that way with everyone. The King James Version was "modernized" in 1769, but, even so, English has certainly changed a lot since then! **We believe that if you're reading an English translation of the Bible it ought to be up to date - written in the English you speak every day. God wants you to understand his Word so that you can put it into practice!**