

Where is Your John Hancock?

Luke 10:17-20

INTRODUCTION

- A. Today is a day of celebration, for two hundred and thirty-four years ago today, the Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence.
 - 1. With that document, that long-ago Congress said we would no longer be subjects of British Crown, but we would be a free & independent nation.
 - 2. Throughout the United States, cook-outs, parades, & fireworks will commemorate the courage & foresight of the fifty-six men who signed that Declaration.
- B. After the Declaration of Independence was approved on July 4, Congress sent the text to be printed.
- C. About a month after the Declaration of Independence was approved, the delegates to the Continental Congress signed the engrossed copy that is now on display at the National Archives.
 - 1. John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, was the first to affix his signature.
 - 2. According to legend, Hancock wrote his signature in the flamboyant, famous script & then declared, “There, I guess King George will be able to read that!”
 - 3. While that story – like George Washington’s chopping down the cherry tree – is most certainly apocryphal, that legend has become a part of the American psyche.
 - a. We all recognize that famous signature.
 - b. “John Hancock” has become synonymous with the word signature.
- D. Our “John Hancock” is quite important.
 - 1. With our “John Hancock” we sign contracts & pledge to work for our employers.
 - 2. With our “John Hancock” we sign checks & allow businesses to deduct funds from our checking account.
- E. But, “***Where is Your John Hancock***” this morning?
 - 1. Our text this morning speaks about one place we can have our name written:
 - a. READ TEXT.
 - b. If you’re reading from the KJV, you notice that Jesus sent out 70, not 72, as the ESV says.
 - 1) This is one of those places where the Greek manuscripts differ.
 - 2) Honestly, the manuscripts differ so greatly that we aren’t exactly sure if 70 or 72 is the original reading.
 - 3) Of course, it doesn’t matter if 70 or 72 was the original Greek, for the precise number here doesn’t change the meaning of the text one whit.
 - 2. What is important is that these disciples return after their limited commission with great joy.
 - a. The exclaim: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (v 17).
 - 1) Jesus had told them to heal the sick (v 9).
 - a) Perhaps these disciples didn’t realize that the ability to heal diseases would necessarily include the ability to cast out demons.

- b) Perhaps they are just amazed that God would give such great power to men such as themselves.
 - 2) Regardless, these 72 men are greatly excited. They almost come across like a child on Christmas morning who discovers that brand new toy that he has just been “dying for.”
- b. Jesus, however, cautions them against boasting that they have power over such forces by saying, “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (v 20).
 - 1) In other words, Jesus says, “Don’t rejoice that you have this great power, but rejoice that God has placed your ‘John Hancock’ – your name – in heaven.”
 - 2) This morning, we want to learn how to rejoice that our “John Hancock” is written in heaven.

First, we need to understand the imagery of

WRITTEN IN HEAVEN

- A. The Scriptures speak of several books that God keeps in heaven.
 - 1. One is the so-called book of the living.
 - a. Apparently, this book contains the names of everyone who is currently living upon the earth.
 - b. Some texts:
 - 1) “The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven” (Deut 29:20).
 - 2) “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous” (Ps 69:28).
 - 2. There is also a book that contains the names & deeds of all people: “The dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done” (Rev 20:12).
 - 3. There is also a book that contains the names of the elect:
 - a. “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book” (Dan 12:1).
 - b. “All who dwell on earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain” (Rev 13:8).
 - 4. There is also a book that contains the names of those faithful to the Lord.
 - a. “Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name” (Mal 3:16).
 - b. “Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil 4:3).
- B. Obviously, God has no need of these ledgers, for there is nothing that God does not know.
 - 1. Yet, this is a figurative way of reminding us that God knows.
 - 2. God doesn’t need these books to remember who is his child or not, but we need this symbolism to help us remember that God knows all about us.

NO REJOICING

- A. Jesus tells the disciples not to rejoice over the fact that the spirits were subject to them.
- B. Why should these disciples not rejoice?
 1. Think about this for a moment.
 - a. Never before had God given such great power to so many.
 - 1) We know the Twelve came from quite diverse backgrounds – fishermen, tax collectors, zealous opponents of Roman rule.
 - 2) It would make sense to suppose that these 72 came from even more diverse background since there were 60 more of them.
 - 3) To them, God had given great power.
 - b. Demon possession was a serious condition in the first-century world.
 - 1) One demon caused a little boy to fall often into fire & water (Mt 17:14-18).
 - 2) A man with a demon “lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones” (Mk 5:3-5).
 - c. Why not rejoice that God had given to ordinary mortals power to free people from such a horrible fate?
 2. The answer seems to be simply this: It wasn’t their power that healed – it was the power of God.
 - a. You get a glimpse of that in what the disciples say to Jesus: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (v 17). The demons weren’t subject to these men as men, but they were subject to them only as representatives of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Christians **never** had control over what gift of the Spirit they received:
 - 1) The Gospel “was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb 2:3-4).
 - 2) There could never be boasting over spiritual gifts, for God distributed those gifts according to his will.
- C. What could those words possibly have to do with us on this Independence Day?
 1. Is there really much difference in the disciples’ boasting over their ability to cast out demons & our boasting in America?
 2. How often do we boast in our riches or our liberties?
 - a. We must never forget that it is our God who has made this nation what it is.
 - 1) “The Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will” (Dan 4:25).
 - 2) “There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom 13:1).
 - b. No amount of valor or strategy could have defeated the Red Coats had that not been in the sovereign will of God.
 3. To his fellow delegates at the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin said: “All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And

have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the convincing proofs I see of this truth — that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?”

longer I live, the more

4. Let us never forget Who has made this nation so great!

REJOICING

- A. The disciples weren't to rejoice that the spirits were subject to them; instead, Jesus says, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (v 20).
- B. Why should the disciples rejoice so that their names are written in heaven?
 1. They could control whether or not their "John Hancock" was written in heaven.
 - a. There was nothing they could do about what spiritual gift God had given them. There is nothing we can do to enhance or to diminish the greatness of the United States – God governs the affairs of men.
 - b. Yet, we – like these disciples – decide whether or not God will write our "John Hancock" in heaven.
 - 1) Salvation rests in our own hands.
 - a) To the crowd at Pentecost, Peter declares, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40).
 - b) "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).
 - 2) God has made everything ready – it is up to us whether or not we will allow our God to place our name in the book of life.
 2. Their "John Hancock" in heaven would last throughout eternity.
 - a. The spiritual gift of healing the disciples exercised would soon cease. Concerning spiritual gifts, Paul writes, "As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away" (1 Cor 13:8).
 - b. Our American citizenship will one day end.
 - 1) It may be that we are citizens of this nation as long as we live.
 - 2) It may be that in God's great sovereignty, allows another nation to overtake this one.
 - 3) Regardless of whether our American citizenship ends in death or foreign domination, we are citizens of heaven: "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:20-21).
 - c. Having our "John Hancock" in heaven will last through all eternity.
 - 1) "The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels" (Rev 3:5).
 - 2) Where is your "John Hancock" this morning? Is your "John Hancock" written in heaven?