



RECKONING

AND

REPENTANCE

SJT

A look at John Chapter 8

We just had our Fourth Annual Pops and Keggie Kamp, here on the banks of Lake Providence, Louisiana. Kamp is a party hardy gathering of almost non-stop activities for five highly energetic grands and two grandparents who try to keep up with them. Included on the list of things to check off are the prerequisite afternoons on the lake, devotionals and crafts, and visits with their great grandparents who live just down the road. In case anyone is counting besides your truly, I have SIX grands now, but Kennedy Lee is a wee too young for Kamp. Her time will come!

The five grands who do attend habitually shorten our official moniker to Keggie Kamp, regardless of my efforts to include the beloved farmer. That can be equally attributed to the fact that Pops still has to farm during it all, and the reality that he functions as the wise manager of this crowd as compared to Keggie, their fellow Kamper. Our hashtag is #noadultsallowed and none of the grands think that disqualifies me, (or my BFF who is known to hang on the lake with us.)

I anticipate loads of fun and the consumption of large amounts of food. I'm also prepared for a bit of folly! It's hard to imagine getting five grandchildren under one roof for an extended slumber party without at least a little folly, but we'll get through that, too. In the interest of full disclosure, lean in and I'll tell you a story about one of my big grandparenting fails! Littles aren't the only ones who can fall into folly...

The grands and I were headed out on the lake for an afternoon of boating and swimming. That particular day I was the only big person in the party, so we weren't going to be tubing, skiing, or knee-boarding. (For that, we insist on having a grownup at the wheel and grownup eyes on those being towed.)

We had all trooped down to the boat dock with the necessary supplies, sunscreen, life vests, a cooler of ice downed drinks, and snacks. Many snacks. Up until the big fail, we had been strenuously following all of our big safety rules. The kids were all covered in sunscreen and wearing their life vests, having suited up before we reached the dock. That's non-negotiable and I'd just like it noted in my defense. (Yes, I'm going to need a strong defense. Stay tuned.)

The kids were all seated, and I was pulling away from the dock when I saw it. Bummer! We had inadvertently left the cooler on the dock's lower level.

I made a large circle and trolled back up to the dock. There was zero wind. The boat was sitting completely still in the water, which is when I made a mistake I can't possibly defend. My serious lapse in judgment could've ended very badly.

I told the grands to sit still. My intention was to step off the boat's back platform, grab the small cooler, which was literally one step from the boat, and step right back on the boat. Sounds fine, and it would've been, only I didn't kill the motor.

I know. You're right. You can't think worse of that decision than I do.

In that precise nano-second of time, the middle grandchild decided to act. From what we could piece together later, he thought the boat was going to drift away without me. So, in typical Connor ninja speed fashion, the seven-year-old said, "I'll help, Keggie!" The next second has been forever recorded in my memory, in slow motion.

As Connor was announcing his plan to help, he somehow simultaneously teleported himself to the gearshift and pulled it down in one motion. Before my eyes, my grands began leaving the dock—in reverse!

In the ensuing pandemonium, with all five grands screaming and successfully drowning out my instructions, Connor's older brother had the presence of mind to grab the keys from the ignition and kill the motor. Thank you, nine-year-old grandson. Thank you. But there sat my grands, in the boat all my themselves, some distance from the dock. The older grands began trying to quiet their younger siblings. Be still my heart. I was about to do what I never do—swim off the dock.

Brief backstory...I don't swim off of the same dock where I see snakes regularly sunning their slippery selves on cypress knees, where I imagine alligators lurking in the shadows. Oh, no, sir. I mean, I love the summer fun! I tube, ski, kneeboard, all of it! I just do it from the center of the lake. Everyone knows this. My friends know this. My family knows this. My grands know this. Keggie enters the water in the middle of the lake, and she exits it there. In normal times. These were not normal times.

There may be a pause here in action as I retell the story, but those were my grandchildren out there in that boat and there was no pause that day. I removed my sunglasses, my phone, and my swimsuit cover, and dove in, sans life jacket. (Minor fail that palls in comparison to the big fail: while I had made sure the grands had on their vests, mine was in the boat.)

As I stroked toward the boat, the occupants grew very quiet. They'd all been fussing at Connor when I dove in, but even that stopped. Keggie was not going to be happy when she boarded, and they knew it.

When I drew near the boat, Emerson Ann, oldest granddaughter, moved towards the rear of the boat. "I'm just lowering the ladder for you, Keggie," she said, in a tone one uses to approach a snarling dog. Ladder lowered, she quickly returned to her seat.

Not a word was said as I boarded. Five pairs of eyes were on me as I towed off and caught my breath. Everyone was waiting for the sermon that was sure to come. Only it didn't.

I met Connor's beautiful dark eyes, clouded with anxiety, still wet with tears, and I smiled. There would be plenty time to talk about what went wrong. The moment called for more. It called for mercy.

"Let's talk about grace," I said to the grands as I pulled Connor into my arms. They couldn't have listened any closer as we began talking about what to do when we know we've been wrong.

Among other things, I told Connor I knew he meant well when he disobeyed the order to sit still, and I reminded him that one of our rules was that they never touch the throttle, the wheel, or the keys. Connor was obviously contrite. The others had heard him crying and they had heard him saying, "I'm sorry!" more than once. Everyone knew he was wrong. I told them Connor was also forgiven.

Then I told them Keggie had made a ginormous mistake in not turning off the boat motor and I fully owned my role in the debacle that started it all. Grownups can make mistakes, too, I told them, and I had made a big one.

Together, we wiped our eyes and salvaged the day.

This story falls solidly under the kids and my “what happens at Keggie Kamp stays at Keggie Kamp rule”, but it didn’t. Stuff happens. By that weekend, their parents had arrived for our larger family reunion began. We were all sitting over a dinner table strewn with empty dishes, telling stories on our full stomachs, which is one of my favorite things in all the world when the cat escaped the bag.

I mean, I’m sure I was going to tell the other adults about our mishap, eventually, when the time was right. Only, during a conversation about near misses, Emerson blurted out, “Like when we drove the boat without you, Keggie?”

My granddaughter froze with a “Oh, no, I’m sorry” look on her face, and all adult eyes swiveled to Keggie. Ruh, roh.

We don’t always get to choose our day of reckoning. If we wait too long, it inevitably chooses us

In the end, all was well, and all ended well. The grands’ parents were understanding and gracious about my mistake, and grace upon grace, they still trust me with their littles. But, about that day of reckoning idea...

A day of reckoning means “being forced to deal with an unpleasant situation you’ve been previously avoiding.” It’s when we haven’t chosen to be where we find ourselves. Hello 2020, right?

Can you list a few things you’re facing personally or collectively with the rest of us that you would not have chosen for 2020?

2020 has a certain feel to it, doesn’t it? You can almost hear Jesus saying, “Ready or not, here I come!”

And yet, what we’re seeing and saying is hardly new. Record Psalm 12: 1-4 below.

Have mercy. Those words could have come out of any of our mouths this week. On the other hand, 2nd Timothy 3:1-5 sounds like the evening news. Record those verses in the space below.

Ancient news, evening news, breaking news, through it all Jesus is the same wayfaring man, doing the will of the Father. We're always wanting to go back to find Him or settle down with Him right where we are. Jesus is always moving forward. We long to find or recover a normalcy amid the broken mass of humanity – that He died to save.

But, wait, doesn't the word tell us to pray for those in authority so we can live a quiet and peaceful life? Yes, it does. You're thinking of I Timothy 2:2. Record those words here.

God's Word also tells us to go into all the world with the gospel, to loosen the chains for the prisoners, and help set the captives free. We can't abide in Jesus without going forward with Jesus, but we resist that tension. So... God allows us to be sifted, to keep us moving, towards His purposes.

We find record of God allowing the enemy to sift people throughout His word. Look up Luke 22: 31-32 and record what Jesus said to Peter. Feel free to paraphrase in your own words.

Question. Have you ever felt like Peter had an advantage in knowing the enemy was about to try and trip him up, and he still fell for it? If so, can you be honest enough to identify with Peter? Spend a moment processing your thoughts to those questions in the space provided.

My guess is you've heard the story of Job from the Old Testament. Read Job 1: 1-12 and record the verse where God gives the devil permission to sift Job.

The devil has to get permission to sift us, church. And God allows sifting for His purposes.

I can hold the following two positions, often simultaneously 1) I hate the evil that is racism on this planet, past and present, whether by action or apathy. I can find memes, articles, and news sources about racism I agree with, and I can discuss the problem with you at length. The same applies to my second position. 2) I can be easily frustrated and feel like, “This is crazy! When will enough, be enough?” The reality is, for the devil and those who aim to destroy this country, enough will never be enough. End of story. We won’t be able to appease those who are unappeasable. In what ways can you relate to either or both of the positions I spelled out above. Journal your thoughts below.

Here’s our challenge as I see it: Will we let Satan’s presence in the sifting, distract us from God’s purposes in allowing it?

God *doesn’t* hold out a bar we can’t reach. He doesn’t keep moving the goal-lines. Record Genesis 50:20 below.

With God’s help, we can meet these days with the same attitude. We can acknowledge that even with Satan stirring the pot, God’s good purposes can prevail.

I want us to look at a New Testament story for illustration. It’s the familiar story of the woman caught in adultery, and it’s about more than keeping our judgmental stones in our self-righteous pockets. The Word is alive, and God will use it speak to us today if we’ll listen. Read John 8: 1-8 and then answer the following question, according to verse 6.

What was Jesus’ initial response to the woman’s accusers?

The Word began to write. Fascinating. There’s another recorded incident of God writing in the Old Testament. We find it in Exodus 31:18. Please record that verse below.

God wrote out the Ten Commandments with His own finger. Please record the commandment found in Exodus 20:14 below.

Do you see it? Those who most knew the law, failed to recognize that the One who gave it was on the scene.

Instead, they tried to trap Him with His own words. Does that have 2020 written all over it?! Let something break on the news, and we all take to our social accounts to post our opinions about it, even as the scrutiny police poise to parse them. And if we don't weigh in, we can feel the expectation from our circles for us to speak up mounting by the minute! For those of any position of influence, however large or small, the trap is set. It's also super sensitive. So, write it quickly, but right it well, and, oh yeah, the approved phrasing is always changing, and no, it isn't posted anywhere. Have fun, kids!

If my tone sounds too breezy, please know my heart is far from it. Have you felt pressured to stake a position or defend one publicly? It doesn't have to be limited to the global pandemic or the escalating racial tensions. Take a moment to think about anything you felt like you were expected to expound on and journal your thoughts below.

With his credentials, his morals, and his judgement challenged, Jesus paused and knelt. Whoa. Actions really can be louder than words, can't they? I need this lesson Jesus is giving. I'm prone to using my rash ready words and then mistaking them for action, and I don't think I'm the only one.

Do believers need to speak up against evil wherever it's found? Yes! Do we need to follow up those words with actions? Absolutely! But we need wisdom to do either. Read Matthew 5:9. What does this verse call us to be?

We need wisdom from above. Record James 3:17 below.

If we can't speak and act in the manner of that verse, the best thing we can do is stop talking and listen for God. He can give us action steps towards peace, and He will if we ask, but we'll never hear what He is saying if we're always talking. Would you use the space here to write out a simple prayer in your own words, committing yourself to listen for direction?

We're accustomed to seeing Jesus' compassion for the woman in this story. But, what did he want for her accusers? Can we know His heart for them as He kneels there writing in the dirt? Yes, we can.

Record I Timothy 2:4 in the first space and 2nd Peter 3:9 in the second one.

Despite much speculation as to what Jesus wrote, we can't know because we're not told. We do know He wanted salvation for each of them and He wants it for all of us. Had any of the accusers knelt in repentance, that person would've found forgiveness. Same applies to us this morning.

Please read John 8:9 and record in your own words what happened when Jesus challenged the woman's accusers to throw the first stone—if they were innocent.

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. They came to trap Jesus with another's sin and found themselves trapped by their own. We don't always get to choose our moment of reckoning, remember? Under conviction, they left before their hidden sins could become public knowledge.

The startling truth of verse nine is that we can be convicted of our sin without repenting of it.

As we work through this passage, the Holy Spirit is working with us, to bring conviction where it's needed. Not because of my words but because He attends to His. What will we do with our conviction? We can leave with it to save face because we value the man's approval over God's, but let's learn the lesson of this passage.

Conviction doesn't equal redemption; it doesn't find forgiveness.

Conviction by itself isn't enough, and it doesn't lead to change.

If concealment follows conviction, nothing changes.

Read John 8: 9-11. Jesus had parting words for the woman, but none for her accusers. Why is this? There are no wrong answers. Think about it and journal your thoughts below.

Here's one of my thoughts. What good would it do for Jesus to tell the men to "sin no more" when they hadn't owned their present sin? He knows better than us that we're powerless before the sin we hide. Whatever Jesus isn't Lord over in our lives will continue to lord it over us.

The men left with their sins covered, temporarily. The woman was uncovered but she didn't seize the chance to run for cover. I believe she saw her sin in light of her Savior and had a heart change at some point in this drama. Why would I say this? Let's let God's word answer that. Record Luke 13:3 in the first space and Acts 3:19 in the second one.

The only One who could truly pardon the woman, did, and the Bible teaches us God can't forgive unless we repent.

Jesus said he didn't come to condemn the world but to save it and salvation awaits anyone who will repent—change their mind, ask for forgiveness, and resolve to go forward with Christ. But there's another reason I think she repented.

According to John 8:4, what title did the accusers give to Jesus?

Seeing Jesus as Teacher is religion and it doesn't change our hearts. We can hear Him as Teacher every Sunday, while acting like we'll live forever— as if we'll get to choose our moment of reckoning.

According to John 8:11, what title did the woman give to Jesus?

Acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Savior brings us to repentance and calls us to the ongoing response of an ever-changing life.

The biblical word is sanctification. Look up the word sanctification in an online dictionary. Record the definition below or paraphrase it in your own words.

Sanctification is a big word that means partnering with the Spirit of God to become increasingly more like His Son, through conviction that leads to repentance. Conviction comes as we follow Him, and with every conviction comes a corresponding call to an act of repentance.

The tragedy? We can get comfortable with our conviction the longer we sit with it. Right? If you're feeling convicted, you can just wait it out. *And I'm talking about while you're working through this study, and during this moment in our world.* We can say, I hear you Lord, and I'll respond later, but our next moment of reckoning could come without warning...

We can even soothe ourselves with our conviction. *"My heart just hurts over this."* Without action, that pain is just conviction that changes nothing and no one.

Is it possible our churches are full of convicted people and lacking in repentant believers?

We can recognize where we're convicted yet unrepentant by looking at where we're uncomfortable but refusing to respond.

Acts 2:37-39 gives us a correct response to conviction, whether we're talking about the very day we decide to follow Christ or all the days that follow. In Acts, chapter, two, Peter had just preached to a crowd on the subject of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit when his listeners responded.

What question did they ask? The answer is in verse 37.

True repentance says, "Now that I'm convicted of my sin, what should I do?"

Record Matthew 3:8 in the following space.

Does it get ugly when we uncover our hearts? Yes, but the company of Jesus is our exceedingly great reward. I love that the Bible calls repentance a gift because Jesus is on the other side of it waiting to kneel with anyone willing to receive Him and walk into the rest of our lives with us.

I can't tell you what your appropriate deeds of repentance are about racism or any other sin, but God can, and He will, if you ask. I'm asking Him for my next steps. And I'm asking you to seek Him for yours.