“What Did You Say… Simon?”

Acts 8:9-24

Introduction:

I was introduced to the concept of self-esteem somewhere around the fourth grade. It has to do with someone’s self-concept. The value someone perceives their life to have, this will greatly determine a person’s self-esteem. You hear a lot about teenagers who struggle with low self-esteem, but this is something that adults grapple with as well. Questions about the value or significance about someone’s life can often drive people to do things that both amaze and horrify us. In today’s lesson we will see how the Bible addresses this. **It addresses it through the life of a man named Simon.** Acts 8:9 introduces him to us.

(He was a man used to being valued. You could say that everything Simon said, people did. People really valued what he said. He had great respect from the people of Samaria because he knew how to do things that they could not understand. v. 10)

1. It feels good when people respect and admire us.
2. Simon had for a long time been revered by the Samaritans.
3. People today aspire to be respected for various reason:
   1. Atheistic professors wow their students with their understanding of their field.
   2. Athletes are often adored. Some are willing to win by any means necessary (Lance Armstrong).
   3. Clothing for many is a way to get others to look at them and they feel superior because of their fashion sense.
   4. Many people make money the measure of their lives. In many of these pursuits people are willing to forsake family, health, integrity and even God.
4. Unfortunately even we as Christians sometimes allow what others think direct our decisions.
   1. Telling others about Christ is an uncomfortable proposition for many.
   2. Some are not faithful to church because they don’t want to seem like fanatics.
5. Every person has a desire to feel valued at some level, but we should not allow this desire to overcome our sense of what is right.

Transition: Simon is one of the first to try to use Christianity to gain admiration, but he was certainly not the last.

1. Many people use God to get people to respect them.
2. Cults twist the Word of God to manipulate people.
   1. Men like Joseph Smith and Creflo Dollar are motivated by money and the significance they gain while leading people astray.
   2. Some groups would even use this passage to say that a “spiritual experience” is necessary to be a Christian. “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself…” 1 Cor. 14.4 This was something done as a sign and is not done today
3. Even true Christians can sometimes be motivated to serve God because the good things others will say about them.
4. After Simon started following Phillip he began to miss the fame that he had enjoyed before.

Transition: People seek after the admiration of others because they think that this will give their life meaning and significance.

1. The measure of a man however, is not determined by what others think about him, it is determined by the role that God’s authority plays in his life.
2. When Simon saw that Peter and John were doing powerful things\* he desired to purchase the gift of God with money. v. 18
   1. The imparting of the Holy Ghost was a way that God was identifying the apostles with what Philip had done in Samaria\*\*
   2. When a person believes today they receive the Holy Ghost by faith as it is promised in Acts 2:38. Neither speaking in tongues, nor cloven tongues of fire, or a rushing mighty wind are necessary signs of God’s authority. We have the complete Word of God as the authority for our faith.
3. Simon was motivated by envy. He had previously enjoyed being respected and valued, and wanted to have that same feeling again.
   1. Simon was unsatisfied with the role that God had given him and thought he could pay to be more important.
   2. His true feelings of selfishness were made evident with his proposal to Peter
4. It feels good when others think highly of us, but it is important to remember that this is not the way to find true significance in our lives.
   1. Simon went about finding significance the wrong way.
   2. People often sacrifice what is most precious to them trying to feel important.
   3. Christians can allow what other people think to direct their actions.
   4. True significance, satisfaction, and fulfillment is only found by obeying God’s will for your life.

Conclusion: How have you allowed what others think determine how you act? Simon was wrong when he thought he could use the power of God to gain fame. Don’t despise the role that God has given you in order to please or impress other people. The fear of man bringeth a snare Prov. 29:25, and this fear can keep us from doing some important things that God wants from us:

Salvation, Baptism, soul-winning, inviting people to church, tithing, career choice, marriage.. etc.

Do not allow what others think determine your choice to follow how God has led in your life.

\*Peter and John came to see what Philip had begun in Samaria. The signs that Phillip did as well as the imparting of the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands of the apostles was something that God did in the early church because of the transition from law to grace Gal. 3:24-26. There is a difference between how God worked in the book of Acts and how he works today, even Charismatic groups do not claim to see cloven tongues of fire as it was in Acts 2. The purpose of these signs was to be a sign that the power of God was truly upon early believers. Now we have the complete Word of God and there are no apostles. The Bible is our authority for faith and practice, there is no longer a need for these signs.

\*\* The Jews looked down on the Samaritans and this would have caused some to question if this was legitimate. Samaritans were half-Jewish and were seen as unclean and ungodly. Their forefathers had married foreign women and worshipped other Gods. They also had idols in Gerizim going back to King Jeroboam. Philip’s coming to this place is significant because of the cultural barriers that were being broken by bringing them the gospel of Christ.