

The Mind of Christ

Preaching in the Enemy’s Camp – Part 1

INTRODUCTION:

- I. It is almost universally believed that the final week in the life of Jesus – which was also the week of the great Jewish feast of Passover – was the most important and most event-filled week of His entire life on earth.
 - A. The week began on Sunday when Jesus made His triumphant entrance into the city of Jerusalem.
 1. He came riding on a donkey, coming as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and coming as the Prince of Peace.
 2. Throngs of people went before Him laying palm branches in His path, and even laying down their garments, while at the same time shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David!”
 3. The people clearly saw Jesus as the promised Messiah and the hope of Israel, and the city was “moved” by the events of that day.
 - B. On Monday, Jesus returns to the city of Jerusalem after spending the night in nearby Bethany, and comes directly to the Great Temple.
 1. Immediately, Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers and those who sold animals, and drove them all out of the Temple courts.

2. In a moment of intense anger, Jesus said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.”
3. John tells us this wasn’t the first time Jesus cleansed the Temple of those who were making money off businesses set up there. In fact, John records a similar event at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

BODY:

- I. The following day – Tuesday of Passover week – Jesus returned to the city of Jerusalem from Bethany during the morning hours, and went into the Temple to teach.
 - A. While in the temple Jesus was immediately confronted by the chief priests and the elders of the people who demanded to what right Jesus had to disrupt the commercial enterprises within the Temple courts.
 1. **Matthew 21:23-27** – *Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John – where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From*

*heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'
But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John
as a prophet." So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not
know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what
authority I do these things.*

2. These men wanted to know two things from Jesus:
 - a. First, they wanted to know by what authority He was doing all these things.
 - (1). Coming into the city of Jerusalem on Sunday as the Messiah.
 - (2). Cleansing the Temple on Monday.
 - (3). And now, having the AUDACITY to actually think He had the right to TEACH in the Temple!
 - b. Second, they wanted to know who gave Him this authority.
 - (1). In other words, was He operating on His OWN authority, or is He going to claim that GOD gave Him the authority to do all these things.
 - (2). If Jesus claimed He was doing all these things on His OWN authority, then they would brand Him as a false Messiah.
 - (3). But if Jesus claimed He was doing all these things on GOD’S authority, then they could accuse Him of heresy

and brand Him as a wanna-be Messiah who was about to lead an insurrection against Rome!

3. But Jesus turned their question back on them by saying He had a question for them, and if they answer His, He will then answer theirs.
 - a. The question concerned the baptism of John – whether it was from heaven or if John was merely acting on his own, with no divine authority.
 - b. Realizing they were caught in a real dilemma, the chief priests and elders of the people refused to answer the question by saying they didn’t know.
 - c. Jesus obviously knew these men had already formed an opinion about the baptism of John, and believed John was just another radical itinerant preacher who simply stirred up the people, and gave them a false hope that the Messiah was about to come.
4. Therefore, since the chief priests and the elders of the people refused to answer Jesus, He was no longer obligated to keep His end of the agreement and answer THEIR question.
5. However, He DOES have a few things to say to these men.

II. In fact, at this point, Jesus launches into a series of parables – six in all – that are either directed against His accusers, or as in the case of the last three, are given specifically to His disciples.

A. Let’s take a closer look at the FIRST of these six parables – a parable that was directed specifically at the chief priests and the elders of the people.

1. **Matthew 21:28-32** – Jesus taught this parable: *"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.*

B. The meaning of this parable is rather simple to understand – a man had a vineyard and needed his two sons to go into the vineyard to help with the work.

1. Jesus said the father went to the first son and asked him to go work in the vineyard.
 - a. However, this son flatly refused! “No way!” “Absolutely not!” “Forget you!”
 - b. This son’s reply was a sign of complete disobedience and rebellion – not to mention the absolute, utter contempt he was showing toward his father.
 - c. He had no respect for his father at all!
 2. So, the father goes to the second son and asks him to go work in the vineyard.
 - a. This son responds with all the kindness and respect that any good, dependable, loving, caring son would show toward his father.
 - b. “Yes, I’ll be more than happy to go work in the vineyard today.” “Absolutely!” “Anything you say, dad.” “You know all you have to do is just ask, and I’ll do whatever you want.”
 - c. This son’s response seems to be a sign of complete obedience and trustworthiness.
 - d. Furthermore, this son’s response showed great love and respect for the father.
- C. However, the story doesn’t end there.
- 1, Jesus says the first son changed his mind.

- a. He probably realized how rebellious and evil he had been toward his father, and may have grieved over how badly he had treated him.
 - b. So, he repented and went into the field as he had been asked.
2. But Jesus says the second son never did what he said he would do – he probably never intended to, either.
- a. He apparently decided he had more important things to do, and as long as he played the role of the obedient son, he could keep his father off his back.
 - b. Make no mistake about it – this young man was a hypocrite. Two-faced.
- D. Jesus now turns to these chief priests and the elders of the people and asks, “Which of the two did the will of his father?”
1. The answer was obvious – “The first.”
 2. Then Jesus delivers a stinging rebuke of these religious hypocrites.
 - a. **Matthew 21:31-32** – *Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors*

and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him."

III. What was Jesus actually saying to these men, and why?

A. First, Jesus clearly identified who these two sons were.

1. The tax collectors and prostitutes – those who were the most vile sinners in the minds of MOST religious Jews of that day – were represented by the first son in the parable.

a. At first, they rejected the Law of God – in fact, they showed absolutely NO RESPECT for the LAW or for the God BEHIND that Law.

(1). They never attempted to take on the character of God – the divine attributes – in their lives.

(2). They simply lived for themselves, ONLY!

(3). They were rebellious, disobedient, and disrespectful.

b. However, when John came “in the way of righteousness” – preaching “repentance and remission of sins” – these sinner came flocking to him in droves.

(1). There was no false pride in THEIR hearts – no spiritual egotism.

- (2). They KNEW they were sinners. They KNEW they needed God’s grace and mercy, and they KNEW they needed the forgiveness of their sins.
- c. These sinners had changed their minds – they repented of their hardness of heart toward God, and began to live right.
2. On the other hand, the chief priests and the elders of the people were like the second son in this parable of Jesus.
 - a. They made a pretense of obedience. Their obedience and faithfulness was only SURFACE DEEP!
 - b. It was all SHOW!
 - (1). They had become EXPERTS at doing all the “GOD TALK!”
 - (2). They knew how to pray those BEAUTIFUL prayers.
 - (3). They could quote ALL THE SCRIPTURES from the Law and the prophets.
 - (4). They walked around with that pious, holy, religious “GLOW” about them.
 - (5). They were the VERY PICTURE of holiness and righteousness.
 - c. But when John came “in the way of righteousness” – preaching “repentance and remission of sins” – these chief

priests and elders of the people said, “Who ME? Are you KIDDING? Don’t you know who I AM?”

d. In their own minds they had no need to REPENT because they had no SIN! They were blinded by their own false pride and spiritual egotism!

(1). THEY weren’t sinners.

(2). THEY weren’t in need of God’s grace and mercy – THEY were RIGHTEOUS because THEY kept all the rules and regulations of the Law – not to mention the traditions of the elders.

(3). THEY weren’t in need of ANY forgiveness – they had no SIN!

e. These chief priests and elders NEVER changed their minds because they saw no NEED to change.

(1). They paid lip-service to God, and claimed to faithfully keep the Law.

(2). But in reality, they rejected God’s system of righteousness revealed in the Law to follow THEIR OWN system of righteousness based on their WORKS!

B. Now you understand why Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you!” (**Matt.**

21:31b)

1. The tax collectors and harlots will enter the kingdom of God
FIRST, because they KNEW they have been disobedient and rebellious, and they REPENTED and began DOING what God commanded.
 - a. They started LIVING the life in keeping with the divine attributes – the divine character – of God.
2. But the chief priests and elders of the people will enter last (if at all), because they DON’T SEE that they are disobedient and rebellious, and feel NO NEED to repent because they believe they ARE DOING the commandments of God.
 - a. Although they CLAIMED to be lovers of God, their ACTIONS showed otherwise.

IV. So, what’s the message for us? How can WE apply the principles of Jesus here to OUR lives?

A. In the first chapter of James, the Lord’s brother addresses the SAME issue that Jesus addressed – namely, people who TALK THE TALK, but don’t WALK THE WALK!

1. **James 1:21-27** – *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer*

of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

- B. James says there are basically two kinds of believers.
1. The first are those who are “hearers ONLY.”
 - a. These are those who find the PURSUIT of knowledge enjoyable, but they have no intentions of APPLYING that knowledge to their everyday lives.
 - b. They’re like the student who simply AUDITS a class for no credit – they’re just there for the INFORMATION.
 - c. You can always tell those who are AUDITING a class – they’re the most relaxed students in the classroom. They don’t have to worry about taking any tests, and don’t have to concern themselves with the homework, because they’re not there for a grade.

- d. They have NO COMMITMENT whatsoever. They’re just along for the ride.
 - e. They’re the believers who HEAR what God wants them to do and how He wants them to live, but they aren’t serious about DOING it.
2. Then James says there are those who are “hearers AND doers.”
 - a. These are the ones who are not only interested in the PURSUIT of knowledge, they also APPLY IT!
 - b. They’re taking the course for credit! They prepare for the tests and they’re very dedicated to getting the best grade possible – because they’re COMMITTED!
 - c. They’re the ones who HEAR what God wants them to do and how He wants them to live, and they DO everything within their power to FULFILL God’s expectations.
 3. So, in the end, it comes down to those who HEAR the will of the Lord and those who DO the will of the Lord.
 4. James says those who are only HEARERS, are like a man who looks into the mirror – he sees the need for change, but does nothing about it.
 5. On the other hand, those who look into *“the perfect Law of liberty,”* and who CONTINUE in those things – those who are not a *“forgetful HEARER”* but a *“DOER of the work”* – will be blessed.

- a. If we think we’re RELIGIOUS and yet don’t SHOW IT by our OUTWARD ACTIONS – we’re just fooling ourselves.
 - (1). That kind of “*religion is vain*” – empty, useless, worthless.
- b. But if we conduct ourselves in a RIGHT way toward others, AND toward God – we have a “*pure and undefiled religion.*”

CONCLUSION:

- I. What kind of SON are we?
 - A. If Jesus were to look into your life at THIS VERY MOMENT, what kind of “SON” – what kind of child of God – would He find?
 - 1. Would He find one who HAS been rebellious and disobedient in the PAST, but who NOW has turned in obedience and is faithfully DOING what the Father has ASKED us to do?
 - 2. Or would He find one who has been putting on a SHOW of righteousness and faithful obedience, but whose heart is STILL filled with rebellion and disobedience?
 - 3. We’re one or the other – and we KNOW which one we are.
 - 4. More importantly, JESUS KNOWS which one we are too – so we might be fooling everybody ELSE, but we’re NOT fooling the LORD.

- B. What kind of life are you living? Are you living a lie?
1. Do you KNOW you’re soul is NOT right with God, and KNOW that you need to do something about it?
 2. Fortunately, you can be JUST LIKE the tax collectors and harlots in the days of Jesus whose hardened hearts melted at the preaching of John, and who then turned their hearts back to God.
 3. If you need to turn your heart to God, there is no better time to do it than RIGHT NOW!