

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCT 10TH-11TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

**QUESTIONS (MATTHEW 21:23-27)**

**AN ANSWER FOR AN ANSWER**

When asked "Who gave You this authority?" Jesus said, "I will also ask you one question, and if you answer, then I will tell you..." Jesus knew they had no desire to hear the truth, so **He refused to waste time on people that chose to be unteachable.** Jesus also knew that a **pointless debate would fuel the fire they wanted to set.**

**"DID JOHN'S BAPTISM COME FROM HEAVEN?"**

Jesus asked this because it exposed the hypocrisy and evil of the Pharisees. They "discussed it among themselves" because they knew they had been duped.

- To say "Yes it did" meant that Jesus was the Savior. To say, "No it didn't" would've turned the crowd against them because they thought John was a prophet.

**"WE DON'T KNOW"**

The religious leaders looked out for their own self interests above the truth, and because of this they had no firm foundation to stand on. **Those who want truth will find it, but those who simply want to advance themselves will always be unstable and uncertain.** Jesus was the Savior, but they didn't have a **desire** to see it.

**ACTIONS OVER WORDS (MATTHEW 21:28-32)**

**JESUS GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE**

Jesus moved from defending Himself to pointing out the religious leaders' wrongs.

- First, they were **living disobediently to the scripture.** Second, they had gone past neglect and **were being abusive with their religion.** Third, they took their **privilege as ministers as means for self-advancement.**

**THEY HAD DISQUALIFIED THEMSELVES**

Jesus told this parable to show the Pharisees that they had been given clear instruction from God, but they didn't do what they said they would, therefore the blessing of the Father would pass from them. God will do what He sets out to do. **If we refuse to live faithfully, the blessings of God will go elsewhere.**

**WE HAVE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD / "TRULY I TELL YOU..."**

Notice the Father told both sons the same thing. There was no favoritism. Oddly enough, both sons did the opposite of what they first said. **The emphasis is not on their initial words, but on their actual actions.** When asked "Who did the Father's will?" the answer was clear, **the one that DID what the Father said.** Tax collectors were hated by the Jews and prostitutes were greatly despised, but Jesus assured the Pharisees that **sinners who eventually obey the Father will be in heaven but hypocritical religious people will not.**

- Those that recognize their depravity will be saved, regardless of previous mistakes.**

**THROWING A SOFTBALL TO THE PHARISEES**

In v32 Jesus plainly tells the religious leaders that John came "in the way of righteousness." This was another chance for them to humble themselves, **but pride won over humility.**

- This is the cancer of our culture. If we'd objectively step back and see the fruit of society compared to the fruit of Jesus' teachings, we would change.**

**IT ALL GOES BACK TO FRUIT**

Show me how and where the **outcome of the world's culture matches the empty promises it makes.** In contrast, I can tell you thousands of stories of redemption, restoration, and deliverance when God's principles are lived out. **You will know a tree by its fruit.**

**THE STONE (MATTHEW 21:33-46)**

**CONNECTING THE PROPHETS TO JESUS**

The parable of the vineyard owner that sends his workers and then his son to gather the fruit is a metaphor of God sending His prophets and then His Son to get the attention of His people. Any Jewish listener would have connected it back to Isaiah 5. But again, the Pharisees weren't listening.

**WHAT WE HAVE IS ACTUALLY "LEASED"**

An important part of the parable is that the vineyard is leased by the occupants, not owned. This should remind us that everything we have in this life is because God allows us to have it.

- We're stewards of God's possessions. We need to change our verbiage and remember we're owed nothing from God.**

**ALL OF US ARE "LEASED" A VINEYARD**

Though this lesson was pointed at the leaders of the 1st century, all of us are given life and a mind that is free to make choices. Our "vineyard" is our time on earth before we die or Jesus returns.

- The parable tells us that **a time will come when we will have to give an account of what we have done with our time.**

**THE TENANTS REFUSED THE MESSENGERS**

The tenants of the vineyard not only refused to produce fruit, but they also beat and killed the people sent to hold them accountable. When the landowner sent his son, they even killed him.

- The analogy is clear. The prophets and even the Son of God were killed because they presented the truth.

**"...WHAT WILL HE DO TO THOSE FARMERS?"**

Grace had been shown by the landowner, but eventually judgement had to be made against the evil of the tenants. Jesus said, "He will completely destroy those terrible men."

- We're shown amazing grace, but there will come a time that everyone will be held accountable for unrepented sin. But, the faithful will be rewarded for eternity.**

**SO WHO SETS THE STANDARD FOR GOOD FRUIT?**

Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22. Jesus is the foundation for truth and goodness, but because He didn't come in a way some wanted, He was rejected. Therefore truth was rejected.

- The standard of what is good and evil is set by the Creator, not the creation. Goodness isn't determined by what we feel but by what He says.**

**AND WITH HIS HELP WE CAN BE "GOOD"**

Though people and the church will always be imperfect until He returns, **because of the Cross, His Holy Spirit, and grace, we can live in a way that honors God and blesses the world around us.**

- Righteousness is not our perfection, but relying on God to help us display His goodness in our lives.**

**THE SHIFT FROM ISRAEL TO THE CHURCH**

When Jesus warns the Pharisees that the "kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to people producing fruit," He is foreshadowing the church being the light of God rather than Israel.

- This doesn't mean God is done with Israel (replacement theology). Paul clearly tells us this in Romans 9-11.

**RETURNING TO THE STONE IMAGERY**

"Whoever falls on this stone will be broken" means that if we refuse to acknowledge Jesus, our lives are broken, or not what God desires for us. **If we refuse to the point of never repenting or becoming ambivalent towards God, the "stone" will utterly "shatter" us, meaning the judgment of God.**

**WAIT, HE'S TALKING ABOUT US!**

When the religious leaders realized Jesus was referring to them, they looked for a way to arrest Him. But, the crowds at this point loved Jesus and regarded Him as a prophet. **We often love to identify what is wrong, as long as what is wrong isn't us.**

**A DESIRE TO CHANGE AND GROW**

Do we have a desire to learn the truth? If so, this means we must intentionally search for it through **reading, prayer, and meditation / listening.** This desire should never fade away. Even if we have known the Lord for decades, **we are to be constantly evolving closer to Him.**

**PUTTING BELIEFS INTO ACTION**

Speaking truth is important, but it's imperative to live it out. **Do our actions support our claims of faith?** Our past doesn't have to dictate present and future actions. **Jesus forgives, moves on, and expects us to do the same. It all boils down to fruit.** What're we doing to honor God and others?

**CONSISTENTLY CHECKING THE ENGINE**

We all have a tendency to point out the wrongs in everyone else, while ignoring the evil in us (Mt. 7:5). **Are we examining the state of our hearts?** Are we using the biblical standard? Are we staying away from harmful pollutants and drawing closer to things that honor God? We must have fuel in the tank. **Is the Word, prayer, and the church community a priority?** Like oil in an engine, **are we filled up with the Holy Spirit?** We cannot run properly without it. Engines are designed to turn energy into action. Similarly, **we're designed to be filled with His Spirit in order to advance the things of God.** Are we doing that?