

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

January 05, 2025

I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 11:16-24**, “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, [17] and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ [18] For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ [19] The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. [20] Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. [21] ‘Woe to you, Chorazin (koh RAY zin)! Woe to you, Bethsaida (beth-SAY ih duh)! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. [22] Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. [23] And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. [24] Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

B. From **Matthew 11:16-12:45**, we are presented with various examples of resistance, rejection, and hostility toward Jesus, His teaching, and His activities. We may not fit any of these examples, but we probably know people who do. Therefore, we will look at this section with the thought of seeing what we are up against when talking to people about God and the word of God, and to remind ourselves that we ought not get discouraged when people respond in similar ways to us and our efforts to talk to them about God and the Christian life.

C. Pray

II. Religious fickleness, rejected opportunity, inescapable judgement

A. [16] But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, [17] and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ [18] For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ [19] The Son of Man came eating and drinking,

and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

1. Though Jesus was applying His comments to His generation of Jews, His assessment of them is not unique to them. In my experience, many people, including some who attend church, are like the Jews of Jesus' day in their response to God, God's word, and the way of godliness.
 - a. However, before taking a closer look at Jesus' assessment, I want to acknowledge there are several views on how the various parts of these verses are to be understood and applied today.
 - b. My goal is to avoid getting bogged down in the details and look at the big picture. From this perspective, the essence of Jesus' message is that, "Those who are disinterested in, resistant to, or even hostile toward God, His word, and the Christian life will either find fault with or treat as useless any approach or choice of words you use to invite and urge them to embrace the truth."
2. Jesus begins His assessment by comparing the people to children, which means: (1) they are immature in their thinking, (2) they are focused on themselves, (3) their happiness is dependent on things going their way, and (4) they only accept into their group those who will play their games their way.
 - a. For example, they claimed John had a demon because of his austere, rigorous life-style in the wilderness.
 - (1) Luke says, "And [John] continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he **lived in the deserts** until the day of his public appearance to Israel" (**Luke 1:80**).
 - (2) Mark says, "John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey" (**Mark 1:6**).
 - (3) The reality is, John lived an ascetic, reclusive life-style under difficult conditions – and this set him apart from the masses. But such a lifestyle does not automatically mean he was demon possessed. According to the stories in the NT, having a demon most often showed itself in some form of mental illness or physical disability. John had neither problem.
 - (4) The ones with the problem (*from the perspective of rational thinking and healthy spirituality*) were those who did not want to give **any** legitimacy to John and his message. What they wanted was to discredit John and his message in any way that would seem plausible to the unthinking masses.

- b. These same discreditors of John said Jesus was a glutton, drunkard, and friend of tax collectors and sinners, because He met with, talked to, and even ate meals with sinners. Of course, these are things no godly, self-respecting religious person would ever be. Yet, according to scripture, Jesus was guilty of such things.
 - (1) **Matthew 9:10**, Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in [Matthew's] house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.
 - (2) **Luke 15:1-2**, Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. [2] Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." One specific example is Zaccheus.
 - (3) However, eating with sinners does not automatically make you a glutton or a drunkard, nor does it mean you approve of their sinful behavior. Yet talking with unbelievers over a meal can provide a comfortable, unrushed setting for such conversations.
 - (4) The reality is, Jesus was none of the things they claimed Him to be even though He did what they said He did.
 - (5) Therefore, the ones with the problem (*from the perspective of rational thinking and healthy spirituality*) were those who – for their own ungodly reasons – refused to give **any** legitimacy to Jesus and His message. They were intent on discrediting both Jesus and his message in any way that would turn the public away from Jesus and back to them.
3. In His assessment of the Jews of His day, Jesus made a point that is true today – there are those who are **so** committed to refusing the truth, no matter how or by whom it is presented, that they will go so far as to present illogical arguments, make irrational claims, and even resort to forms of hostility.
4. The reality is, we are up against the same kinds of people. This doesn't mean we can be lax in our presentations or careless in our timing. Just the opposite is true. We ought to improve our presentations as much as possible, and we ought to look for better times to say things. Yet in the end, the biggest problem is those who are unwilling to hear and receive truth.
5. Jesus confirms this with a proverb – be it His own or commonly known.

B. [19b] "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

1. People can say many things, they can make many claims, they can infer, assume, propose, conclude, and even believe their own words.

2. But **reality**, that is, the actual outcome of what we say or claim or believe, verifies its truth, accuracy, and wisdom – or lack thereof.
 3. In other words, in spite of all the hostility toward, resistance of, degrading inferences about, true-sounding assumptions, and seemingly accurate conclusions, truth and wisdom are proven to be valid by the outcome of acting and living accordingly.
 4. Therefore, even though well-educated, well-spoken people reject and zealously argue against God and His word, it does not bring God or His word into question. Rather, it brings the speaker’s personal integrity and moral honesty into question, and it reveals what the speaker is choosing to believe in spite of the evidence to the contrary.
- C. [20] Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. [21] “Woe to you, Chorazin (**koh RAY zin**)! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. [22] Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. [23] And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. [24] Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”
1. There are five important truths in this statement that we are wise to take seriously and act on accordingly.
 - a. **First**, there is a final judgment where everyone – believer and unbeliever alike – will be judged according to what they have done during their lifetime.
 - (1) **2 Corinthians 5:10**, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 - (2) **Revelation 20:11-12**, Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. [13] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death

and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

- b. **Second**, the more truth that is given directly to us or is made available to us – about God, the truths of God, and godly living – the more responsibility we have to live accordingly. This principle will directly and significantly affect our final judgment.
 - (1) We see this principle at work under the Law in the OT. **Numbers 15:28-30**, “The priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who goes astray when he sins unintentionally, making atonement for him that he may be forgiven. [29] You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them. [30] But the person who does anything defiantly (*knowingly*), whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.”
 - (2) Jesus confirms this principle in the parable of the faithful steward. **Luke 12:47-48**, “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, [48] but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”
- c. **Third**, we will be judged as individuals, but we will also be judged as members of a group – be it our community, social circle, political group, church, city, or nation.
 - (1) There is no direct statement in the scripture to this effect, but there are plenty of examples to support this truth.
 - (2) For example, God judged the nation of Egypt for their cruelty to the Jews. He judged Edom and the Moabites for harming the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land. He judged all of Israel for worshiping idols, breaking the Sabbath day and Sabbath years, and sinning in other ways. God judged the Babylonians for their cruelty toward the Jews after conquering them. And the list could go on. The point is, Jesus proclaimed a truth that seems to have been God’s way from the beginning.
- d. **Fourth**, our response to the truth we have has eternal consequences – and that eternal consequence is either heaven or hell, either eternal life or eternal punishment. There is no in-between.

- e. **Fifth**, if Jesus' ministry met such opposition and had so little success, we are not likely to do any better. Success in ministry and evangelism ought not be measured by growing numbers, but by faithfully using what we have been given to fulfill the task God has set before us.
2. The last thing I want to point out from these verses is that those who claim to be born-again and part of God's family **can be** the most deaf-eared and hard-hearted of all – as were the Jews in Jesus' day.
 - a. It is for this reason that Jesus says that **IF** the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom had heard and seen what these Jews heard and saw, they would have repented. It would have been enough to get their attention and turn them in a new, godly direction.
3. Therefore, the point Jesus is making to His fellow Jews is that God gave them John, Jesus, a clear and fuller message, and supporting miracles, things that were not given to Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom. Yet it still wasn't enough. Their response was no better than Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom's.
4. So we see that not only on an individual basis will we be judged according to the information available, but also on a group or national basis. This is a sobering truth for every people group, religious group, social group, and nation.
5. It is also a truth that ought to get our attention, for we are part of a nation that has been given much in the way of truth about God, righteousness, justice, godly living, religious practices, resources, wealth, and prosperity.
6. Therefore, let us not think that God only blesses, for He also judges. And in my opinion, He is already judging us as a nation for what we have done with what He has given us.

III. Conclusion

- A. This raises several questions: What are we doing with the truth we have, as an individual and as a group? What are we doing with what we have been taught, as individuals and as a group? What are we doing with what we have seen of the goodness, power, wisdom, grace, mercy, faithfulness, and kindness of God?
- B. May the truth and wisdom we have been given be vindicated by our deeds.