
Tuesday - April 7

Jesus was walking into the Temple for the very last time. This was his home. His heritage. The place where he grew up as a boy. The sights, sounds, and smells of Temple worship were all too familiar to this old-school Jewish boy. He was dedicated there as an eight day-old baby, and studied there as a 12 year-old boy. This was his Father's house . . . so this was his house.

But this Temple visit would be different than all the others. This would be his last. His last sermon was about to be delivered and he had ONE MAIN POINT. Jesus said . . . I AM the main point, and you've ALL missed the point!

The Last Sermon.

You could hear a pin drop on that early Tuesday morning as Jesus took his place at the Temple. Something felt different about today's message. Something seemed heavier than usual. The Savior - The Messiah- The Greatest Teacher of all time . . . was teaching for the very last time. Jesus knew this would be his last time to speak the TRUTH.

What would you have said if you were Jesus? If this were your last message? Would you do a quick recap of the 10 commandments? Would you cancel church for the day and host a huge picnic (where you fed everyone)? Would you tell an inspiring story that would finally melt their hearts to tears? What would you have said if you were Jesus? Here's what Jesus said when it was finally his turn to speak . . .

You've got it ALL WRONG!

Yep - that's basically what he said over the next several pages of scripture. He started in his usual style of telling parables, but it wasn't very long until the parables turned personal. Jesus told the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29 . . .

"Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures,
and you don't know the power of God."

"Don't know the Scriptures!?!?! Is he insane??? We've spent our whole life memorizing the Scriptures word-for-word. We're professional do-gooders. If anybody is GOOD - it's us. We're ALL GOOD, Jesus!"

Hold On. He's Not Done.

The lesson was getting heated and he was only just getting started. Jesus pointed directly at the Pharisees (the religious elite) and said to the crowd . . .
"Don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they preach. They crush people with unbearable religious demands, and never lift a finger to ease the burden. Everything they do is for show." ~ Matthew 23:3-4 This was his last sermon and he wasn't going to leave anything unsaid.

*Jesus was only three days away from his crucifixion,
and he LOVED them enough to tell them the TRUTH.*

Jesus continued with seven more warnings
to the religious elite in Matthew 23 . . .

"You shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces." (v.13)

“You swear on the name of the Temple
but you ignore the God of the Temple.” (v.20)

“You tithe on your herb garden but you
ignore showing Justice, Mercy, and Faith.” (v.23)

“You strain your water so you don’t swallow a gnat
but instead you swallow a camel.” (v.24)

“You’re so careful to clean the outside of the cup
but inside you’re filthy - full of greed and self-indulgence.” (v. 25)

“You’re like white-washed tombs that look beautiful
on the outside but are full of dead bones on the inside.” (v.27)

You guys are Snakes. You’re a Den of Vipers.
How will you ever escape the judgment of Hell?

WOW . . . anyone ready for intermission?

Why would Jesus spend his last sermon
telling everybody how WRONG they were?

Seriously . . . do we really need another sermon on our "wrongness"?
I thought Jesus loved people? I thought he came to bring peace, and hope,
and love? I thought he was the ultimate motivational teacher?
Why would he spend his last message on this earth reminding
everyone how wrong they were? Because of Love.

Jesus loved them enough to tell them the TRUTH.

Love Tells the TRUTH.

Think about it. How loving would it be for the Messiah to stand in his Temple for the final time and stop short of anything but telling the truth? Anything short of the TRUTH wouldn't be LOVE. And there was one final truth Jesus needed to say: Jesus said . . . "The Scriptures point to ME. Yet you refuse to come to me to receive eternal life." (John 5:39)

They knew Scriptures. They knew the in's and out's of The Law of Moses. They knew how to keep their noses clean and their hands to themselves. They knew about God intellectually but they didn't know him personally.

Jesus was surrounded by the religious elite who knew the SCRIPTURES, but didn't know the SAVIOR.

The sad part was that "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6) was standing right in front of them. Why couldn't they see that The Truth was near? He was inches away from their hands, but miles away from the hearts! Like many of us, they had built a false kingdom that put themselves at the center. They had believed the oldest lie in the book . . . "You don't need God - you're ALL GOOD." It's the same lie that deceived Adam in the garden, and it's still lying to us today.

Jesus was telling them that their GOOD works would never be GOOD enough.

The Gospel of Good.

The Gospel of Good is a deceiver. It sounds true. It feels right. It seems logical. But it's an uphill battle. If good is the standard then who defines good? If good is the goal, then "How Good is Good Enough?" If good can save us, then why was Jesus so angry at the good guys?

*The problem with the Gospel of Good,
is that the scriptures claim that NONE of us are good!*

Romans 3:23 claims that “ALL of us have come up short of God’s standard.” The problem with the Gospel of Good is that it’s relative - it assumes that God compares our goodness to the goodness of those around us. It assumes that as long as we’re-better-than-they-are then we’re OK. Or as long as my-good-outweighs-my-bad then I’m OK. And while that sounds like a doable scale . . .

God’s scale is PERFECTION.

So if God’s scale is perfection then we’re all in trouble! How can any of us be 100% perfect ALL THE TIME??? We can’t. The message of Jesus was that your good works won’t get you to heaven and your bad works won’t keep you out. The message of Jesus was that salvation was through him alone.

Jesus + Nothing = Salvation

The Gospel of God.

The word Gospel means “Good News” and Jesus is the best news ever. Jesus said, “If you trust in me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. And I know his commands lead to eternal life.”

~ John 12:44-50

*The good news of Jesus is HIS goodness
is what matters not YOURS!*

How About You?

Imagine standing in that crowded Temple so long ago . . . How would YOU respond to the truth of Jesus? Would you be offended that your goodness wasn't good enough? Would you be relieved that God didn't demand goodness but offered grace? Would you be ready to receive the Good News of Jesus? If you're ready - you can do that right now! Right where you are.

Prayer of Salvation: Hey Jesus - it's me _____. You know me well enough to know my history. My past is no surprise to you. You know the good, the bad, and the ugly about my life and you love me anyway. If the words I read today are true, then salvation is from YOU ALONE and that's really good news!! Jesus - I'm calling on your name today to save me. To forgive me. To rescue me from the endless pursuit of trying to be good enough. Thank you for giving your life so that I could have life eternal. Amen.

Jesus said . . . "You will know the TRUTH
and the Truth will set you FREE." ~ John 8:32