

Sermon Notes: October 22, 2023

Matthew 22:15-22 “The Enemies Oppose Jesus’ Authority”

The Lord who sees only 2 types of people. The Lord sees in our sea of humanity either believer or unbeliever — those with Him or those against Him. After driving out demons the enemies of Jesus charged that He was working by Satan’s power. This was simply unbelief rearing its ugly head.

Jesus replied to these absurd, false charges, (Luke 11:23) Matthew 22 continues with God’s enemies still challenging Jesus’ authority. This is a carryover charge from chapter 21.

The Pharisees are beginning to feel challenged by Jesus’ growing popularity among the people. They enlist the help of their enemies. The Herodians are followers of Herod. They care little about the Jewish heritage.

The 2 groups come before Jesus with words of false praise and flattery. They did not fool Jesus. He knew their thoughts, their evil intent and their hypocrisy. On the outside they praised Jesus, inwardly were setting a trap for Him. Unbelief trapped them.

Unbelief is very dangerous. Unbelief sets traps for humankind. Often it begins innocently, but very quickly flourishes into that which consumes a person’s very soul. Our sins that separate us from God can easily begin with hypocrisy. Outward we say and do all the right things, but our hearts are not close to God at all.

Hypocrisy happens when we let the cares of this world filter into our thoughts during worship. Worship is our blessed sanctuary away from the cares of this world and life. But often Satan will sneak in thoughts of worldly things while we are in the divine presence of God. (Mark 7:6)

During Jesus’ time the religious leaders did one thing, but believed another. It was the same during the time of Martin Luther. The church taught the way to eternal life was through works. The motto of the church, during Jesus and Luther’s time, really was: pay, pray and obey. The gospel had almost disappeared. The simple saving message of the gospel reveals that Christ has paid the price, which we could not and cannot ever repay. Christ has obeyed because of our disobedience.

Still today some churches compromise God’s gospel. Some like to emphasize what human kind has to do to be saved. But Christ has done it all. (Jeremiah 5:26-27) Ephesians 2:8, We are saved by grace through believing what Jesus did for us on the cross, not works.

People’s unbelief sets traps. False shepherds proclaim their message and do not point to Christ. Some teach and promote a prosperity religion. “God wants you to have success! God wants you to be rich and take many vacations.” This is a false message.

(1 Timothy 6:9) Earthly wealth can become a trap that plunge us into ruin and destruction if we are not aware of it. Being rich toward God is our greatest blessings.

God truly is not against wealthy people. There were people who became followers of Christ who were quite wealthy. The main issue is do you control your money or does your money control you?

The Pharisee’s disciples and the Herodians banded together and came to try to trap Jesus. Jesus knew their evil intent. (Matthew 22:16) Jesus knew their hearts and saw their actions.

Then we hear the true answer coming from Jesus’ mouth, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” God’s Word is still God’s truth today. God, His Word, His believers, His Church have been under attack since the beginning. No matter the many traps that have been and are still being set today — God’s truth, His Word stands forever. God’s truth sets us free.

(Hebrews 4:12) God’s Word is our sure defense. We cannot depend on our own strength. (Ephesians 6:16-17) Faith destroys Satan’s traps. (1 Peter 2:2-3)

There are indeed all types and kinds of people in this world. Our gracious God only considers 2 categories of people: unbelievers or believers. Sadly, unbelief is always lurking in the hearts of people trying to trap the unsuspecting soul. Thankfully God has given us His Word to set us free, to provide our escape from eternal destruction. (John 6:68-69) God has the words of eternal life.