

Sermon Outline

“When It Comes to Jesus, There Can Be No Neutrality”, Matthew: Life and Words of Jesus, Part 40 – Matthew 12:38-50 – Robin Boisvert – June 2, 2013

Introduction

1. The Gospel of Matthew is about the coming of the Kingdom of God, the rule and reign of God. Jesus is the King and with his coming the Rule and Reign of God has made its appearance.
2. The Gospel of Matthew is also about opposition and conflict. Satan and demonic forces, political leaders (King Herod and soon, Pontius Pilate), and Israel’s religious leaders (the scribes, Pharisees and the crowds) opposed Jesus.
 - a. In Matthew’s gospel, chapters 11 and 12 describe increasing opposition to Jesus and his mission. Jesus had performed some amazing miracles and made some astounding claims about his deity, role and relationship to God, the Father. Filled with animosity, the religious leaders conspired to destroy him (Matthew 12:14). It is this tension that forms the backdrop of Matthew 12:38-50.
3. The main idea of this passage is this: **to avoid eternal condemnation we must align ourselves with Jesus Christ by becoming his disciples, doing the will of the Father.**

The Sign of Jonah (verses 38-45)

1. With an evil motive, the Pharisees asked for a sign from Jesus. They wanted proof that he had the authority to do what he was doing and claim what he was saying. Jesus knew the unbelief that lay behind the request. So Jesus didn’t give them the kind of sign they were looking for. Instead he gave them the sign of Jonah.
2. The sign of Jonah is a reference and foreshadowing of Jesus’ death and resurrection. His death paid the ransom price for sin. And his resurrection is, without doubt, the Father’s complete vindication, attestation and approval of his Son and his mission. But it was yet future, so it really did nothing to satisfy the Pharisees.
 - a. Then Jesus went on to say some interesting comments about Jonah and his preaching. In verse 41 he said, “The men of Nineveh will rise up with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.” In Old Testament history, Nineveh was the Gentile capital of Assyria, the most feared people of the Ancient Near East. At the preaching of Jonah, calling them to repent or be destroyed, Nineveh repented.

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- b. Because of their wicked unbelief, Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees and their generation that the Ninevites would rise up at the judgment and condemn them! They repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold, one greater than Jonah was among them. But with hardened hearts, they refused to believe and repent.
3. Jesus continued his condemnation with a reference to the Queen of the South (the Queen of Sheba). Jesus said that the Queen of the South would also rise up at the judgment and condemn the religious leaders and their generation! She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold one greater than Solomon was among them!
4. Greater than Jonah. Greater than Solomon. Greater than the Temple. Lord of the Sabbath. The only one who knows the Father and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. These are the claims of Jesus. Either Jesus is filled with delusions of grandeur. Or he really is the Son of God, with all power and authority, the one through whom the Kingdom of Heaven has come.

Worse than at First (verses 43-45)

1. Jesus continues to press his point by using an illustration from demonology. It seems at first not to fit into the overall dialog, until you read the concluding statement: "So also will it be with this evil generation" (Matthew 12:45b)
2. This discussion began with the Pharisees slandering Jesus about the casting out of a demon (see Matthew 12:22-32). He used an illustration from demonology to bring the discussion full circle. When you sum it up, what Jesus is saying to the religious leaders is this: "your situation is bad now, but if you don't repent it is going to be seven times worse. As things now stand, you are condemned and headed to hell."
3. For those who do not believe by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, they are likewise condemned. But there is hope. To avoid judgment and eternal condemnation, we must align ourselves with Jesus Christ by becoming his disciples, doing the will of the Father.

Whoever Does the Father's Will (verses 46-50)

1. "While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him" (Matthew 12:46). Now, in all likelihood, their request to talk was not to offer him their unqualified support. Mark's gospel account says that his family thought he was beside himself, that he had lost touch with reality. They were concerned about him and wanted to talk.

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2. The request of Jesus' family seems reasonable. But Jesus' response seems rather cold and unloving. Doesn't Jesus believe in family values, like honoring father and mother? Yes, Jesus knows all this. But he wants to make a larger point.
 - a. The most important thing is to do the will of the Father. Commitment to Christ takes precedence over all other relationships. Jesus is not belittling the importance of family. Rather, he is emphasizing the importance of discipleship. Even blood relations do not merit an inside track when it comes to the Kingdom of God. The only way to enter the Kingdom of God is through faith in Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection.
3. Everyone must come to grips with the call to discipleship. As Jesus explains in these verses and in words almost identical to Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." True discipleship is demonstrated by doing the will of the Father.

Conclusion

1. This was a tough day for Jesus; we can expect no less. Aligning ourselves with him in his mission means we will share in his sufferings. As Jesus had times of tense interactions, so will his disciples. Jesus told his disciples that they are not above their master. If they hated and persecuted Jesus, they will hate and persecute his disciples, as well (see John 15:20).
2. But those who do the will of the Father know the joy of being the brothers and sisters of Jesus. We do not make ourselves a part of Jesus' family by doing the will of God. But as we do the will of the Father we identify ourselves as those who belong to Jesus. But the cost of inclusion is high. Christian discipleship is total and absolute surrender to the will of the Father, no matter what the cost.

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Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 12:38-50.
2. In what ways do you want Christianity on your own terms: "I will follow Jesus, BUT..."
3. What is Jesus' point in telling the Pharisee about the "sign of Jonah" and the "Queen of the South"?
4. How can sign seeking undermine the place Scripture should have in our lives?
5. What does it practically look like for you to be Jesus' disciple – to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus?
6. Why does Jesus prioritize commitment to himself over family relationships? What is the cost of true discipleship?