

Bible Study for Sunday Sept 27, 2020

Our text for this Sunday is:

- Matthew 21:23-32

Opening Question: A quote from theologian and author D.A Carson:

I would like to buy about three dollars worth of gospel, please.

Not too much—just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I get addicted.

I don't want so much gospel that I learn to really hate covetousness and lust.

I certainly don't want so much that I start to love my enemies, cherish self-denial, and contemplate missionary service in some alien culture.

I want ecstasy, not repentance; I want transcendence, not transformation.

I would like to be cherished by some nice, forgiving, broad-minded people, but I myself don't want to love those from different races—especially if they smell.

I would like enough gospel to make my family secure and my children well behaved, but not so much that I find my ambitions redirected or my giving too greatly enlarged.

I would like about three dollars worth of the gospel, please.

- What are your reactions to this quote? Does it hit close to home for you? Or someone you know?

Read Matthew 21:23-32

²³When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Commentary: This Gospel lesson plays out almost like a theatrical scene: Jesus is met with a question and responds with a question which is lobbed around almost like a tennis ball among the officials and the people. With all the banter back and forth about how to answer the

question and what that answer might imply, it quickly becomes clear that what was posed to Jesus as He approached was really more of a trap than an honest question. So, Jesus illustrates what we might call the “question behind the question” to strip away all of the pretense and break down the rhetoric, in order to reveal one’s true intentions.

What are places in our lives where our lips are saying “yes” to God, but our actions are not following through? How can we align our yes-saying with our yes-doing?

How can we ask questions of others with openness, inviting genuine conversation without expecting a particular response (or having a hidden agenda in the first place)? How does this apply to our lives of prayer, and to our lives of Christian service?

How do you respond to authority?

Authority was an important thing in those times – religious people valued credentials and sources.

- In a time when Jesus was speaking bluntly and making enemies, this might have been a perfect chance for Jesus to “make a stand.” Why do you think He refused this opportunity?

Do you think most Christians you know talk a good game but fall short when it comes to actually living out their faith? Why or why not?

What happens when someone is simply going through the motions of being a Christian as opposed to someone actually living it out?

Are the people who talk the most faith usually the people who truly have a more sincere faith? Why or why not? Why do we put on a mask to make people think we are something we are not?

The chief priests and elders exercise damage control when they hesitate to answer Jesus’ question. They fear the crowd’s opinion and they fear loss of power. How often do we see our own leaders doing this? Is there a time when you have done this yourself, holding on to power rather than giving an honest answer that might imply that you do not have control? Do you think that we privilege human authority over divine authority?

What is the one thing you think God is telling you through this passage (it could be an encouragement, a challenge, a command, a promise, a question)?