

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

October 25, 2020

Sermon Title: “When Spiritual Blindness Makes People Who Are Smart as a Fox, Dumb as a Rock” from Matthew 16:1-12.

Today’s Scripture: See insert Emma to read

Prayer

Introduction: Influence. The power structures of the world are doing everything they can to influence you in order to control you. Whether it is the Illuminati/communist controlled media, whether it is the CDC or WHO or Dr. Fauci who stands to make millions on a vaccine or Bill Gates who wants to depopulate the earth down to millions not billions, or the political parties that are throwing millions of dollars in ads targeting each other, it is all about influence in order to control and gain power. In our passage today we are going to look at competing voices of influence still at work today to control the minds and hearts of people. One is the shouting voice of Satan and the other is the still small voice of God our Savior.

Context:

- 1) Leaving the Decapolis and entering once again into Jewish territory where the Pharisees and Sadducees are brave enough to confront the Messiah.
- 2) He is in the vicinity of Magdala where Mary of Magdalene hailed from. We don’t know if she was a prostitute, that is church tradition but we do know that she was delivered from 7 demons and became Jesus’ number 1 follower all the way to the end. Don’t let anyone tell you that Christianity is anti-women. Mary was probably the first person Jesus healed and became a strategic partner with Christ in the ministry of the gospel just as millions of women like her have been strategic partners in Kingdom work. If you look at the ministry of Jesus you will see that he has done more to lift women out of their second class status and raised them to be equal members in the family of God. Just because God has assigned the sexes to different roles does not mean that either sex is inferior to the other.
- 3) The Pharisees teamed up with a few Sadducees to test Jesus. Now this alone is amazing. The Sadducees are like today’s Never Trumpers in a way or the DC elite. They are social snobs. They are rich. They are liberals. They are like mainline denominations today who deny all miracles. The Pharisees were poorer, traditionalists, conservative, and legalistic. After last Thursday night’s debate can you imagine Donald Trump and Joe Biden ever teaming up together to tackle a joint project? Never. But that is exactly what is going on here. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, no matter how much I despise their beliefs. You can tell how much of a threat Jesus was to their cocktail party lifestyle.

Main point: God has provided all the signs necessary in our world to point any genuine seeker to find him. Without the Holy Spirit, the voices God uses will be drowned out by the prejudices of culture.

1. But proud and spiritually blind people demand more. “Then came forth to him the Pharisees and Sadducees, ² and they began to test him, demanding ¹ that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven, ² making a test of him”.

 - The cosmos is the biggest (in terms of visibility) sign of all. **Psalm 19:1–4** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, (ESV) and
 - **Romans 1:19–20** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (ESV)
 - The wrath of God is the next significant sign. **Romans 1:18.**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (ESV) Did you not see the wrath of God in the flood? Did you miss it when he wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah? Were you sleeping when Israel was sent into exile? In our own country, did you not realize that losing 600,000 soldiers in the Civil War was an act of God to punish our nation for allowing the sin of slavery to continue for so long? What will be the wrath of God for allowing abortion to continue for 47 years to the tune of 65,000,000 deaths?
 - The intricacies of the human body is the next sign revealing the existence of God. **Psalm 139:14.** I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. (ESV) DNA, design of the eye or ear or our immune system. How can any medical student remain an atheist if he is honest with the source material?
 - Yet, to the spiritually blind, no amount of evidence will convince them of the truth regarding Christ as Savior and Lord and God. What are the Causes of spiritual blindness:
 - **Satan 2 Corinthians 4:4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (ESV)
 - **Sin John 3:19** John 3:19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. (ESV)
 - **God** when people have spurned what little light they have he will confirm them in their blindness. **2 Thessalonians 2:10–12** and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (ESV)

- The demand for more is seen today in putting God to the test. How many times have we heard “I’m not believing in God because he didn’t heal my son, daughter, mother father.” Atheists seem to want it both ways. First of all they insist that it is logically impossible to believe in miracles as actually happening in the gospels or in real life therefore you Christians are naïve, gullible, and so they reject Christianity. But in the next breath they insist that God reveal himself in some miraculous way before they will agree he exists. So they deny miracles but then they insist on them for proof. Jesus said in Luke 16 in the story of the rich man and Lazarus that even if someone comes back from the dead whom they know to tell them there is a hell and a heaven and a God who judges they will still not believe.
 - In this passage, the Pharisees and Sadducees were disobeying their own Scriptures which says in Deuteronomy 6:16, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test as you tested him at Massah. The Pharisees and Sadducees should be the ones most aware they were doing wrong because if Jesus did perform one more (among many they had already seen) they would be requiring it from God above forcing God to do something at their command. God is no one’s servant. He doesn’t own anyone proof according to their standards. That was my error in high school. I said, “God if you are real, then show me!” About 9 months later he whispered quite loudly in my ear “Read Hebrews 11:6” which says, And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”.
 - Besides putting God to the test, they were risking looking like fools. They were hoping to expose him as a fraud because they honestly didn’t think he could perform a miracle. What if Jesus answered them and said “What would you like?” I’ve already brought the dead back to life, given sight to the blind, healed lepers and oh yes, fed 5,000 Jews and their families and 4,000 Gentiles and their families so what would you like? Would you like me to point my finger at you and send you straight to visit with the rich man in Hades? That can be arranged as Jesus could start waving his finger.
2. Proud and spiritually blind people are oblivious to the spiritual realities of God’s plans even though they claim to be theological experts. *But he answering said to them, in the evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather,’ for the sky is red; and in the morning, ‘It will be a stormy day,’ for the sky is red and menacing. You hypocrites, the face of the sky you indeed know how to read but the signs of the times you cannot recognize!”*
- Jesus made them look like fools by giving them an illustration. He said, in my paraphrase, “You Ph.D’s in theology you amaze me. You have your doctorates and your titles and your regalia that set you apart from the common people yet you can’t even give me the ABC’s of God redemptive plan. How is it that you know meteorology so well that you can predict tomorrow’s weather without a meteorology degree but you can’t tell a kindergartner in Sunday school how to get to heaven”.
 - The signs of the times was standing two feet away from them. Simeon got it at his birth. Anna got it at the Temple. John the Baptist got it at the river when he told everyone “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. Mary Magdalene got it. Just go ask her, she’s in the crowd. Does she act differently know than she did 12

months ago when inhabited by 7 demons? Just ask Peter after I filled his boat with a miraculous catch of fish. What about all the prophecies of the Virgin Birth, the Bethlehem birthplace. Aren't all of these signs sufficient for you to realize who it is that is standing in front of you this very minute?

3. Proud and spiritually blind people need to be seen for who they are so that others do not follow their error. **And groaning deeply in his spirit he said, "Why is this generation demanding a sign? ¹ A generation that is wicked and adulterous is demanding a miraculous sign, and ² verily I say to you, ¹ no sign will be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah."**
- Why was Jesus groaning? I don't know. I can only guess. I don't think he was groaning in sadness over the blindness of the Pharisees and Sadducees. At this point he was ready to abandon them totally and turn away from them and begin to condemn them for their religious intolerance. I think he was groaning because he was deeply moved in his spirit that these hypocritical, arrogant, conceited, offensive, black and white robed white-washed sepulchers were leading hundreds of people astray by teaching them to follow them straight to hell in a legalistic lane to nowhere but eternal flames.
 - Jesus is (in my opinion) pointing at the group saying to the crowd "Why is this generation of religious leaders demanding a sign? I'll tell you why. They are wicked. What? These people display themselves as the most holy of people who are right up there next to Moses. But they are conceited, full of immoral thoughts. They can't let a gorgeous woman walk by without stripping off her clothes mentally and imagine doing you know what with her. Not only are they practicing adultery in their minds and some in their bedrooms, but they are also committing adultery in their spiritual beliefs just like their ancestors did when they worship Molech or Baal in the OT. How? By worshipping a god of their own imagination, a god, who smiles at those who keep every jot and tittle of the law and blesses the righteous with riches and condemns the sinners with poverty. That is their god. They were serving a god of money, of power, of people's admiration and opinions. Those were the gods they were worshipping.
 - However, Jesus warned them they were going to get one more sign. It was for the crowd and it was for the Pharisees who were attacking him. For the crowd, they would hear of Jesus rising from the dead and many would believe. The Pharisees would grapple with the resurrection and do their best to deny it although they would be totally unsuccessful. For them, it was a dark, dark moment of reckoning. They knew the one they had spurned, ridiculed, and eventually crucified was walking around the city in their midst fellowshiping with his disciples and would, would, someday come after them and it would be too late then to repent.
 - The sign of Jonah is simple. Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights and Jesus was in the tomb three days and three nights, starting at noon on Thursday, Thursday night, Friday, Friday night, Saturday and Saturday night and rose again on Sunday morning of Resurrection Sunday.
 - As Jesus finished this conversation, he turned his back on the Pharisees and never again tried to convince them in a gentle manner of their rebellion against the God of Heaven.

Final word:

Salvation is for those whom the Holy Spirit has brought so low they know they are adulterous sinners worshiping their own gods and living lives of sin that have hurt hundreds of others including spouses children parents. Salvation is only for those turning to God on their knees of repentance and godly sorrow.