

September 28, 2008

Messiah

Matthew 21:23-27

Pentecost 20 - A

“What does John’s Baptism have to do with the Price of Gas?”

Introduction

1. With the current financial situation of our nation we’ve been hearing the phrase “Wall Street to Main Street”
2. That phrase means that there is a connect between the Financial Crisis of Fannie, Freddie, and AIG **and** our home mortgages, savings accounts, and jobs
3. This phrase is to help citizens of the United States realize this is not just some issue of some financial elites: but that there is a connection of all this to you and me
4. But I would like to turn that phrase for our benefit today: I would like you to seriously consider the strong connect, of which there is absolutely a union – “from Messiah Street to Main Street” – if you will
5. All this “God-talk” and Jesus’ debates with the Jewish Chief priests and elders, talk of John’s Baptism, and Authority → HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH YOU AND ME
6. We probably don’t lay awake at night thinking about “the authority of Jesus;” or we don’t look up at gas station signs looking for answers to “John’s Baptism;” we don’t watch the News channels to get some understanding of the debate of “Jesus vs. the Sadducees”
7. So – what does John’s Baptism have to do the price of gas anyway?
8. What is the connection between FAITH and LIFE? The Bible and Life? Jesus and Life? – Is there one?

I. **Let’s first of all put ourselves at the scene of Jesus and this group of Chief Priests and Elders of the people (who were basically Sadducees)**

- A. The setting was Tuesday of Holy Week
 - a. Just two days ago – Jesus greatly offended this group
 - b. The Sadducees had control of the Temple, and they made money by selling animals for the Passover –
 - c. This was a money hungry, power mongering people – though they wanted to be looked at as pious, faithful, respected Jews
 - d. But two days ago, on Palm Sunday, Jesus acted in righteous anger and tipped over the tables of the Money changers: money went flying, animals were all over the place, Jesus threw them all out of the temple crying out that the temple was the house of the Lord and for prayer, and they have made it a den of robbers
- B. And now it is Tuesday – 3 days before this group will put Jesus to death
 - a. They approach Him with venom and hate
 - b. Once again we’re in the Temple – and many people are gathered around Jesus, intently taking in His teachings
 - c. And then one of these Sadducees speaks up over the crowd, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

- d. They knew Jesus' answer to this question – though they refused to believe it
 - e. They have been publicly insulted too many times by this Jesus, and now they have stepped up their intent to “get even” – to catch Him in a trap, to trick Him, to foul Him up
 - f. This was the big question of the day – this was their attempt at a “gotcha question”
- C. Jesus is steady, He knows who He is, and He answers their question with a question
- a. He says, “I also will ask you one question, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things”
 - b. This was not Jesus playing a childish game, or trying to divert the question, or that He didn't know the answer to their question
 - c. The answer to Jesus' question will be the same answer to the Sadducee's question concerning His authority
 - d. Jesus asks, “The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?”
 - e. Jesus, of course, is referring to John the Baptist, who has since been beheaded, of which the Sadducees would not have shed any tears
 - f. The Sadducees go and huddle in a corner – not to get the right answer, but to get the answer that will finally shame Jesus and convict Him
 - g. But Jesus' question catches them in a dilemma – which was the purpose of Jesus asking the questions
 - i. If they say the authority of John's baptism is from heaven – then they would have to admit that John was a legitimate prophet, and that Jesus is the legitimate Messiah – that both are from God
 - ii. If they say the authority of John's baptism is from man (which they wanted to say) – then all the people listening to Jesus, who also followed John, of whom many were probably baptized by John – would show their great disfavor for the Sadducees – and they would be all the more humiliated, defeated, and shamed
 - h. So with all their scholarly savvy, their rhetoric skill, with all their egotistical etiquette – they answer Jesus, “we don't know”
 - i. And then Jesus responded, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things”

II. While the big question may seem to be “who is John the Baptist” – the REAL QUESTION here is “Who is Jesus?”

- A. Is there a connection between “Messiah Street” and “Main Street?”
 - a. Do people really care who Jesus is?
 - b. Does it really matter who Jesus is in our world? in our life?
 - c. Are people really talking about Jesus – or is he an old-fashioned idea of good in the world? Or a joke to comedians?

- B. Let me give you a couple illustrations of how the world is not just dismissing Jesus, but how He is a stumbling block to the world, and how the world just does not know what to do with “this Jesus”
- a. A couple of weeks ago, I had two Jehovah Witness men come to my door
 - i. Myrna and I invited them in
 - ii. To make a long story short I finally said, “You know, the big difference between you and me is that I believe Jesus is True God, and you do not”
 - iii. This man’s heart was hard against Jesus Christ and he left literally, loudly, knocking the dust off his shoes outside my door
 - iv. This man goes door to door speaking falsely against Jesus, leading many (who live on Main Street, so to speak) away from heaven, with the unbelief of the Sadducees

 - b. Another illustration - There’s a new movie coming out soon by Bill Maher called “Religulous” – a combination of the words “religion” and “ridiculous”
 - i. While Maher makes fun of all organized religions, he particularly outright ridicules your God and mine, Jesus Christ
 - ii. The tag of this movie: is “Religulous describes religious ideas, beliefs, or claims that are patently absurd, comical, or ridiculous”
 - iii. While the movie is not yet out, it promises to be a blatant attack on Jesus Christ by Bill Maher, “a man who states that at least half the 10 Commandments are stupid,” and who also says “Holy Communion is drinking the blood of a 2,000 year old space god”
 - iv. NY Post Lou Lumenick says of this movie, “This is one of the funniest documentaries ever made.”
 - v. To mock and deride the Creator of the World, the Redeemer of sin and death is blatant unbelief, and a display of outright hard-heartedness, and rejection of the Only God who gives us eternal life in heaven

 - c. Do you think “Messiah Street” and “Main Street” is connected?
 - i. What is the acceptance of homosexual behavior?
 - ii. What is the acceptance of abortion?
 - iii. What is the acceptance of all faiths lead to heaven?
 - iv. What is the acceptance that money and power is where it’s at, baby?
 - v. What is the acceptance that evolution is how we got here?
 - vi. This is believing that Jesus’ authority comes from MAN – that “He made himself up”, that He is NOT from God, and that He is NOT GOD!

III. Dear fellow believers, there is a “Connection” between FAITH and LIFE, Between Who Jesus is and who we are, between the Creator of the world and how we view the world, between Salvation in Christ and how we live

- A. Look at the original question of the Sadducees...

- a. In itself – this is a great question “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”
 - b. The Sadducees knew what Jesus would say – and they hoped to trap Him...
 - c. But what IS the answer?
 - d. Look what the Scriptures say in John 1, “In the beginning was the WORD, and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS GOD!”
 - e. Look at Luke 1 in Joseph’s dream, “Mary will bear a son, and His name shall be called IMMANUEL” – meaning GOD WITH US... GOD with us!
 - f. Does Jesus come from heaven or is He a self-made man?
 - i. Is Jesus like the founder of the Mormon church who woke up one day and said “God spoke to me in a private revelation?”
 - ii. Is Jesus like the founder of the Islam faith, Mohammed, who had a vision in a cave one day saying He was greater than Jesus, and that Jesus is no god?
 - g. NO – Jesus IS God, come from heaven, who created Heaven, even as He said to His disciples in the Upper Room, “The Father and I ARE ONE!”
 - h. The Creed of the VERY EARLY CHURCH states, “The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet there are not 3 Gods, but 1 God”
- B. From “Messiah Street” to “Main Street” – what does this have to do with your daily life of taking your kids to school, buying medications that cost so much, our children going to war, what kind of ipod we’re going to buy, and the price of gas?
- a. The heart of the question of Jesus’ authority is WHO JESUS IS
 - b. Like the Sadducees we too are money hungry and power mongers – everyday – look how we think the world should revolve around us...
 - c. Like Bill Maher, we ridicule God and scorn Him by laughing at the 10 Commandments, not taking them seriously – we ignore and break them everyday!
 - d. Whether we agree with it or not – whether we like it or not – “The wages of sin is death”
 - i. I cannot like eternal punishment all I want – but me not liking it does not change the fact that I have eternal consequences for my sin
 - ii. I cannot like having to answer to God as an authority over me – but me not liking God being the authority over all does not change the fact that HE IS in authority over me
 - e. But where is Jesus’ GREATEST authority displayed?
 - i. Is it in the 6 days of creation? Is it in His debates with the Pharisees and Sadducees? Is it in Jesus commanding the storm to stop or Lazarus to rise?
 - ii. Fellow sinners – Jesus’ greatest authority is when, on the cross He says, “Father, forgive them” – and the debt of sin is erased from us
 - iii. In my Martin Luther 5th and 6th Grade religion class on Martin Luther and the Reformation – we are learning how the Church in Luther’s day led the people to believe that they could pay for their own sins, how they could be forgiven by buying pieces of paper

called indulgences, and how their money could free them from this made-up place called purgatory where they had to suffer enough to be forgiven

- iv. But Jesus' authority is IN HIS BLOOD – In His blood is full and free payment for everything we have done wrong, and that's the same AUTHORITY that is in THIS (point to Sacrament) BLOOD OF CHRIST – this is God's blood and it IS the forgiveness of all our sins!
- f. When we come and confess our sins and we hear "Your sins are forgiven" – those words have power because of the AUTHORITY of Jesus Christ – who has won that forgiveness for you and me – so that everyday of our lives...
 - i. When we scream at our children
 - ii. When we talk back to our parents
 - iii. When we cheat on our spouse
 - iv. When we hate our brother
 - v. When we cheat on a test
 - vi. When we get money hungry and power mongering...
 - vii. Everyday of our lives – Jesus declares, "I FORGIVE YOU!" – and those words have power because Jesus, who died and rose for you, IS GOD!

IV. Jesus responded to the Sadducees concerning John the Baptist – was His baptism of Heaven or Man?

- A. The baptism of John the Baptist is the Baptism you have received at the FONT with the water and the Word poured over you
 - a. Baptism defines who you are!
 - i. You are not a follower of Bill Maher, but of Jesus Christ
 - ii. You are not a student of evolution, but a disciple of the Creator
 - iii. You are not a believer in Abortion, but a child of the Lord of Life!
 - iv. You are not a product of the Sadducees who sought power and glory on earth, but you have been born in the waters of Christ who is your wealth and your all!
 - b. Included in John's Baptism was Repentance
 - i. You and I fall and fail everyday
 - ii. Everyday life IS messy – we get frustrated, angry, anxious, hateful, greedy, lustful, and self-centered
 - iii. "Main Street" is not in Paradise, but in this fallen world – where we are tempted to be lazy, where our greed and excessive spending puts us in debt, where our speeding gets us tickets, where going on various Internet sites strains our marriage, and where we think the whole world is consumed in the price of gas!
 - iv. We come to Jesus everyday, every week → and we say, "Lord, I, a poor miserable sinner confess unto you all my sins and iniquities..."

- v. And “on Main Street”, in “this fallen world” → with all His power and might and authority, Jesus says day after day, “I forgive you, I will not forsake you, see I have you engraved on the palms of my hands!”

Conclusion

1. From heaven or from man?
2. Where does Jesus get His authority? - As the creator of Heaven, Jesus’ authority comes from the fact that He is the one, only, true, and eternal God – with the Father and the Holy Spirit
3. And what does this have to do with the price of gas? What does this have to do with...
 - a. The teacher teaching her students a math problem?
 - b. The boys practicing soccer on the soccer field?
 - c. The man in his office doing business with his customers?
 - d. The single mom working a full-time job and raising her 3 children?
 - e. The young man in the military, the young lady in college?
 - f. The doctor doing surgery, the agent selling insurance, the mechanic fixing a tire?
4. Who Jesus is defines who we are every day – We are the baptized, forgiven, loved, heaven-promised, people of Jesus Christ – who is in authority over all!
5. Faith and Life have everything to do with each other!
6. Being a Christian and living our daily lives has everything to do with each other!
7. Being a Baptized child of God and living in this world has everything to do with each other!
8. How glad we are, how blessed we are, how saved we are!
9. Jesus is God, and something more valuable than gas has saved us!
10. Jesus is God, and the price of His blood takes us to heaven for ever and ever!
11. “Messiah Street” to “Main Street” – the intersection is marvelous – like the shape of a cross even. Amen!