



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

67 – Self Indictment

Announcements:

5/7 @6:30 -

*Annual Conference
Report*

5/8 @6:30 -

*Men's Discipleship
- Question 9*

5/10 @7:00 -

Prayer

5/11 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/14 @8:30 -

Sunday School

5/16 @6:30 -

*Women's
Bible Study*

ICE BREAKER: What proverbs or wise words do you find particularly useful?

In 1670 a man named John Ray published a book of English proverbs. While many of them would sound weird and out of place today because of the change of language over the past 300+ years (for example: “A broken apothecary, a new Doctor”), quite a few of them are still perfectly appropriate. One of them is “give him enough rope and he will hang himself”. In other words, if you give people enough freedom, or just allow them to keep talking, eventually they will get themselves into trouble. The Collins dictionary provides this definition: “to allow someone to accomplish his or her own downfall by his or her own foolish words or acts”. It turns out what is true now, and what was true in 1670, was also true some 2000 years ago as Jesus was dealing with the Pharisees. On Sunday we looked at the big problems that the Pharisees had with the teaching and parables of Jesus. Today we are going to take a slightly different path and see that Jesus doesn't need to issue judgements to the Pharisees here (even though he does) because they issue these judgements against themselves.

READ: Matthew 21:28-32

The issue at the heart of this parable (the Pharisees and John the Baptist) really goes back to the passage immediately before it. This means that the Pharisees really get themselves twice here. In the last passage they showed that they understood that *if* John was from heaven then they should have listened to him. But here they show that, at least at a fundamental level, they understand that obedience is better than hollow words. When told the parable of the two sons, they confess (verse 31) that it is better to be the son who says he will not obey but eventually does than to be the one who claims he will obey but ultimately does not. So not only have they stated that obedience should have been listening to John (Matthew 21:23-27) but here they admit that their hollow words and superficial obedience to the words of God is really not worth much. Jesus could have gone to scripture (Psalm 40, for example) to illustrate that what God desired was not just sacrifice but obedience, or even through his own authority just issue a judgment (like he will later in Matthew!), but here he lets the judgment of the Pharisees rest on themselves, unfortunately they just don't get it!

DISCUSS: Why is it so difficult for the Pharisees to see themselves in this parable? In what ways are we the same? What is the cure?

READ: Matthew 21:33-41

As a parent I have found that sometimes the most effective form of punishment is to allow the child to determine it themselves. For example we have said: “If you **DO NOT** do *x*, *y*, or *z* what do you think is a fair consequence”. It turns out that usually what we are told is something even more harsh than we were thinking! So when something is left undone and the consequence is dolled out we can go back and say, this is what **YOU** thought would be fair. In effect, that is what Jesus is doing here (though God's judgements are always perfect, and he is sovereign, we are looking at this as just a heart issue). After telling the parable to the Pharisees he asks: “what should the owner do?” The Pharisees respond with their usually heavy hand (well, usual against everyone but themselves!). “Those wretches should be put to death and their property taken and given to a people who will appreciate it and use it properly!” (Verse 41). Here's the rub of it all: The Pharisees have rejected God, the one who planted the vineyard that is Israel (see Isaiah). Each servant God sent (the prophets) has been killed and even now they are scheming and trying to figure out how to arrest and kill the son of God (see verse 46 and the rest of Matthew!) The Pharisees are right, the time that they have had as tenders of the vineyard is coming to an end, it will be taken from them, and ultimately, if they do not repent and trust in the son even the most extreme part of their judgment (death) will be their just reward. When they stand before the God of the universe and must give an account for every word said, these will have a particular sting!

DISCUSS: Besides a judgment of the Pharisees, what lessons must we learn from this parable? How can these warnings and judgements impact *our* lives?