

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

73 – The Pharisees and Moses

Announcements:

6/21 @7:30 -

Prayer

6/22 @6:30 -

Grace Group

6/25 @8:30 -

Sunday School

6/25 @5:00 -

Joint Service with

La Luz @ Grace

POTLUCK

AFTER!

6/26 @ 6:30-

Men's Discipleship

ICE BREAKER: What is the best piece of advice that you have ever received?

READ: Matthew 23:1-3

One of the things that I try and do any time that I write a sermon is something David Helm calls “staying on the line”. It’s a lot like Godilocks, you are trying to find what to say about Scripture those things that are “not above, not below, but just right.” In other words, anytime I preach (and I believe, any time that we read and study Scripture), the goal is to say what Scripture says, *only* what Scripture says and *all* of what Scripture says. So to go “above the line” is to add to a passage and say more than any passage intends or means (missing on the “only” part). To go “below the line” is to not say all that a passage says (missing on the “all” part). To stay on the line is to be faithful to a passage. This is relevant to our passage for today because we can see first hand the consequences of failing here in the lives of the Pharisees. They were really good at going above the line, they often went below it, but if they had figured out a way to stay on the line, maybe they would not have felt the full sting of Jesus rebuke here!

Let's start with going above the line. I don't think it would be unreasonable to say that this was basically what defined the Pharisees. We have seen it over and over again just in Matthew. Most particularly in Matthew 15. If we remember back to that passage the Pharisees come to Jesus upset because his disciples are not washing their hands. To give them the benefit of the doubt, this complaint probably started in a good place. It is good and right to be clean. The law cared a whole lot about ritual purity and there were many times that hand washing was important, but they had added to God's Word (gone above the line). The consequence of going above the line is that legalism and self-righteousness creep in. Here we see that they thought that their rules for when and where and how were just as important as God's. And this is what got them in trouble with Jesus. He told them “Well did Isaiah prophecy of you when he said... [you] teach as commandments the doctrines of men.” (15:7-9). It is important that, however noble our intentions may be, we don't add to what God's word has said!

DISCUSS: In what ways might we be guilty of going above the line? What is the response when I see myself (or others) doing it?

The flip side of this is going below the line. Here our best example is the passage we looked at last week. Jesus asked them a question from Psalm 110. “The Lord said to my Lord...” Had they been willing to teach all that Scripture says and teaches, their eyes would have been opened to see that the Messiah that they were looking for was standing right in front of them. So why did they fall below the line where? There are most likely a whole host of reasons. The First is that often it is really hard to fully understand and grasp all that a passage is teaching. Maybe What God has said goes against what feels right to us, or the way of thinking that comes most naturally and so we abandon those thoughts. Whatever the reason, this is a very dangerous and sad place to be in as we (to paraphrase Paul a little bit) “exchange the truth of God for something that is cheaper, weaker and a lie!”

DISCUSS: What are some reasons that we see people doing this? In what ways might all of us be guilty?

But finally I want to see the importance of staying on the line, and here is where we get to the passage that we read earlier. The Pharisees were the ones who “sat in the seat of Moses”. And as the ones who sat there the followers of Christ should “observe whatever they tell you”. Glossing over a whole lot of how and why that works, here is the point that I would like to make. When we preach and teach what Scripture preaches and teaches, the Authority of God backs it up. If we are saying what Scripture says, *only and all* of what Scripture says then we can speak with great confidence, for it is not my words, but Gods that are being spoken. This word is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, if we wield it properly, it is a mighty weapon indeed!

DISCUSS: In what ways can we stand in confidence if we know we are on the line of Scripture? Why do we often shy away from wielding this power?