



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

74 – The Divine Judge

Announcements:

6/25 @5:00 -

*Joint Service with
La Luz @ Grace
POTLUCK AFTER!*

6/26 @ 6:30-

Men's Discipleship

6/28 @7:30 -

Prayer

6/29 @6:30 -

Grace Group

7/2 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: Has there been a time in your life where you had a “hard pill to swallow”? (Something that seemed bad or unpleasant that was true or good for you)

READ: Matthew 23:29-35

In all of the painful woes pronounced by Jesus here in Matthew 23, this seventh one stands out for a variety of reasons. As we saw on Sunday, all others come in pairs, this woe stands alone. It is also by far the longest of all the woes. Then, in a chapter full of painful language, this woe has some of the *most* painful. “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sent to hell?” (verse 33) really takes the cake. Then, on top of all of that, the content here is also remarkable. While reeling from the strength of Jesus' words, we might miss some of the beautiful (and maybe troublesome!) things that Jesus says here. So today we will be diving into what Jesus says, first about himself, but then about his people.

The first thing to note is what Jesus says in verse 34. “Therefore **I** send you prophets and wisemen and scribes...” One word that is one letter long makes all the difference here. To say that God will send people to be his mouthpieces would not be world shaking. If this verse were to read: “therefore God will send to you his messengers, namely his prophets and wisemen and scribes” then no one would blink an eye, because God had done, and still does, these things. What is remarkable is that Jesus claims to be the one to do this! In other words he is placing himself in the position of Divine Judge and Ruler. The prophets are sent by Jesus; the wisemen - Sent by Jesus; the messengers of God are the messengers of Jesus. Translation: Jesus is God. This does two things, it makes the woes that much more woeful and one saying them that much higher!

DISCUSS: Why is it important to see that the prophets and scribes and wisemen are sent by Jesus in particular?

That is the beautiful part, now the maybe troublesome part. Imagine you are the disciples, sitting there listening to Jesus just lay into the pharisees. You are probably smiling ear to ear to hear these judgements on these people who have been rude and judgemental to you. Then you hear Jesus say: “I will send you prophets and wisemen and scribes.” Now your chest pops out a bit. That’s us! He is going to send you, how exciting! Then the music stops. “Some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town.” The thought is this: Jesus is the Divine Judge and ruler, and he can send his people wherever HE wants to. While we can guess the feelings of the disciples I find it fitting that they don’t get to say anything here. Because really what can anyone say? What can the potter say to the clay? What can the sent one say in opposition to the one that is sending? The job of the sent one is not to complain or even fear, but to go where they have been sent - regardless of fears, trials or troubles.

DISCUSS: How does this fit the above definition of a “hard pill to swallow”? What does that mean for you and your life?

But there is one more thing that is worth looking at. It is not just that the divine judge sends his people because he wants to (though that is true), but he also tells us why! Verse 35: “SO THAT on you may come all the righteous blood of the earth.” In other words, the reason that Jesus will send his people into persecution and even to death is so that his judgment can fall upon these people. We could say a whole lot about this, but I would just like to make one point. When we go and preach the gospel one of two (and a half...) things can happen. The first is that they will hear and repent. This is the great hope of sharing the truth of Jesus -- that we can answer for them the question asked in verse 33. “Jesus” is how sinners can escape being sentenced to hell. The other is that they will reject the message. In doing so they are bringing more judgment upon themselves. In BOTH we should note our job is not to know or understand what God will do with our work, just to be sent. God will do with me and with my message what he will do, my job is just to obey! (I should note the half... sometimes we plant seeds that will grow and blossom into the full life of the Gospel, but that is just a “time delayed” option one).

DISCUSS: How can understanding that it is up to God to use his people and their message as HE wants free us to proclaim the gospel more boldly?