Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 63: Jesus crosses a line

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say.

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell.

"You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.

"You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Day 434: Belief

"At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son decides to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry." (Matthew 11:25-30)

In many ways, those who prize their intelligence have the hardest time understanding Jesus. Salvation does not depend upon the gift of intelligence – in fact, it doesn't depend on any gift. It depends on faith. Jesus offers those who are tired, weary, burdened; those who are broken, outcast, or needing healing to find health, wholeness, completeness, relief. He wants to grant this relief to those in need.

And He is warning us: many will find it hard to accept salvation through Jesus, because their thoughts will get in the way of them accepting faith. They will not believe, because they will convince themselves that belief doesn't make sense.

Jesus is not saying that people should not think, or that we must put our brains on hold to follow Him. In fact, He demands we fully use all our gifts, including our intelligence. It is like St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) wrote, "I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe -- that unless I believe I shall not understand." Anselm was an extremely bright fellow – a fellow who understood that belief was necessary for him to understand.

Have you found that your belief has aided your understanding? Are you able to accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, even with what you do not understand?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 435: The tide turns

"At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on a Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick heads of wheat and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw this they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is against the law to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry — how he entered the house of God and ate the sacred bread, which was against the law for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are not guilty? I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. If you had known what this means: 'I want mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Then Jesus left that place and entered their synagogue. A man was there who had a withered hand. And they asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" so that they could accuse him. He said to them, "Would not any one of you, if he had one sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was restored, as healthy as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, as to how they could assassinate Him.
(Matthew 12:1-14)

"Something greater than the temple is here."

"The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

They went out and plotted as to how they could assassinate Him.

What could be greater than the temple?

The one to whom the temple points?

Yes.

Who would be Lord of the day of rest and worship?

The one being worshiped?

Yes.

And so, they plotted to kill this man who was claiming the unthinkable and doing the unpardonable.

Jesus has now crossed the line from wondrous miracle-worker to claiming the authority of God. This was beyond what was explicit in the Old Testament, beyond what many of Jesus' day would accept – and beyond what many in our day accept as well. With His claim, Jesus is also

claiming authority over you – your creation and your destiny. Do you accept this? Do you choose to serve Him, or leave Him?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 436: The chosen one.

Now when Jesus learned of this, he went away from there. Great crowds followed Him, and He healed them all. But He sternly warned them not to make him known. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I take great delight. I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. He will not break a bruised reed or extinguish a smoldering wick, until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope." (Matthew 12:15-21)

Jesus left those who wanted to kill Him, and going elsewhere, continued to heal. Matthew reinforces Jesus' role by quoting Isaiah from the Old Testament. Jesus is the chosen servant, the loved one, the one to proclaim justice, to nurture, to provide hope. He is the chosen one.

Jesus wants to nurture you, bring justice to your world, provide hope to your community. Note what around you needs nurturing, requires justice, has despair instead of hope. Offer it to Jesus.

What have you offered to Jesus?

Day 437: Beelzebul (part two)

Then they brought to him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. Jesus healed him so that he could speak and see. All the crowds were amazed and said, "Could this one be the Son of David?"

But when the Pharisees heard this they said, "He does not cast out demons except by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons!" Now when Jesus realized what they were thinking, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is destroyed, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. So if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has already overtaken you. How else can someone enter a strong man's house and steal his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can thoroughly plunder the house.

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. For this reason I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matthew 12:22-32)

'*Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you*.'

Either this one was The Chosen One, Crazy, or filled with the devil. They could not deny what He was doing, so they couldn't claim He was crazy. They couldn't accept He was The Chosen One – which left only the third option. And so, they accused Him of being in league with the devil. Jesus refuted their logic, and then made the statement, *whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.* Whoever maligns the character of God Almighty will face the consequences, just as the Israelites did at Meribah and Massah:

He says, "Do not be stubborn like they were at Meribah (strife), like they were that day at Massah (testing) in the wilderness, where your ancestors challenged my authority and tried my patience, even though they had seen my work. For 40 years I was continually disgusted with that generation, and I said, 'These people desire to go astray, they do not obey my commands.' So I made a vow in my anger, 'They will never enter into the resting place I had set aside for them.'" (Psalm 95:8-11)

Jesus was repeating what His Father had said before: those who try to control God, who despise His character, will not enter the shalom He has created for them.

Please pray for all those who will not enter into God's Kingdom because of their unbelief. Write down those who are on your heart.

Share with Jesus, asking Him to forgive them and that they turn their hearts.

Day 438: Fruit

"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is known by its fruit. Offspring of vipers! How are you able to say anything good, since you are evil? For the mouth speaks from what fills the heart. The good person brings good things out of his good treasury, and the evil person brings evil things out of his evil treasury.

I tell you that on the day of judgment, people will give an account for every worthless word they speak. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:33-37)

A tree is known by its fruit. A lemon will always taste sour, and a date always sweet. People will be known by their fruit as well – you justify or condemn yourself by your own words.

How do you your words and actions justify you? Write down the fruit of your life so far.

Pray for those who are condemning themselves, and pray with gratitude for those who are justifying themselves, by the grace of God.

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 439: Something greater

Then some of the experts in the law along with some Pharisees answered him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented when Jonah preached to them—and now, something greater than Jonah is here!

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon—and now, something greater than Solomon is here! (Matthew 11:20-24)

Several points:

a.) Jesus asks for faith, not proof. In fact, He refuses to provide "proofs."
b.) The Son of Man will be in the earth for three days and nights – foreshadowing His death and resurrection.
c.) Something greater than a prophet, something greater than a king – Jesus is in a class by Himself. He is claiming His role as the Son of God, the Chosen One.

We have received the sign Jesus spoke of – on the third day He rose from the earth and was with His disciples before ascending to His (and our) Father. Through Matthew and others, we know of Jesus' teachings and actions, and His call for us to repent (change our ways) from wickedness to love (what is healthiest). We also have no excuse not to hear His wisdom, for it is available through the Gospels, the New Testament, indeed the entire bible. It is available through our church and most importantly, through the Holy Spirit. Let us continue to focus on doing good. Let us continue to put ourselves at the feet of Jesus to hear His words. Let us continue to encourage each other and build each other up.

What are ways you can encourage yourself for a daily discipline of focusing on doing good and hearing the voice of Jesus? What are ways you can encourage your fellow explorers in the church? To build up each others' faith?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 440: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom.