

Text: Matthew 22:15-46

Title: "Oh, Great God!"

Introduction: Over the past few weeks, we have been using Jesus teachings and encounters with people to help us find out what is Truth. The problem is that Jesus said that He is the Light of the World; sometimes that Light is really bright. Jesus' truths are hard for us to listen to and certainly hard to live by, especially if we have our own truths that we live by and they are contradicted by Jesus words. But, we know that anytime we decide to live life according to false truths that takes us places that we do not want to go.

This is true in our relationships, marriages, work-place, careers, etc. Many times in life we get blindsided by a new truth that comes front and center and we have to decide if we are going to ignore it and go on our merry way or if we are going to listen to that truth. Most of us know that in life circumstances, the best thing to do is embrace what is true and make the adjustments in our lifestyle or our viewpoint and live life out of Truth.

In this series, "Squint", Jesus challenges us (John 8) that if we will just listen to the Truth that He teaches, abide in that Truth, live by that Truth, remain in that Truth, that eventually, although the light is very bright, eventually, our eyes will adjust, we will understand better what Jesus is teaching and life will get better than we expected. "You will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free."

Let's Pray!

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. You will find our Scripture for today on one side and a brief outline of this Scripture; complete with fill-in-the-blanks on the other. The easy part is to fill in the blanks, because the answers are going to go up on the screens in front of you. The hard part: transport that piece of paper home with you, put it somewhere where you will see it and take time to re-read the Scripture and think about what has been said here today. If you are listening online or IPODing this message, you too can download the outline off of our website and fill in the blanks. We are glad you are with us whenever you decide to listen to this message.

If you have your Bible with you, turn with me to Matthew 22, starting with verse 15. We are going to listen as Jesus is confronted by three groups of people who, again, are going to try to trick Jesus into following their agenda, much like we do.

They have confronted Jesus before and he has not got on board with their plan yet. It's like Jesus has his own agenda for His life and does not want to join up with them. We do some of that don't we? We try to entice Jesus to get on board with our life plan, because if He does, we are surely going to get all the stuff and the experiences and life goals that WE want. We think, "That would be good." But Jesus has His own plan.

At this point in Jesus ministry, there are thousands who are following him and are believing that he might be the Messiah, which puts him in direct competition with the church leaders of the day who DID NOT believe that Jesus was the Messiah. The church leaders are losing credibility with the Jewish people which would jeopardize their relationship with the Roman government ... in turn, the church leaders lose their financial backing, their status and popularity and their lifestyle. Besides that, they don't want to admit that they might be WRONG about Jesus. What a swallow of pride for them to bow down to a carpenter from Galilee!

So, the church leaders sit down to come up with a plan to discredit Jesus (make him look foolish in public) so that the people will quit following him and things can go back to “normal” for the religious leaders.

Now, before we start bashing these religious leaders for trying to get Jesus to follow their plan and come on board with their agenda, let’s ask ourselves if we’ve ever done it. Because you know, religious or non-religious, at one point or another in life, people become religious. And when people become religious it is usually around a time when they are in trouble or something has happened in their lives that was unexpected and maybe tragic or on the verge of becoming tragic. When we find ourselves in trouble, what do we do? We start making deals with God.

“God, I know that we have not talked in a long time, but if you will help me do well on this test, I will not miss church for a whole month!” Or, “God, I’m not sure if you are out there, but if you are could you make sure that Sarah calls me back. If you do, I will read my Bible and not miss Sunday school again.” “God, I am so sorry I did what I did last night and if you could make sure my Dad doesn’t find out, here’s what I’ll do...” “Dear Almighty Heavenly Father, if you will make sure that I’m not pregnant, I will never do that again and I’ll go to worship and do motivational talks to high school girls and I’ll...”

See, we’ve done it. We’ve tried to make deals with God, like God doesn’t know our hearts and the motivation behind the deal. We act like God is our peer or our kid brother that we can pull one over on. We treat God like He’s McFly to our Biff. Right?

Please know this ... before we start into these stories ... God is never taken off guard, surprised, blindsided, stunned and/or shocked by our actions or our words. God is not Someone you can distract or forgets what you’ve done or what your motivation is.

Alright, to the stories ... three sets of people trying to trap Jesus...

I. The Coin Trick (vs. 15-22) ... Pharisee/Herodian Money Trap

- A. (v. 15) They actually think that they can TRAP Jesus. They think they can outsmart Jesus and make sure that they get rid of him so they can go back to life as usual.
- B. (v. 16) The Pharisees send their disciples (2nd string) in with a group of Herodians or supporters of Herod. These are two groups of people who would never work together under normal conditions...
 1. Pharisees = Thought that the Jewish nation should have freedom and did not like supporting Rome with tax payments, knowing that Romans did ungodly things with their free time. They prayed for the Messiah so they could go back to the good ol’ days like when David was King...
 2. The Herodians = Jews who did not mind having Rome in charge. They thought it a good deal to pay Rome a nominal fee and know that the whole Roman Empire was going to protect them ... they did not have to worry about invasions or wars ... security.
 3. So, these two groups approach Jesus with a question they have been working on for weeks ... “How can we trap Jesus? How can we ask a question that is a ‘check-mate’ question ... no way out?” Well, they come up with this...

- C. (v. 17) After the “Butter Up”, this is a great question, because it should put Jesus in a spot of answering one of two ways (notice they used Caesar [self-proclaimed divinity] instead of Rome) ...
1. If he says, “Pay Caesar’s tax”, then the Pharisees will be able to say that Jesus is worshipping Caesar as god.
 2. If he says, “Don’t pay the tax”, then the Herodians can turn him over to the Roman guards for refusing to pay, and encouraging others to refuse to pay, the Roman tax!
Foolproof!!
- D. (v. 18a) “But Jesus knew their evil motives.” Can we stop there for a second, please? ***Jesus is not fooled by them. Jesus is not fooled by you.*** Jesus knows what is in our hearts. Jesus knows what our motives are behind the things we do and say. *You cannot fool Jesus!*
- E. (V. 18b-19) What a great response to the question ... “Show me the coin used for the tax.”
1. As soon as the Pharisees show Jesus a coin, he has proven that even they pay the tax!
 2. That’s why Jesus says, “You hypocrites!” They are trying to put Jesus on the spot when they themselves show allegiance to Caesar as god by having the coin on them!
- F. (v. 20) Jesus shows them the coin that looks like this (PICTURE OF DINARIUS ON SCREEN)... it has a picture of Caesar on it.
- G. (v. 21a) “Caesars picture”. Wow! Good answer by them...
- H. (v. 21b) Jesus turned the tables quickly. They had spent hours if not days coming up with a question that would trap Jesus ... Jesus dispelled it in a few seconds.
1. “Caesar is the one who put that coin you have into circulation, give it back to him.”
 2. You are made in God’s image. Give yourselves back to God.
 3. (v. 22) I’m thinking that as they walked away, someone said, “Who came up with that silly question anyway?!?”

II. The Cup Trick (vs. 23-33) ... The Sadducee Resurrection Trap

- A. (v. 23) “That same day...” (They should have taken a break!) ... No resurrection ... that’s why they are “Sad You See”. Now, they are thinking that if they ask this question, Jesus is going to be stumped and have to give up on His belief of a Resurrection!
- B. (V. 24-28) Gotcha! This is so silly ... (CUP TRICK ... where’s the heaven husband?). They think Jesus is going to fall apart on this “... you’re right, I never thought of that and if Moses said it, it must be true ... you’ve got me!”
- C. (v. 29) This might speak to us a little bit this morning ... You don’t know the Scriptures and you don’t know the Power of God!
1. The Sadducees have worked hard to come up with a question there is no answer to, so they think that because ***they*** don’t have an answer, no one can have an answer (arrogant!).

2. I wonder how many of us push back at church and Christianity because we are hiding behind our questions ... “If I don’t know the answer to this question and no one else can answer this question about life or eternity or God, NO ONE KNOWS the answer ... SO, I don’t have to follow Jesus! I can live and do and be however I want.” How arrogant! “If I can’t explain it, then no one can explain it.”
 3. I’m not sure we know our Scriptures. And I’m pretty sure that none of us can put a finger on the Power of God! I’m sure all of us have WAY underestimated the Power of God!
- D. (v. 30) I don’t really like this verse, nor do I fully understand it. If you are in a bad marriage ... something to look forward to, but I cannot imagine experiencing heaven without Sarah by my side.
1. BUT, Jesus said, no marriage in heaven ... not sure I like or understand that.
 2. Then he says we will, in this respect be like the angels ... not sure what that means either. BUT, Jesus said it.
 3. Then Jesus says something we can understand. Amazing...
 4. This is a group of men (Sadducees) who have spent their lives studying the Scriptures (Old Testament ... Moses specifically), memorizing it and teaching it. Jesus goes to one of the most well-known Scriptures of *their* readings (Moses) and around a *verb tense* makes an argument for *resurrection*.
 5. This is one of the reasons I believe this to be the Word of God ... no one could make this stuff up; it had to have happened. Listen to what Jesus says...
- E. (v. 31a) That’s kind of offensive to the Sadducees. That’s all they do is read the Scriptures! Then Jesus quotes what God said to MOSES...
- F. (v. 32a) Jesus pauses ... Sadducees = “so?” Jesus = do you remember who God said that to? Sadducees = “Yep. Moses!” Jesus = Right. “What relationship did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have to Moses? Right. They lived hundreds of years before Moses... (Joseph, Jacob’s son, died 300 years pre-Moses). They are dead, dust, gone...”
1. Sadducees = “So?”
 2. Jesus = Then why would God say to Moses that God “IS” the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and not, “WAS” the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (v. 32b) “So he is the God of the living, not the dead.”
 3. (v. 33) = Jesus wins again! So far the score is: Jesus = 2; Religious Leaders = 0!
 4. “Okay, whose idea was it to use that question?”
- G. Now they have to make a big comeback ... So, they bring in their Ringer. They were only going to use this guy if they had to! It’s time!
- III. The Card Trick (vs. 34-40) ... The Ringer’s Commandment Trap**
- A. (vs. 34-36) Pharisees are rolling their eyes because they should have known that the Sadducees wouldn’t come through.

1. You know that this expert has it all figured out ... Moses commandments = 10 for Jesus to choose from. No matter what one Jesus picks, he has nine more to question him about, "Why wouldn't #3 or #4 be the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"
 2. "Pick a card, any card ... your choice. You pick. I'll make you wish you'd picked a different card!"
 3. You can see the smug look on his face as he finishes the question. He can practically see the people all turning away from Jesus with comments like, "Awww, I should have known he was a phony!" Game Over!
- B. It appears Jesus didn't hesitate long before he answered (v. 37-38).
- C. As the 'expert' takes a breath to discredit what Jesus said, Jesus keeps going ... "And... (V. 39-40)!"
- D. You ruined my card trick! You can't take two cards! BUT, Jesus answer made all of the Pharisees take the 10 commandments plus all the Scriptural prophecies and fit them into the two categories Jesus just mentioned: Love God and Love God's Kids!
- E. Everything we need to know about God fits into 2 Commandments! They'd never thought of this before. And you can see the Pharisees going through the lists in their heads ... yep, yep, right ... He's right!
- F. Then Jesus dives right back in with a question of His own. The Pharisees are still gathered around Jesus and they are down 3-0! Jesus is about to put the game completely out of reach...
- IV. Jesus' Turn (vs. 41-46)**
- A. Here's Jesus' question: (vs. 41-42) The Pharisees probably did not expect a question by Jesus, but they were quick to answer.
1. Why? Throughout the Old Testament (their scripture) it's written that Messiah would be a descendant of King David.
 2. But, Jesus knew that when the Jewish Religious leaders talked about the Messiah, they talked about another great king like David was. They did not believe or expect the Messiah to be Divine / God!!!
 3. The Pharisees Messiah is a great military or political leader who will conquer all their enemies and make them a world power like when David was King!
 4. This is why Jesus was so hard for them to handle ... He did not fit into their box of what Messiah would look like. They never expected the Messiah to look/act/live/ teach like Jesus.
 5. So, Jesus asks the question about Who the Messiah would be a descendant of ... "David!" "Right!"
- B. Follow-Up Question: (v. 43) Jesus responds by taking the absolute experts, studied it since childhood, to one of the most familiar writings about Messiah in their Scriptures ... what we call the Old Testament ... Jesus takes them to Psalm 110.

1. The Pharisees knew this Scripture ... really well, but Jesus opens their eyes up...
 2. This that Jesus says here helps me to believe that what we read in the Bible is true and not made up ... you cannot make this stuff up ... the way Jesus enlightened them like they had never been enlightened before...
 3. The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law are about to hear something that they've never heard, but will confuse them and disorient them; but, they will have to think about Messiah in a new way. Their theology might have to now include Messiah as Divine (of God). This is new!
- C. Jesus = If the Messiah is just going to be a physical descendant of David, why would David call the Messiah, 'my Lord'?
1. The Pharisees are looking at each other thinking, "Where is he going with this?" He doesn't even give them a chance to answer that, before he starts quoting the Scripture...
 2. (V. 44-45) Jesus just stunned them to silence...
 3. (V. 46) "...no one dared ask him any more questions."
 4. GAME OVER!
- D. Who is this Guy?!? They walked away talking about how they had spent days and weeks coming up with foolproof strategies to trick Jesus. They had him cornered and could taste Jesus arrest and all the people turning away from him and calling Jesus a fool! He Escaped!
1. "Did you ever see that in Psalm 110? Nope, I never saw that before."
 2. "What about that verb tense where he proved resurrection?"
 3. "Who is this Guy? Because this is not my kid brother that I can trick!"
 4. They were in the presence of GOD!! The GREAT GOD!
You don't trick, trade, deal, barter, etc. with GOD!
- E. The beginning of our speaking to Jesus needs to be "Oh, Great God!" When we do that, we will hold back on trying to trick or make deals with God. When we recognize Who God is ... Who we are dealing with, we won't dare try to convince God that our way is better than His! We will know that our best bet is to live life HIS WAY!
- F. You know what? Do you know why we approach Jesus the same way the Pharisees and Sadducees approach Jesus? Two things:
IGNORANCE AND ARROGANCE!
1. IGNORANCE because we do not know the Scriptures and we do not know the POWER of God!
 2. ARROGANCE because you and I came into the world the same way. We came into this world saying, "OH GREAT ME!"

V. Oh, Great Me!

- A. Oh Great Stan! I am the center of all things! If more people were like me, this world would be a better place ... everything should revolve around me, including YOU GOD!
- B. Now, God, let me tell you what you need to do: You need to get over there and fix that ... fix that ... fix that ... and if you were a Good God, you wouldn't let that happen or that happen and you'd agree with MY WAY of doing things so I could act how I want and pursue what I want and do what I want and you'd care more about how I FEEL ... "are you paying attention God? Do you need me to slow down so you can take notes; because I have the whole thing figured out ... I have cup tricks and card tricks and coin tricks and I will show you how it's done!
- C. Oh Great ME! What is Your problem, God?!? I do not sense that you are cooperating with 'Oh GREAT ME!'
- D. It's ARROGANCE! It's why you ignore God for most of you life until times get hard or you're in a crisis or you feel incredible guilt about something and then you become SPIRITUAL!
- E. ARROGANCE! God, You sit in the corner. I'll call you if I need you.
1. I'm starting a business or take a new job, and You don't know anything about business or economy or my families finances, but if I get in trouble I'm going to call you...
 2. I'm going to get married ... wait, I didn't ask You if You thought it was a good idea or not to marry this person ... You're in 'time-out' over there in there in the corner ... If I get in trouble in this relationship; I'll call You!
 3. ARROGANCE! That is 'OH GREAT ME!' who has little God in my corner in case I get in trouble and need HIM!
- F. What I'm saying here is not: Don't come to God when you are in trouble or don't bother to call on God if you haven't been in church for a year or more... What I'm saying is: Whenever you come to God; come by saying, "OH, GREAT GOD!"
- G. Recognize Who God is... Awesome, Almighty, Creator God who knows us and this world better than we do ... Let's not ever approach God again with the IGNORANCE OR ARROGANCE thinking we can treat Him like our little brother and trade our dime for His nickel!
- H. Can we please approach God this morning as 'OH GREAT GOD'? Not even bringing our agenda with us? Just coming and saying, "You Alone are the Great One! Let's do life YOUR WAY!"

Let's PRAY!!

Communion/Prayer: OH GREAT GOD! You loved us enough to send Your GREAT SON to hang on a cross and die so that we could be called your kids. You did that for Oh Little Me. How will we respond? We understand that we cannot even approach you as a Holy God without our sins forgiven and the only way that happens is if Jesus takes those sins and kills them off on a cross 2,000 years ago... as we approach the communion table (all in this together/sinful), help us to approach with a better understanding of Who You Are = "OH GREAT GOD!"

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