

A Perfect Storm

Mark 11:12-25

Setting The Scene:

Jerusalem 33 AD:

Understanding The Times And The Terms:

Isaiah 56:1-8, Jeremiah 7:1-11, Micah 6:8, James 1:26-27, Mark 12:33, Luke 13:6-9

- Temple area:
- Money changers:
- Selling doves:
- Carrying merchandise:
- All nations:
- Fig tree:

Taking It Home:

- God is more concerned with my love and justice, than with my appearance and attendance.

Trees without figs wither.

People without love and justice hinder God's purpose.

Followers who don't forgive won't experience forgiveness.

- Following God comes through faith, not religious practices.

A Perfect Storm

Food for Thought for the week of March 19, 2006

(Questions and Scriptures for further study)

1. Throughout the Bible there are numerous instances where followers of God substituted religious rituals and obligations for an authentic relationship with Him. The verses below include several examples of this. What rituals or obligations were they focused on and what fruit of authentic faith were they missing?

Isaiah 1:13-17

Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations--
I cannot bear your evil assemblies.
[14] Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts
my soul hates.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
[15] When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even if you offer many prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood;
[16] wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds
out of my sight!
Stop doing wrong,
[17] learn to do right!
Seek justice,
encourage the oppressed.
Defend the cause of the fatherless,
plead the case of the widow. [NIV]

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
[7] Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
[8] He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. [NIV]

1 Samuel 15:22-23

But Samuel replied:
"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?"

To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.
[23] For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
he has rejected you as king." [NIV]

Hosea 6:6

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. [NIV]

Are you aware of any religious rituals or obligations in your life that you are more committed to than an authentic relationship with Christ?

2. We saw this weekend that Jesus included the subject of forgiveness in His short discussion on prayer. He also addressed forgiveness on several other occasions in the Gospels. In Matthew 18:21-35, Peter asks Jesus a question about forgiveness. Jesus responds with a straightforward answer and a parable. What do these teach us about forgiveness?

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

[22] Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

[23] "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. [24] As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. [25] Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

[26] "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' [27] The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

[28] "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

[29] "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

[30] "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

[31] When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

[32] "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. [33] Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' [34] In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

[35] "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." [NIV]

Is there a situation in your life right now where you need to apply this teaching on forgiveness?

3. Pastor Chris explained that Jesus emphasized faith in God, not faith in faith, or faith in religion, or faith in prayer. We can gain further understanding of what Jesus meant when he talked about faith from two encounters He had – one with a Roman soldier with a sick servant and one with His disciples in a boat on a lake in a storm. Read Matthew 8:5-13 and 8:23-27 and compare the faith of the Roman soldier who had never met Jesus before with the disciples who had spent over two years with Him. What caused Him to commend one and rebuke the other?

Matthew 8:5-13

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. [6] "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering."

[7] Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."

[8] The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. [9] For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

[10] When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. [11] I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

[12] But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

[13] Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour. [NIV]

Matthew 8:23-27

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. [24] Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. [25] The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

[26] He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

[27] The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" [NIV]

In what ways does your faith resemble that of the soldier? Of the disciples?

Is there an area of your life in which you sense God is asking you to step out in faith? If so, what's your next step?