

The Ways of Jesus

Tackling Tough Issues

Jesus Had Compassion for the Suffering:

Matthew 12:9-14 – *Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.*

Background:

- The tense relationship between Jesus and the religious leaders
- Jesus carried out His mission, and as He did so there were many times when it bothered the religious leaders... particularly when Jesus performed miracles on the Sabbath
- Religious leaders were threatened by Jesus’ authority and influence over the people

Religion says...

- Follow the command to be right with God
- Focusing on the rules helps us to avoid offending God

But Wisdom says...

- Loving and helping others is more important than the command
- Focusing on God helps us to avoid living in ways that dishonor God

Matthew 22:15-22 – *Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax^[a] to Caesar or not?” But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.*

Background:

- Roman occupation of Israel
- Hostility and rebellion

Politics says...

- You must choose a side
- You are either a friend or an enemy

But Wisdom says...

- Our ultimate allegiance is to the Lord
- Faith and politics are not mutually exclusive

John 8:2-11 – At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Background:

- Adultery in the law
- Honor/shame culture
- A deplorable situation

Justice and Morality says...

- You do the crime, you do the time
- You made your bed, now you have to lie in it
- Change your behavior

But Wisdom says...

- Look past the behavior and see a hurting person
- Love and mercy help people heal
- When God has your heart, your behavior changes