

31. Spiritual Blindness

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People who lost their sights, learn to use other senses, such as hearing, feeling, touching and smelling to compensate what they are lacking. Those who have good eye sight tend to take our sights for granted.

It is a bad thing to have physical blindness, but it is even worse if we are spiritually blinds. Because when we get spiritual blinded, instead of developing other senses to find the spiritual truth God laid before us, we often tend to shut off everything else, too.

We will learn how not to be that way.

A. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Matthew 21:1-5 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Since it was a Passover week, there were probably about 2 million people in and around Jerusalem. This was the only time in His ministry that Jesus actually planned and promoted a public demonstration. Up to this time, He had cautioned people not to tell who He was, and He had deliberately avoided public scenes. Jesus deliberately works to fulfill prophecy, especially the prophecy of Daniel's Seventy Weeks, which many feel Jesus fulfilled to the exact day on His triumphal entry (Daniel 9:24-27).

A side note for Passover: An event that had take place 1500 years earlier in Egypt. God sent a series of nine plagues upon Pharaoh's people to rescue the Israelites. Finally, the tenth plaque which was the death of the firstborn in every human and animal in Egypt. The only way a family could escape this tragedy was to slaughter a lamb and mark the top, sides, and bottom of their door with blood, thereby painting a prophetic picture of the Cross that would one day save all mankind from the curse of sin and death.

Roman rulers rode black stallions followed by thousands of soldiers. Jesus was riding a colt as a symbol of peace. However, He will come back riding a white horse followed by ten thousands and thousands of His saints. The first time Jesus came, He came as the suffering Servant. But when He comes back, it will be as the conquering King to judge everyone. The Israel people were expecting Him to wear a crown after He conquers the Roman, but He wore the crown of thorn.

Matthew 21:6-11 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!” And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”

The word ‘Hosanna’ from Psalm 118:25-26 means “Save now!” the crowd was essentially saying, “Overthrow the Roman politically. Help us economically. Lead us militarily. Save NOW!” No wonder that, as the week went on and they realized none of their expectations were met, so they turned against Jesus.

But the Jews still did not recognize Jesus as their King. What caused Israel’s spiritual blindness? For one thing, their religious leaders had robbed them of the truth of God’s Word and had substituted man-made traditions and religion. The leaders were not interested in truth. They were concerned only with protecting their own interests. “We have no king but Caesar!” was their confession of willful blindness. Even our Lord’s miracles did not convince them. And the longer they resisted the truth, the blinder they became.

B. THE SECOND ROUND TEMPLE CLEANSING

Matthew 21:12-13 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called 1) a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

Jesus performed two acts of judgment: He cleansed the temple, and He cursed a fig tree. Both acts were contrary to His usual manner of ministry, because He did not come to earth to judge, but to save.

Inward corruption of the temple and outward fruitlessness of the nation Israel were the evidences of their hypocrisy.

The temple was defiled by the “religious business” of the leaders. They had turned the court of the Gentiles into a place where foreign Jews could exchange money and purchase sacrifices. What had begun as a service and convenience for visitors from other lands soon turned into a lucrative business. The dealers charged exorbitant prices and no one could compete with them or oppose them. Historians tell us that Annas, the former high priest, was the manager of this enterprise, assisted by his sons.

The court of the Gentiles was used for mercenary business, not missionary business.

Keep in mind that Jesus had already cleansed the temple at the beginning of His public ministry three years ago. Before the public realized, the temple merchants were starting to creep back into the temple with permissions of the corrupted priests.

Isn’t that just like us? When Jesus came to our hearts as the Lord and Savior when we became Christians, He overturned the tables of our lives; He kicked out filth out of our hearts; He whipped ungodly thoughts out of our minds. As time goes by, we became comfortable with the circumstances and started to allow those filth, ungodly thoughts creep back once again into our hearts which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Lord comes in faithfully and deals with it radically. And we need it.

Do you know what makes God angry? When we hinder others those who seek Him, that makes Him angry. You might say, “We are not Pharisees. We don’t do that.”

Oh yeah? How about this? Some might want to come to church to seek God, but they don't dress like we do or they don't smell like we do. So we look down on them. How do I know? I know, because I had that attitude and God dealt with me severely.

Many years ago, one Wednesday night at Calvary Tucson, I was sitting on my usual seat. It might as well have my name on it. Because I was sitting on that seat every time I went to the church. Here was a young man coming into the sanctuary and looking for a seat. He was not well kept, he didn't smell good, because he was suffering from a little mental illness. In my heart, I was thinking, "I don't want him to seat next to me. He smells bad." Right away, the Lord started to rebuke me and raked me over the coal which I deserved. By the time, He finished with me, I was the one who stunk so bad spiritually. I've learned my lesson. The Lord willing, I would never do that again.

When our visitors come, they may not dress properly or modestly. They don't know the lingo, they don't know how to act. Let's not shoo them off. They come to the church to seek God, not to join a snobbish social club. This church should be the place where sinners come and get saved by God's grace, and feel welcomed. God forbids that we may do anything to drive them away with our own stupidity.

Matthew 21:14-17 Then 2) the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 3) 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?" Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

The hypocrisy of the religious leaders is evident. Greed and theft in the temple didn't bother them, but praise to Jesus did.

What does God want in His house?

1) Prayer - God wants prayer among His people, for true prayer is an evidence of our dependence on God and our faith in His Word.

1 Timothy 2:1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men

2) Helping one another - He also wants people being helped. The needy should feel welcome and should find the kind of help they need.

3) Praise - Jesus was quoting Psalm 8:2.

I hope and pray that our church Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita is the place of prayer, helping one another and praise to our King Lord Jesus Christ.

C. THE LESSON OF THE FIG TREE

Matthew 21:18-22 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither away so soon?" So Jesus

answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

A man sat through a church service and then on the way home he fussed about the sermon, he fussed about the traffic, he fussed about the heat, and he fussed about the lateness of the meal being served. Then he bowed and prayed.

His son was watching him all the way through this post-church experience. Just as they were beginning to pass the food he said, "Daddy, did God hear you when we left the church and you started fussin' about the sermon and about the traffic and about the heat?"

The father sort of blushed and said, "Well, yes, son. He heard me." "Well, Daddy, did God hear you when you just prayed for this food right now?" And he says, "Well, yes, son, He... He... He heard me." "So, well, Daddy, which one did God believe?"

Nothing makes non-believers turn away like hypocrisy of believers. Non-believers know what Christians are supposed to do. When we cross that line, especially Christian leaders, such as TV evangelists, pastors, elders, deacons and ministry leaders, etc., it brings more fuel to their anger and cynical attitude toward against the name of God, not necessarily against us.

The idea that Jesus would curse a tree may surprise us. Jesus certainly would not hold a tree morally responsible for being fruitless. Jesus was not angry at the tree. Rather, He used this tree to teach several lessons to His disciples.

The disciples were surprised to see how fast the fig tree died. Even Round-Up doesn't work that fast.

When we consider the time and place of this event, we understand it better. Jesus was near Jerusalem in the last week of His public ministry to His people. The fig tree symbolized the nation of Israel (Jer. 8:13 & Hosea 9:10, 16). Just as this tree had leaves but no fruit, so Israel had a show of religion but no practical experience of faith resulting in godly living.

God wants to produce fruit in the lives of His people. Once a person comes to know Jesus as his Savior and Lord, in effort to please God, that person starts to change his lifestyle into godly life. He turns away from his old ungodly life to follows Jesus. That is the start of the fruits we are supposed to produce. After our salvation, if the people around us cannot see the difference in our lives, where is the evidence that we are truly saved? That salvation could have been nothing more than an emotional hype. You are the only one who can answer that.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) If you are playing the game of religion in your heart and your heart is filled with pride, they will cause you spiritual blindness in your hearts.

Jesus is not impressed with what we do, nor He is touched by what we say. He is not telling us, "Admire Me," but He cried out to us, "Follow Me."

2) We must keep our hearts ever so sensitive to God through the Bible to avoid any spiritual blindness.

Throughout the Bible, God warns us not to harden our hearts. If we start to harden our hearts, we start to hear our own voice over God's voice of correction and reproof.

Hebrews 3:7-9 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years."

- The Pharaoh of Egypt hardened his heart against God and Moses. He was destroyed.
- The Israeli people who escaped from Egypt hardened their hearts against God because of their unbelief. Their two million graves scattered all over the wilderness.
- The prophet Balaam hardened his heart against God because of his greed. He became a soothsayer and got killed by sword.
- The strong man Samson hardened his heart against God because of his unruly sensuous mind. His eyes were gouged out and chained around a millstone like an animal.
- The big mouth Peter hardened his heart because of his over confidence. He denied Jesus for three times and wept bitterly.

3) We must keep our hearts which is the temple of the Holy Spirit pure by keeping short account with God.

What are we allowing to creep into our hearts? We must guard our hearts carefully. Because all of our actions and behaviors start from our hearts.

4) God wants to produce fruit in the lives of His people.

Are we producing godly fruits in our lives so that non believers can see them? Or are the trees of our lives no different than non believers?