

Matthew 22:41-23:12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 January 2020

Preacher: Rev. Ben Roberts

[0 : 0 0] All right, so we pick back up in Matthew 22 tonight, and lots of interesting stuff to look at. If you want to open your Bible up, I think it's page 828 that we were just reading from, and that will help you out as we go through. Let's remember where we are as we start.

All right, so Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, and he has not come quietly, has he? He's like a rock through the window of these religious elites, right through the window of the establishment.

As soon as he gets to Jerusalem, he's in conflict with these leaders, and he's going into the temple, and he's going turning tables over in the temple. He's putting an end to their exploitation. He's telling parables, and he's telling these religious leaders, you're rebels against your own God, and these leaders see him as a threat, and they are angry, and they move to stop him.

And the first way that they move to stop him is by trying to entrap him. So this is what we talked about last week. All these different political and religious factions, they get together, and they bring all these loaded questions, and they come to Jesus, and they're hoping they're going to stump him or make him say something dumb or just discredit him, and it all completely backfires, right? Because Jesus just answers really well. It literally silences them.

And we pick up in that moment of silence in our passage this week. It's in that moment of silence that Jesus is going to actually launch this counterattack of his own. So last week he was a bit on the defensive, and now this week he's on the offensive, and it's his turn to question and to teach.

[1 : 3 8] And so our text breaks in half at the chapter there. The first is this question, which is all about Jesus' identity, who is Jesus. The second part is the beginning of this sermon that he's going to give over the next couple of weeks on hypocrisy against the Pharisees. So those are our two parts. We'll talk about identity, this question that reveals who Jesus is, and hypocrisy, a sermon with a diagnosis and a cure. So let's start with identity. This question, right? He's asking this question back to the Pharisees. These conservative religious folks, they're all gathered together. They've just asked him a question. He's just answered three questions in a row. You remember these were zingers.

They were designed to trap him. And now he's got a question of his own. And he says, riddle me this, verse 42. What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? And the Pharisees are like, dude, this is so easy. Jesus, this is basic. This is basic. We've got this. There's all these promises in the Bible about King David's son. David was just the greatest king ever, godly king. He's king over Israel a long time ago. And God promised this guy that one of his descendants would rule, that this guy, the descendant of David, would come, bring God's blessing, restore Israel. He's the Messiah, the descendant of David, the Christ. And they say, David's son. Duh, that was easy. Obviously, this is a trap, right? That's too easy. Jesus says, okay. How is it then that David, in the spirit, calls him Lord, saying, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet?

If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son? All right. So Jesus is quoting a psalm here. He says, King David, in the spirit, under God's guidance, that is, wrote this psalm. And this psalm is a really big problem for you and what you think about the Christ. So in the psalm, if you see it in verse 44, there's two lords, right? There's two lords. The first Lord is God, God the Father. And he is saying something to the second Lord. He says, he turns to the second Lord and he says, I'm going to elevate you up to my level. I'm going to put you at my right hands. I'm going to exalt you in victory over all your enemies. You're going to be right next to me in power. And Jesus says, look, guys, David is calling this guy Lord. And if it was just one of his like random great grandkids, do you really think that's what he would call him? Lord? All right. So there's this family story that my grandma used to tell. You guys want to hear it? Okay. There's a story that we, that my family is descended from George Washington. Brilliant general, first American president, you know, pretty impressive. But keep in mind, this is saying that like 10 generations ago, someone in our family no one in our family even ever had the last name Washington. Somebody was like the third cousin of George Washington's aunt's nanny or, you know, something like that. It's like just this completely tenuous link. Why does she keep telling that story? Oh, it's this idea that greatness runs through our veins. We love this, right? My ancestor, I might be a tactical genius. You guys don't know. George,

I'm related to George Washington, right? And it'll manifest any day now. So this is like the Pharisee story. Their story depends on Christ, about who the Christ is. It depends on David's greatness, right? They're saying, well, David was really great. And so the Christ is going to kind of have some of that juju, one of his descendants. It's like a recessive gene, like, you know, David's, one of David's descendants is going to be really great. And Jesus says, listen, guys, that doesn't work. When David talks about the Christ, he calls him Lord. He said he's going to sit at God's right hands, the place of authority. This is the Christ, the one who's going to save God's people. He's so much more than simply David's descendant. He's going to do so much more than David ever did. And so that's what Jesus is after here. That's what this question means. If he is David's Lord, how in the world is he just, you know, David's boy? Whose son is he really?

And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any questions. Yeah. Jesus answered all of their questions.

[6 : 21] And those questions, they were essentially red herrings. They were designed to entrap and distract. And then he says, let me ask you a question. This is the question. Whose son is the Christ really?

And this is really telling for the question. This is the question. The Pharisees are silent. They have no answer to that question. And Jesus is like, look at you guys. You're all, you're prim and proper.

You're waiting for David's son. Do you have any idea what you're actually dealing with here? The Christ, David's son, the son of Mary, is also God's son. And I'm also right here. I'm standing right in front of you. That's the perfect illustration of what hypocrisy is, isn't it? They say, they say that they want the Christ. We want the Christ. We understand who the Christ is, but they're literally face to face with him and they hate him. They don't want anything to do with him. They do things in the name of God, but they don't want God. They don't want his son. They don't want David's descendant.

So they've taken this set of beliefs and practices that they have about God. And they've taken some of these things and they serve their own political and personal ends. And they've lifted those things up. And those things have become, they've, they've come to eclipse God.

They've completely blocked their vision of God and who he is. And God is standing right in front of them. They can't see him. This is the heart of Jesus' critique as we go into chapter 23.

[7 : 47] So let's talk a little bit more about hypocrisy. And let's start with the diagnosis. So if you're imagining the scene here, Jesus has just hit them back with this question. And then he turns in the Pharisees and he looks at the crowd and the disciples. And, and it seems like the Pharisees are still there, which is, it's about to get super awkward for them when they hear what he says.

And he says to the crowds and disciples, the scribes and the Pharisees, they sit on Moses' seat. So do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do for they preach, but do not practice. Jesus says, your leaders, they're all about Moses. They're all about teaching his law. And by all means, listen to Moses' law, but consider these so-called experts. They don't even follow their own advice. They teach that they want the Christ, but they don't. They teach to love God by obeying the law, but they don't. They're kind of like backseat drivers. I'll follow up on, I'm going to follow up on your metaphor. We'll see if we can, we'll see if it works this time. You can see. Okay.

My kids do this all the time. I'm driving. They'll be like, dad, you should stop for gas.

Seriously. Dad, you should honk at that guy. Like you could not know less about driving. You have zero on the job experience on your resume.

Jesus is saying something like this about the Pharisees, isn't he? Lots of advice. Some of it may even be technically true. I was almost out of gas. It was technically true. But they're not even close to the steering wheel, right? They don't even know anything. They don't know God at all.

[9 : 38] So they're preaching from the right textbook, but they're doing it all wrong. But it gets worse. Because their teaching is not just disconnected from real life. It's not just theoretical. It's actually harmful. They're using God's law as a weapon against his own people.

So that's what verse four is about. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear. They lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. So in crime shows, this is called throwing the book at someone, right? But it's not only that. They also come up with extra laws called fencing laws. And so they say, here's the law, and we're going to build a big fence of other laws around it because we want to keep that law safe. We want to make sure no one breaks that law. So we'll do all these other laws so you won't even get close to making a mistake.

I went to a Christian university. It's called Wheaton College. And while I went there, dancing was forbidden. Dancing. I know it seems like a such a good thing. But we all had to sign a pledge that we would not dance, among other things. And the thought was, I suppose, we want to keep men and women behaving Christianly in their relationships. We want them to pursue chastity. We want to keep sex linked to marriage. You know, maybe they had kind of good reasons behind why they were promoting this. But then they thought to themselves, how can we make this happen? We'll stop them from dancing.

You don't think it worked, right? Well, it didn't work. It wouldn't work. That's not the right solution. We actually had a joke around campus, and the joke was, no sex, because it might lead to dancing.

But we know this, right? We know that putting rules around rules is not a way to transform someone's heart. It's not a way to help them know God or to live for God. The Pharisees were really famous for doing this exact type of thing. And what it ended up doing was suffocating all the people that actually, they really wanted to follow and obey God, but they were just buried under this impossible system. They were completely distracted from what the main point was, completely distracted from the heart of loving God and obeying God. And I wonder if we do this as Christians.

[11 : 50] What do you think? I think sometimes as Christians, we might take the good news of Jesus and kind of put it behind our back, all that forgiveness and grace stuff, and say, we'll get to that when you can keep the rules.

Let's see. We know it doesn't work like that, though, does it? Jesus says, come to me. Once you know me, you'll long to live the right way. You're going to want to obey God. You're going to see that it's good and it's lovely. You're going to ask for help, because Jesus says, my yoke is easy, my burden is light.

That's how transformation happens. But if we go back to the Pharisees, we'll see that it actually gets even worse once again, because the reason that the Pharisees did all of this, and this gets to really the heart of what's happening with hypocrisy, it's all to make themselves look good. That's verse five.

They do all their deeds to be seen by others. They make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love the place of honor at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, being called rabbi by others. It's all posturing, isn't it? It's all our performance. It's all a show.

So this is how it works. God says in his law, bind the law to your forehead. What does God mean? Well, it's a metaphor, right? God's like, remember my law, bind it to your forehead. It's catchy. But the Pharisees are like, I'm going to do you one better than that. I'm going to actually make a phylactery, which is a box, and I'm going to put the law inside it, and then I'm going to strap it to my head. I know, this is a real thing. This is what they did. God says, make robes with tassels, and you'll look at the tassels, and you'll remember all the laws that I've given you to love and obey me.

[13 : 31] And they say, we're just going to like bling these tassels like all the way out. We're going to have the longest tassels. Mine are going to be glittery. Like, it's going to be, everyone's going to know that I care about keeping the law. So they love to be noticed. They love to be bowed to and honored, and they walk around, and they puff themselves up. I'm a holy man. Everyone is impressed with me.

They make a show of their faith to elevate themselves. It's despicable. And yet, we also do it all the time, don't we? We have to reckon with that, that we're also hypocrites a lot of the time. And this is just a human thing, isn't it? That we just love self-inflation. I love being loved and respected. It really feels good to be just a little bit better than someone else, even if you have to maybe knock them down a bit to get there.

And this happens in all kinds of places. It happens in religion. It's really gross when it happens in religion. But it also happens in our careers. It happens with fitness. It happens in the various ways we might virtue signal, the various causes we might share with other people. This is death to us, isn't it?

This type of behavior. What we're doing is we're taking all these pieces of pride and vanity. We're taking all these kind of little accomplishments that we have. And we're doing the same thing that Pharisees have done. We're constructing this system, this persona. And we're holding it up like this, and we're completely eclipsing Jesus, the source of life and love and purpose. It's death. It's death for us. And so this passage is calling for self-examination. It's calling for repentance.

It's calling us to ask, is there correspondence between my inner life and my outer life? Does out there, the things that I'm talking about and doing and saying that I believe, are those actually in here as well?

[15 : 28] Is there coherence between what I do and say and what's happening in my heart? Do I actually like to pray or do I like to talk about my prayer life? And so on. If light is the best disinfectant for this problem, we need to lay down our facade, right?

We need to take the thing that's eclipsing Jesus, and we need to reveal it and say, this is the thing. And so I would challenge you that at some point you would find a friend or someone that you could speak to and say, this is my hypocrisy. This is where it hits me.

I hate it. And then that person can say back, Jesus is bigger than that. His forgiveness can cover that. We've talked about the diagnosis. We've actually started to get into the cure a little bit, haven't we? Let's dig deeper into that. Verse 8.

But you are not to be called rabbi. For you have one teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one father who is in heaven.

Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

[16 : 49] Jesus says, but not you. Not you. Not my disciples. My disciples are going to act differently. Don't call yourself a rabbi or a father or instructor.

What does that mean? Well, he's not saying that there shouldn't be any teachers or father figures or leaders in the church. And I'm not saying that just because I work for the church.

In just a few chapters, he's actually going to send his disciples out, and he's going to say, go and make disciples across the entire world and teach them. Teach them everything that I've told you. So he's not saying that there shouldn't be any teachers.

He's also not saying that we should fixate on the titles that we use in the church. I don't think he's really saying it's about the titles. He's saying don't use God. Don't use God's work to elevate yourself, to make yourself look good.

Teachers and leaders and pastors, don't insert yourself or your accomplishments between people and their true father. Don't put yourself between people and their true teacher, Jesus.

[17 : 57] No father should eclipse the father. No teacher should eclipse the teacher. And the reason is that the cure for hypocrisy is Jesus.

Jesus is the cure for this. It wouldn't make sense if he was just David's son, but luckily he's David's son and a lot more. He's the source of life and love.

He's the cure. Coming to him as our Lord and our teacher is to know his father as our father. So at the end of this sermon that, you know, you're going to get an earful from Jesus on hypocrisy next week as well.

At the end of this sermon, Jesus laments over the Pharisees. And he's, he, we see that he actually is skewering them here because he loves them. He wants them to turn around. He wants them to realize they're hypocrites and come to him and recognize who he is.

And he says, why do you kill the prophets? Why do you reject God? Don't you know that I want to gather you under my wings? Jesus is saying, are you a hypocrite?

[19 : 03] Come to me. Come to me. It works a hundred percent of the time. When we are with Jesus, we are in the place of humility. Jesus has come to Jerusalem to die.

He's come to humble himself on the cross. He's come to save hypocrites. Jesus practices what he preaches. He never postures. He never grasps. And when he calls us, he says, come and be with me here in that place of humility.

Follow my path. Walk with me. If you're walking with Jesus, there's no hypocrisy. Because if you're next to Jesus, you're serving.

You're humble. And he says, from that place, you'll be exalted, just like Jesus. Your enemies, sin and death and the devil, they're going to be put under Christ's feet.

They're going to be defeated. And so the cure to hypocrisy is not a system. It's not trying harder. It's walking with Jesus. Jesus. So, when we see our own hypocrisy, we bring it to Jesus.

[20 : 17] We confess. We set down our systems. We set down our posturing. We pray. We ask for help. We ask for forgiveness. And we keep our eyes fixed on him. So let's do that.

Let's flee to Jesus now in prayer and communion. Amen. Amen.