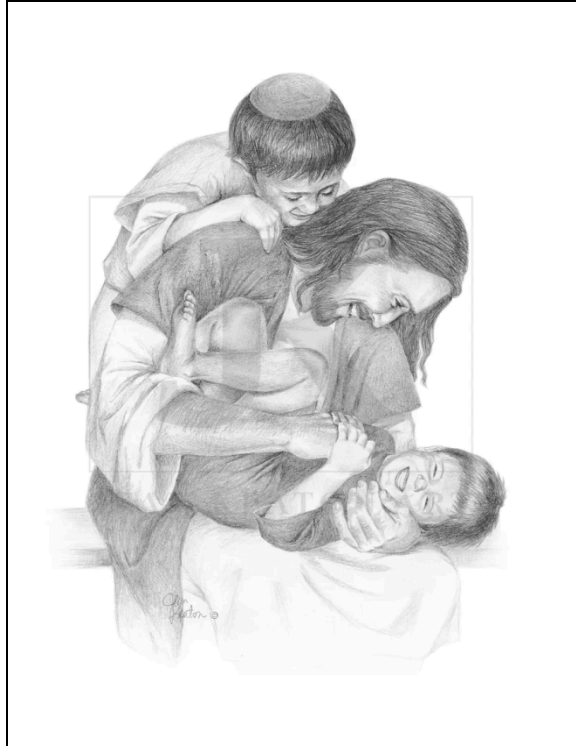


When Jesus Was Angry

1. Warm up: Describe (or show us) the best or worst picture ever taken of you.
2. Take a look at the two depictions of Jesus on p. 3.
 - a. How does the first picture make you feel? Is it consistent with how you see Jesus?
 - b. How does the second picture make you feel? Is it consistent with how you see Jesus?
3. We don't often think of Jesus as being angry, but the Gospels record at least three instances when Jesus became furious. On Sunday we studied one of those stories. In that story, Jesus expresses indignation at how the Pharisees, who were influential religious teachers, approached God and faith. Read Luke 11:37-53, as printed on p. 4.
 - a. In this passage, Jesus levels several indictments against the Pharisees. The first is found in verses 39-41. There Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being obsessively concerned with external religious ritual (like cleansing their hands before they ate), while ignoring the internal state of their hearts, which is far more important. He accused them of having hearts full of greed. Even in our time, we still see lots of religious leaders who seem to be getting rich off of people's charitable donations. Jeff mentioned prominent pastors who wear expensive designer clothes and \$5,000 Air Yeezy sneakers. How do you feel about religious leaders who dress that way? Does it bother you? Should it? Why or why not?
 - b. The second indictment is found in verse 42. There Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being obsessively concerned about the tithing rule – to the point they even tithed of the mint and herbs raised in their gardens – all the while “neglecting justice and the love of God.” Jeff showed a photo of angry white Christians shouting hate at Ruby Bridges when she integrated an all-white school in 1960. How is it possible for people to be very religious, but ignore the core values of advocating justice and sharing the love of God? Why is this phenomenon so common?
 - c. The third indictment is found in verses 43-44. There Jesus accuses the Pharisees of using religion to gain status, carefully engaging in external religious observance as a way of becoming “better than” other people – all the while ignoring the core spiritual value of humility. Have you ever observed someone who seemed to be using religion as a way of gaining status and feeling superior to others? Describe what you saw and what you think motivated them to be that way.
4. There is a common thread that runs through each of the foregoing indictments. In each instance, the Pharisees were more focused on outward religiosity than inward authenticity. They were all bound up in rules, instead of being caught up in the love of

God. In short, they were more focused on religion as rigid rule keeping than on a spirituality grounded in the highest values of the heart as we are led by the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees were practicing rules-oriented religion, rather than values-oriented spirituality, which made Jesus furious because that kind of religiosity turns people off and drives them away from God.

- a. When in your life have you seen someone driven away from God by people taking a rigid rules-oriented approach to religion? Have you yourself ever been driven away from God by that kind of thing?
 - b. In Matthew 23:13, Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross the sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” What do you think this means? How were the Pharisees locking themselves out of the kingdom of heaven? How were they locking others out?
 - c. At the end of the prior verse, Jesus says some people become an even greater child of hell after they find religion. What does that mean?
 - d. Read the lyrics to the “Hymn for the 81%” as printed on p. 4. What thoughts or feelings arise within you as you hear these words?
 - e. Blaise Pascal said, “People never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” What did he mean? Do you agree?
5. Jesus’ approach to God and faith was fundamentally different from that of the Pharisees. Whereas the Pharisees emphasized rigid religious rule-keeping, Jesus calls us to “life in the Spirit.” In other words, Jesus calls us to allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the highest values of the heart – the so called “fruit of the Spirit” – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Ephesians 5:22. The New Testament teaches that, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law of Moses [i.e., religion as rule keeping].” Ephesians 5:18.
- a. Jeff closed Sunday’s sermon with two examples – an example of bad religion (religion as bondage to rules) and good religion (religion as being led by the Spirit to act in accordance with the highest values of the heart). Tell us about a time in your life when you allowed yourself to do something that feels icky because you thought a religious rule required that.
 - b. Tell us about a time in your life when you were able to do something beautiful when being led by the Holy Spirit and acting in accordance with high spiritual values. (Alternatively, you can tell about a time you saw someone else do this.)



Luke 11:37-53, selected verses

37 While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so Jesus went in and took his place at the table. 38 The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner. 39 Then the Lord [became angry and] said to him, “You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41 So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you.

42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. 43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the market-places. 44 Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it.”

45 One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us too.” 46 Jesus said, “Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them. 52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.”

53 When Jesus left, the scribes and Pharisees began to be very hostile toward him.

Excerpts from “Hymn for the 81%”

I grew up in your churches
Sunday morning and evening service,
knelt in tears at the foot of the rugged cross
you taught me every life is sacred,
feed the hungry, clothe the naked.
I learned from you the highest law is Love
and I believed you when you said
that I should trust the words in red
to guide my steps through a wicked world.
I assumed you’d do the same,
so imagine my dismay
when I watched you lead the sheep to the
wolves.

[When people who were different were
hated and marginalized,]
I looked to you to speak on their behalf,
but all I heard was silence

or worse you justified it,
singing glory hallelujah raise the flag.
Your fear had turned to hatred,
but you baptized it with language
torn from the pages of the Good Book.
You weaponized religion
and you wonder why I’m leaving
to find Jesus on the wrong side of your
walls.

You said to love the lost,
so I’m loving you now.
You said to speak the truth,
so I’m calling you out.
Why don’t you live the words
that you put in my mouth.
May love overcome and justice roll down