

Series: Reintroducing Jesus
Text: Luke 6:1-11
May 17, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=52015104316>

Getting Started:

I wonder if you have ever heard someone talk about the difference between religion and the gospel?

What do you think they mean by that?

Obviously religion is not a bad word in and of itself. After all, Christianity is a religion. In James 1:27, James talks about pure and undefiled religion. But, there is an approach to religion that is very different than the gospels, and we are going to talk a little about that together tonight.

The Big Idea:

As an example of the approach to religion that is very different than the gospels, we are going to think a little tonight about the Pharisees. The gospel Jesus preached and the religion the Pharisees taught was very different.

(It must have been! After all, when the Pharisees got to know Jesus, they wanted to kill him.)

The debate between Jesus and the Pharisees is not simply an old boring theological discussion.

The religion of the Pharisees represents the standard religious approach to God that many people still use today:

‘I obey in order to be accepted by God’

Or to say it another way,

‘I do what God wants so that I can get something from God.’

Jesus came teaching something much more radical. He came teaching that we can’t please God through our own efforts, that we need a Savior who will obey in our place, and even die as our substitute, and that the only way we can be made right with God is through faith in Him.

There is nothing whatsoever in a person that merits God's acceptance, his only hope is to be accepted on the basis of Christ. This completely changes one's motivation for obedience. Instead of 'I obey in order to be accepted,' the gospel says, 'I am accepted therefore I obey.'

Into the Text:

To see the biblical gospel clearly let's look at two different passages and see if we can answer a few questions together about them.

The first passage shows us the gospel Paul preached. It is found in Galatians 1:3,4. Have someone read these verses for you.

What does the word deliver/rescue tell us about our condition before God saved us?
How did Jesus deliver us?
What reason does this passage tell us that God did all this for us?
What does the fact that God gets the glory for our salvation tell us about who is the actual cause of our salvation?

The second group of passages gives us a glimpse of the gospel Jesus preached. It is found in Luke 4:18-20 and Luke 5:32. Have someone read these passages for you.

Who did Jesus come to preach good news to? Liberty for? Recovering of sight to? To set at liberty who? Whose favor was he proclaiming? Who did Jesus come to call?

While the words in Luke 4 may refer to people in physical difficulties, they also certainly describe the spiritual condition of the people Jesus was coming to save, as we see in the story in Luke 5.

Through Jesus, God justifies the ungodly!

One author explains the significance of this as follows:

"...the biblical gospel...is clear that salvation, from first to last, is God's doing. It is His calling; His plan; His action; His work. And so it is He who deserves all the glory, for all time. This is the humbling truth that lies at the heart of Christianity. We love to be our own Saviors. Our hearts love to manufacture glory for themselves. So we find messages of self-salvation extremely attractive, whether they are religious (keep these rules and you earn eternal blessing) or secular (grab hold of these things and you'll experience blessing now). The gospel comes and turns them all upside down. It says: You are in such a hopeless position that you need a rescue that has nothing to do with you at all. And then it says, God in Jesus provides a rescue which gives you far more than any false salvation your heart may love to chase."

Digging Deeper:

Make no mistake about it: the biblical gospel is unique!

The difference between saving yourself through your own efforts or helping Jesus save you through being good and relying on Jesus alone for salvation is huge. While obeying in order to be accepted and obeying because you are accepted may result in some similar behaviors at first, like praying and reading your Bible and going to church, they are in reality, two completely different religions.

One author has identified the differences between self-righteous religion and the gospel as follows: (Read through this list and discuss what you think he means by each statement)

“Religion says, if I obey, God will love me. Gospel says, because God loves me, I can obey.

Religion has good people & bad people. Gospel has only repentant and unrepentant people.

Religion values a birth family. Gospel values a new birth.

Religion depends on what I do. Gospel depends on what Jesus has done.

Religion claims that sanctification justifies me. Gospel claims that justification enables sanctification.

Religion has the goal to get from God. Gospel has the goal to get God.

Religion sees hardships as punishment for sin. Gospel sees hardship as sanctified affliction.

Religion is about me. Gospel is about Jesus.

Religion believes appearing as a good person is the key. Gospel believes that being honest is the key.

Religion has an uncertainty of standing before God. Gospel has certainty based upon Jesus' work.

Religion sees Jesus as the means. Gospel sees Jesus as the end.

Religion ends in pride or despair. Gospel ends in humble joy.”

To Think About:

As you look at your life, are you an accidental Pharisee? In other words, are you religious or are you someone who really gets the gospel.

It would be easy perhaps to try to ignore this question or to minimize its importance, but this past Sunday in Luke 5:17-6:11 we saw some of the consequences of the Pharisees self-centered approach. Read the following five consequences out loud and see if anyone can explain how this worked out in the text we studied on Sunday. In other words, after each point, ask, how did it keep the Pharisees from doing this?

1. It kept the Pharisees from showing compassion to people.
2. It kept the Pharisees from sincerely seeking a Savior.
3. It kept the Pharisees from genuinely worshiping the Lord.
4. It kept the Pharisees from accurately understanding the law.
5. It kept the Pharisees from actually obeying their God.

The reason we looked at all these consequences is to show you that getting the gospel right is really a very big deal! Just because someone says they are a Christian and is reading their Bible and praying is not necessarily a good thing, if they are doing what they are doing in order to earn favor with God. That self-righteous motivation will completely ruin everything! It will ruin your relationships with people, keep you from seeing Jesus, empty your religious activity of its meaning, make it impossible to benefit from your study of God's Word, and turn your good works into works that are ugly in God's sight.

Summing Up:

The gospel is for the broken-hearted. Are you humble enough to rest completely in Christ's work on your behalf?

Martin Luther once said,

“There is no middle ground between Christian righteousness and works righteousness. There is no other alternative to Christian righteousness but works righteousness; if you do not build your confidence on the work of Christ you must build your confidence on your own work.”

Whose work are you building your confidence on? What difference would it make on your life this week if you really believed that you have been delivered completely and finally and fully by the work of Christ on your behalf?