

LIFE GROUP

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Road to Jerusalem: Confrontations and Parables March 17, 2024

Summary

This Sunday, Pastor Dale explores how following Jesus may lead to conflicts with societal norms and cultural values, emphasizing the uniqueness of Christian beliefs in challenging both secular liberalism and religious conservatism. He also highlights Jesus' challenge to skeptics and the call to embrace sacrificial love and trust in God, even at the risk of losing control.

Scripture

The Authority of Jesus Challenged

Again they entered Jerusalem. As Jesus was walking through the Temple area, the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders came up to him. They demanded, "By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right to do them?" Mark 11:27-28 (NLT)

Whose Son is the Messiah?

Later, as Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple, he asked, "Why do the teachers of religious law claim that the Messiah is the son of David? For David himself, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.' Since David himself called the Messiah 'my Lord,' how can the Messiah be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with great delight. Jesus also taught: "Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces. And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the head table at banquets. Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished." Mark 12:35-40 (NLT)

The Widow's Offering

Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on." Mark 12:41-44 (NLT)

It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 (NLT)

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Let's Start

This week, Pastor Dale focused on controversy. Take a few minutes and talk about one or more of the following common controversies:

- Pop or Soda?
- Gray duck or Goose?
- Cilantro — good or tastes like soap?

Gratitude and Prayer

How has God worked in your life since we were together?

Let's Talk

1. How do Jesus' actions during Palm Sunday challenge our understanding of who He is and the impact He should have on our lives?
2. Discuss how you experience the tension of "A Versus Reality" in your life. How do you respond to it?
3. Pastor Dale talked about the difference between liberal Christianity and conservative Christianity. How does Jesus challenge both perspectives?

Liberally speaking, Christianity is all about:

- **Social Justice:** Advocacy for the marginalized, the poor and the oppressed, reflecting Jesus' teachings to care for the least among us (Matthew 25:40).
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Emphasizing the responsibility to care for God's creation.
- **Nonviolence:** Drawing on Jesus' teachings of peace and turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), we are supposed to promote peace-building and reconciliation over conflict.
- **Equality:** In God's sight, we are all one. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female. Every tribe, tongue and race is loved and accepted.
- **Equity:** Real Christianity is concerned for the poor and destitute. It is willing to sacrifice for the needs of others.

Conservatively speaking, Christianity upholds:

- **Biblical Family Values:** It promotes and protects marriage and family structures as foundational to society, inspired by biblical narratives.
- **Pro-life Ethics:** Valuing the sanctity of life from conception, based on the belief that all life is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).
- **Personal Responsibility:** Emphasizing individual moral responsibility and accountability to God's laws, reflecting teachings on personal repentance and virtue.

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- **Religious Freedom:** Advocating for the right to practice one's faith freely, reflecting the New Testament accounts of early Christians' struggles for religious expression.
 - **Preservation of Biblical Authority:** Maintaining historical doctrines and practices of the faith.
4. Pastor Dale highlights the encounter between Jesus and the skeptics, emphasizing Jesus as the ultimate argument for His identity. How do different cultures and individuals seek proof or validation for their beliefs? How does Jesus' life and message address these diverse perspectives?
 5. The story of the poor widow's sacrificial giving is contrasted with the actions of the religious leaders. How does this story challenge our understanding of control, trust, and sacrificial love in our relationship with God? How does losing control for the sake of trusting God relate to our daily lives and interactions with others?

Let's Act

Who can you invite to Wooddale's Easter services?
