

October 23, 2016

I Want to Know Jesus

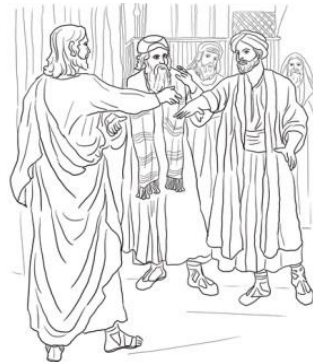
"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."
Philippians 3:10-11

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier; to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home."
Luke 5:17-26

"One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. Some of the Pharisees asked, 'Why are you doing what is unlawful...?'..."One another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled..."
Luke 6:1-11

As Jesus continued in his ministry he began to run into almost constant criticism and condemnation from many of the religious leaders of his day. As his popularity grew they became more and more critical of nearly everything he said and did. When he healed the paralyzed man they condemned him for what he said and when he healed the man with the withered hand they condemned him for when he did it.

These religious elite and their attitudes toward Jesus exemplify a common spiritual trap that we too can stumble over. It is easy when we understand what Jesus commands us to do and to be, to get lost in the 'when' and 'where' and 'how' and lose sight of the 'why'. When the man who was paralyzed was brought to Jesus by his friends he chose to forgive the man's sins. The religious elite condemned him for claiming to be able to forgive sins since they correctly believed that only God can forgive sins. When Jesus then healed the man they should have understood what that said about our Lord. He proved on that day that he was and is the Son of God, but their actions and attitudes would suggest they rejected that obvious conclusion.



Their problem became even more apparent when Jesus was confronted with a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Their rules and regulations concerning the simple command to **"...keep the Sabbath..."** were more important to them than the condition of this man with a severe disability.

In much the same way many of us have, I fear, lost the meaning of what we call the Lord's Supper because of the rules and regulations that we have attached to it. The Apostle Paul tells us that on the night of his betrayal Jesus gave his disciples a simple mechanism to help them and us remember the price of our salvation which he paid.

During his last meal with his inner circle he **"...took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'...he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'**" (I Corinthians 11:24-26)

This beautiful and simple mechanism was given to us by our Lord to do, whenever we do it, in remembrance of him. Over the centuries we have created rules and regulations, just as the Jews did with the Sabbath observance, to guide us in performing this simple task. It seems that most of

our rules and regulations focus on the 'when', and 'how', but almost completely lose sight of the 'why'. And when our rules become more important to us than in this case the Lord's Supper, then we feel justified in criticizing and condemning those who don't keep those rules.

The Pharisees had devoted themselves to the careful keeping of their own rules and regulations. They criticized and condemned anyone, even the Son of God, for failing to meet their 'righteous' standards, and in doing so they condemned themselves.

We, I fear, get caught up in the same behaviors. We focus nearly all of our attention on the 'how' and 'when' and 'where' and criticize and condemn those who don't join us in our careful adherence to these rules and regulations. In doing this we fail to see the hurting and the struggling and the lost who desperately need to come to Jesus.