

Wisdom is Justified by Her Children

Call to Worship: Psalm 30

1st Scripture: Luke 7:18-35

2nd Scripture: Matthew 11:1-19

Introduction

Following our Lord's response to John the Baptist, who was struggling with doubts, the Lord then moved on to highlight both the greatness and weakness of John. To this end, John, who was the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets, was also less than the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, because he was limited to the light that was given in the Old Covenant. Furthermore, the Lord moves on to commend John for faithfully fulfilling his role as the forerunner to the Christ. From the time of John, up to the present, desperate souls were forcefully pressing their way into the Kingdom of Heaven. Coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, John had opened up the gateway into the kingdom, calling all to repentance, and to be baptized unto the cleansing of their sins, so that, they might be ready to receive the Messiah, who would soon arrive. And at the baptism of Jesus, when Jesus was revealed as the Messiah, John had begun to point his followers to the Christ, so that, they might now follow Him. And since then, individuals had continued to flock to the Christ, pressing into the Kingdom.

However, not all were entering in. There were also many who, coming with wrong motives, or not coming at all, had missed the wave. The most prominent, among those who were rejecting the Christ, were the great majority of the Pharisees and the religious leaders of Israel. For, they did not have ears to hear and eyes to see.

This morning then, as we move into verses 16-19, our Lord will now turn His attention toward addressing the present generation, as a whole, especially as it has been shaped by the foolish thinking and self-righteous traditions of the religious leaders. To this end, we will see how illogical and childish, hard-heartedness can make a people, who are sold out to ungodliness and the rejection of the truth. Embracing falsehood has consequences, and those consequences can and will lead to the abandonment of all that is reasonable, leaving no pathway for the truth to

enter in. And brethren, our own present generation is a great testimony to this reality. Though from a different angle, we are living with the infection of this very disease.

I. The Childish Rejection of the Truth

“But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament’” (vs. 16-18).

As I said, while many flocked to John, and then to the Christ, not all did, and even many among those who did, were ultimately fickle in their commitment. In fact, immediately following our text, we will find the Lord condemning three cities who had witnessed many of His miracles, and yet, rejected Him. Contextually, that works well to help us appreciate what our Lord is saying here, just prior to those condemning rebukes. And so, here our Lord begins by addressing the general atmosphere (or aura) of the present generation, which again, has been grossly led astray by the poor religious climate set down by the religious leaders. And He does so, by providing a picture, to help illustrate the general attitude of the present generation.

During the time of Christ, the market place was the main stage for all public activity and life. Not only did people shop and interact there, but wedding and funeral processions often passed through there. And children would certainly play all kinds of games together there, as well. And so, here, the Lord paints what would have been a very common picture to the multitudes; a picture of children acting childish. And I would assume that all of us, while we may not be able to relate directly to everything in the illustration, can very much relate to appreciating the childish things that children do. Those of us who have children, probably see these kinds of things on a regular basis. And those of us who were once children (which would include *all* of us) can probably remember occasions where we have acted in these kinds of ways when we were younger. And those of us who have completely forgotten our childhood, recognize that, sadly, even as adults, sometimes we can act in these kinds of ways. If the religious leaders of our Lord’s time acted like this, then, in our flesh, we are at the very least, prone to do so, as well, at times.

What then is the picture here painted by our Lord. It is a picture of children, who on various occasions, are simply impossible to please. One child, Sam, wants to play a certain game (mimicking a time of celebration, he wants to play the flute so that they can all dance), but nobody wants to do what Sam wants to do, and so the others say, “Ahhh, we don’t wanna play wedding or celebration. That’s boring.” And so, Sam says, “Okay, let’s play funeral then.” And Sam then begins to fake cry, trying to set a pattern for everyone else to follow, but no one jumps in. “Ahhh, we don’t wanna play that dumb game either.” And ultimately, whatever Sam puts forth as an option to play; no matter what he does to motivate the others to do something, they simply turn him down. And their reason for doing this, is not so much because they don’t want to play any of the games, as much as it is, that they don’t want to do what *Sam* wants to do. They are intentionally protesting against catering to Sam’s desires, while pretending they are simply not in the mood for those particular games.

Haven’t we been there, brethren? Can we not remember times, when as children, out of envy or jealousy or pride, or simply because we didn’t want to give one of our friends the sense that they were able to make a good game choice, we encouraged everyone else to see the idea as a bad one, even though it wasn’t really the idea that we were opposed to? In fact, if Jimmy came up with the idea, we would have jumped up and said, “Let’s go!” You see, it’s that kind of childishness that infiltrates groups of friends, doesn’t it? And at different times, they all do it to each other, if not simply to get back at someone who did it to you last time. It’s stubborn pride, which makes it’s way out in a demeanor of dissatisfaction with everything. And when children are in that mindset, it is always a “no win” situation (there’s no place for compromise), and no means of logic can penetrate that thick wall. Our Lord describes then, the present generation in this kind of way.

Coming out of the illustration then, the Lord moves on to bring home the point, by providing very specific ways, in which, the present generation exhibits this kind of illogical foolishness, which is actually compelled by wicked motives. “**For** John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (vs. 18-19a).

And so, here we find the specific way, in which, those who rejected Christ were acting. On the one hand, John the Baptist, who came as an ascetic; who came not eating and drinking or enjoying any of the comforts of life; John, who came in a very stern way, a wilderness dweller, who called the people to repent, shunning the excesses of life... they rejected, saying, “He has a demon.” They wrote off John, on the basis of his distant and ascetic behavior (which accompanied the sober nature of his ministry), accusing him of being demon possessed. They used his “neglect” of regular life enjoyments, as an excuse for writing him off altogether. And in doing so, it was a childish means of pointing to something at the surface, as a means of refusing to embrace the very heart and purpose of John’s ministry altogether, which could have led to their salvation. And because their motives were really impure, and their attack against John’s asceticism was both childish and unfounded, they were without excuse for rejecting his prophetic ministry.

Further exposing their hypocrisy and childishness, they also wrote off the Lord Jesus Christ, for enjoying the excesses that John refused, accusing Him of being a glutton, a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Jesus came eating and drinking; He was among the people in the community (indeed, He went out to them); He went to weddings and feasts and public events, and they used His enjoyment of such things as a means of discrediting His teaching and ministry, basically claiming that He was a “party animal.” And so, like the children in our Lord’s illustration, the people put themselves in a “no win” situation, for receiving the Word of God and the Gospel that God was sending them. They used childish schemes to cast away God’s call upon them, making foolish accusations against both John and Jesus, on both sides of the life spectrum, so as to give them an alleged excuse for casting away the united message, given by God, through John and Jesus.

II. Wisdom is Justified by Her Children

All in all, while those who had made such foolish accusations against John and the Lord were acting childishly and illogically, their impure motives would ultimately be exposed, leaving them entirely guilty for their rejection of the Kingdom of God. They were without excuse. And that is why Jesus adds these words to the end of verse 19, “***But*** wisdom is justified by her

children.” Some translations say, “But wisdom is justified/vindicated by her works/deeds.” Both translations state the exact same thing. The point is this. In the end, what is true will be exposed by the fruit that comes about. It is another way of the Lord saying, “The tree will be known by its fruit.” The lives of the children will authenticate the wisdom or lack thereof, of the parents.

In the case of the religious leaders and the general mindset of those Jews who have rejected John and the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming judgment upon Jerusalem (in AD70) would validate their lack of wisdom and their guilt for turning away from the Kingdom that was offered to them. Their hypocrisy and sinful motives would be exposed, and John and Jesus would be vindicated.

And furthermore, all of those who have violently pressed into the kingdom; all who have truly taken the Kingdom of Heaven by storm, as it was presented to them by John and the Lord; all of the tax collectors and sinners, who flocked to Jesus (and were condemned by the religious leaders), will vindicate the ministries of John and Jesus, first, as their lives are changed, bearing good fruit for the Kingdom in the present, and then, in the final declaration of their being declared just and righteous by God, as they are welcomed into God’s eternal Kingdom and glory! “Wisdom is justified by her children.” What is hidden in the present, will be out in the open in the end. The truth will be revealed, and the childish games that were used as a means of excusing one’s self from bowing the knee to Christ will be exposed for their folly, and judgment will come. No one will get over on God. What a man sows, he will reap!

On the heels of all this, next time, we will consider our Lord’s pronounced “woes” against those cities that have rejected Him, even in the face of the mighty works that were done in them.

III. Closing Applications

1) While none of us have the perfect mind of Christ, brethren, ought we not to be conscious of our own generation, willing to honestly ask the question, “How would Christ describe this *present* generation, within the context of our cultural surroundings?” Ought we not to hold our generation up to the grid of Scripture, which contains the mind of Christ and the perfect and complete will of God, so that, we can properly address it; so that, we can bring every

thought captive to the obedience of Christ? We must be prepared, brethren, to bring the antidote of Christ and His Gospel to the poisonous infection that has infected our own generation.

And where then are we today, brethren? Where has our culture's wholesale rejection of Christ, and the God of Scripture taken us? Hasn't it taken us into a post-modern, relativistic canyon of wickedness, which is plunging further and further into ultimate destruction? Our present cultural climate is clearly indicative of this, is it not? Haven't we turned everything that promotes godliness and godly thinking upside down? The Scriptures teach us to conform our minds to the teachings of Scripture, warning us against trusting in our own desperately wicked and deceptive hearts. The Scriptures begin with the mind, working their way out into the actions. Our culture is built on training us to be driven by our subjective emotions and not by the objective truth. What you *feel* is what matters, and not what is universally true. I *feel* like I am owed things; and like those who work hard, must support me. I *feel* entitled. I *feel* unsafe around those who disagree with me, and any attempt to engage me rationally, and to challenge my ideas and worldview, is hateful, bigoted, racial, abusive and a form of attack. I *feel* like all of my problems are a product of, and rooted in, everyone else, in my upbringing, my surrounding circumstances, and anywhere but my own sinful heart, even though the Scriptures teach that to be the case. I don't *feel* responsible for anything, but I *feel* like everyone else is responsible for this world's ills. I *feel* attracted to men, as a man, or to woman, as a woman... and so, that must be right. I *feel* like I am a woman trapped in a man's body, or a man trapped in a woman's body. And again, to challenge my *feelings*, indeed, to fail to approve and support my *feelings* makes you a hateful bigot. I *feel* like my generation is smarter than every other generation in all of history, and so, I don't have to learn from the past, because they had sinful problems, which prevent them from providing me with any objective truth that I can use in the present. My college professors and my peers feel the same way, and so I must be right. And when you challenge me regarding these things, I will challenge you to "educate yourself," by pointing to modern books written by the same kind of people who are driven by *feelings* and not objective truth.

You see, brethren, we are moving further and further away from utilizing the tools of logic and reasoning, or recognizing universal truth and virtue, because we have rejected the

Creator, His design and His Word. A nation cannot survive long with this kind of thinking. Recognizing this, ought to compel us all the more, not to attack these ideas and sentimental philosophies with the weapons and tools of this world, but rather, all the more, to firmly present Christ and the Gospel, without wavering. We cannot meet this kind of a challenge on its own terms. It is demonic. We have to meet it with the Gospel, and trust the Holy Spirit to remove the suppression of the truth, and to change hearts by His power. And we must do so boldly; not arrogantly, but boldly, standing upon the truth, as the truth, because it is the truth. We know that the mindset, upon which, our culture is presently built, is a facade; it can't work; it can't succeed; it can only collapse. And so, we must address it with the only foundation that can stand; bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. However long it takes... even, if we are taken to the very collapse, we must be prophets, as it were, to this generation. And so, let us clear our minds of any and all of the confusing clutter, which is presented to us as means of contending with the thinking of our present generation, and let us address it, in the way that every corrupt generation has successfully been addressed before; with the pure and powerful; the divinely backed, Gospel of Jesus Christ! And brethren, in doing this, we have to anticipate being mocked, ridiculed and maybe even persecuted at some point. But, it is the only way; it is the only way of sowing seeds of life in such a wicked and corrupt context, with the hope that God, in His time, will give the increase. We are a hardened generation. We are way down the path that leads to destruction. And from any logical standpoint, it is absolutely impossible to turn this ship around. It is way, way, far gone, and moving further and further into the abyss. It's the spiritual equivalent (if not worse) of trying to fix our national debt. But... but God! God who is rich in mercy can bring even a camel through the eye of a needle. And so, throw everything else out, and simply preach the Gospel!

2) Some of you may be hiding behind childish and foolish excuses for rejecting the Gospel, right up to the present. But, you must understand that none of that will fly on the Day of Judgment. You will stand before God. You will give an account for your life, and especially for your rejection of Christ and His Gospel. You will have no excuse for letting His Kingdom pass you by, in the end. It is important that you know this. You might say, "Well, look at all of the ministers who have fallen into sin. Look at the failures of the church. Look at the great evil that

takes place in the world... how could God allow that?" You might put forth volumes of excuses to ease your conscience, thinking that you will somehow be able to justify yourself before God, in the end, when you stand before Him. Please, don't trust in such lies. Wisdom is justified by her children. Your hypocrisy; your love of your sin; your unwillingness to submit yourself to Christ and His reign, will be made very clear on the Day of Judgment. You can fool many in this world, but God sees the heart. Your heart is laid bare before Him. And so, let me exhort you to seek Christ now; stop playing games with God; His gracious offer is here now, but it will expire once you die. And you don't know how soon that might be for you. And you don't know if God will just harden your heart in the present, so that, by the time you are old (if you make it to old), you will have absolutely no desire or motivation to seek the Lord. Today is the Day of salvation! Not when you are old. Not next year. Not next month. Not next week. Not tomorrow. Indeed, not thirty minutes from now. Seek Him now! Call upon Him, while He is near, and be saved!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25