

Lame Preaching

Silently Speaking Loud and Clear

April 14, 2024

Today we're checking whether or not our everyday life is a sincere expression of our faith!



And so I ask: **What are you preaching?** “I don’t preach.” Of course you do.

We *all* always do. We can’t *not*. We often *talk* about *practicing* what we *preach* – but let’s consider a more *significant* question: **Do you preach what you say you practice?** Because, we *moralize* and *sermonize* with every roll of the eyes, *eyebrow rise*, *lip curl*, *cheek puff*, and *shoulder shrug*. Cuz, **we read the heart on the face**. And add to *this* the fact that **our deeds always drown out our words**, and you begin to see that we *can’t not* constantly preach, simply by the way we *treat* our *family*, *friends*, *neighbors*, or *Savior*. Because, **every action, inaction, inflection, and expression sends a clear message**. So, again I ask: **What are you preaching?** Because, what we *each* *silently* preach, reveals *loud* and *clear* if we’re *practicing* what we’re *merely* saying we believe.

[Jesus said] “Obey [the teachers of the law and the Pharisees] and do everything they *tell* you. [Because they speak God’s Word] But do not *do* what they *do*, for they do not practice what they preach.” – Matthew 23:1-3 NIV

But they sure *preach loud* and *clear* what they *actually* believe in their *heart*, by way of *what* they put on *display* for all the *world* to see ... when they *make sinners* feel *unworthy* and *unwelcome*; and *make* the *poor*, *blind*, and *lame* feel *cursed* and *ashamed*. Now, **it’s right to feel ashamed of sinful doing**. That’s *healthy*. But **it’s wrong to feel ashamed of simply being**, as being *worthless* or *hopeless*. That’s *deadly*. **There’s a big difference between being rightly regretful and wrongly unworthy**. A guy might be a bit *embarrassed* about this; but **it’s just what he is**, there’s *nothing* to be *ashamed of*. But, of *this* you could make a *case*; cuz **it’s what the dude did**. And, as you can see, our *doing* is a very *different* story. In *fact*, it’s the story of the *but-but-but*s, that Jesus told *to* and *about* those *Pharisees* at *their* dinner party. Saying:

“A certain man was preparing a *great banquet* and invited *many* guests. ... *But* they all alike began to make *excuses*. The *first* said, ‘[*But*] I have just *bought* a *field*, [*I’m* a *man* with a *plan*, and a *travelin’ man*] and I *must* go and see it.’ ... Another said, ‘[*But*] I have just bought *five* yoke of *oxen*, [*I’m* a *busy* man, and a *businessman*] and I’m on my way to *try* them *out*.’ Still another said, ‘[*But*] I just got *married*, [*I’m* a *married* man, and a *yes* man, and *she* don’t *wanna* come] so I *can’t* come.’ ... [*But*] The [lord] of the house became angry [*cuz* he had *prepared*, *cuz* they had *agreed*] and [he] *ordered* his servant, [to] ‘*Go out* ... and *bring in* the *poor*, [*carry*] the *crippled*, [*lead*] the *blind* and [*assist*] the *lame*. ... and *make them come in*, [*convince* ‘em to *come*] so that my *house* will be *full* [*and fed*] ... [*for*] not *one* of those men who were *invited* [*but*, “*But-but-butted*”] will get [*even*] a taste” – Luke 14:16-24



Cuz **Jesus loves lame children as much as He hates lame excuses**. And the warning was both *startling* and *alarming*: **if you don't respond you'll be replaced** – and *end up* without even a *taste!* “But Lord, my things.” “But Lord, my schedule.” “But Lord, my friends and family.” **We best be gettin' off our but-but-but!** Because, **this host makes haste to give undesirables what ungratefuls waste**. Which *pretty much sums up sharing/preaching/sincerely-expressing our faith*: **faithful servants kindly persuading the hesitant hungry to come and get it**.

You see, mid-east etiquette required those of lower social status to refuse invites from those of higher status. Because **their invitations were merely polite gestures not intended to be accepted**, except in *God's house!* Like *our culture's*, “How're you doing?” We don't expect an actual answer – except *here!* Which is why they had to *go out* and go *all out*, to “*make them come in*”. Cuz these **outcasts, like all outcasts, would be surprised and suspicious and skittish!** “What are you up to?” Which is why **they need to be convinced and persuaded that the invite is sincere**, by what we're silently preaching, loud and clear: that they're not only *welcome* and *wanted*, but *highly desired!* Because once they got there, the atmosphere would be *electric!* Which is *how* God wants His house: “full” ... of *joy*; and, well, *fed*. Which is why **we're called to keep the party going, by keeping the guest list growing!** Because, *receiving* and *responding* to the *invitation* comes with an *expectation* of *extending* the *invitation*.



[So] Then *Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house* – Luke 5:29 NIV

But I think we need a *bit* of *backstory*. You see, Jesus had set up His *home office* and *headquarters* in *Capernaum*, i.e. the *Village of Comfort*. And that big, white building is a *synagogue* that was rebuilt around 300^{AD} after the Roman army *destroyed the original* (in 70^{AD}), along with every *synagogue* in *Israel*, as well as the *Temple* in *Jerusalem*. But, the houses surrounding it date back to when Jesus *lived* and *taught* here! In fact, the black basalt portion is the original foundation. He walked on that black rock road, and entered by this step! And guess who worked the customs office in *Capernaum*. *Levi*, who'd changed his Jewish name to the Romanesque, *Matthew*. A *reviled Jewish tax collector*, a *literal outcast* of *that synagogue*, because he worked for the occupying force. And at one point:

So many gathered [here] that there was no room left – Mark 2:1-2 NIV

[And] Jesus went out [in full view] and saw a tax collector ... sitting at his *tax booth*. [No less!] “Follow Me,” Jesus said to [invite] him, and *Levi got up*, [without a but-but-but] *left everything* and *followed Him*. – Luke 5:27-28 NIV

How can we even begin to imagine it? This *miracle-working, Jewish Rock Star* with an *entourage* of *body guards*, being *mobbed* by a *multitude* of *admirers*, suddenly *stops*, points at you – the most *despised* and *rejected Jew* in *town*, and says, “Want a *VIP backstage pass?*” Why *wouldn't* *Levi* leave everything to *join the party?!* And *what better picture* of *repentance?!* Because *Dr. Jesus* came to *dispense a clean bill* of *spiritual health* to any *self-aware sinner* who'll *accept His diagnosis*; and a *dim prognosis* to any *self-righteous down-lookers* who *don't*. And:

THEN Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and *others* [Matthew's version (9:10) says *sinners*] were eating with them. [No outcast was excluded ... or unnoticed] But the *Pharisees* ... *complained* to His disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with *tax collectors* and 'sinners'?" [But] Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. [To which everyone in the room likely *toasted* and *cheered!* Cuz there are only *two camps*: the *sick* who *know* they're *sick*, and the *sick* who *don't*] I have not *come* to call the [self] righteous, [to the party] but *sinners* to *repentance*." [Cuz that's the *invite* and the *party!*] – Luke 5:29-32 NIV

[But] THEN John [the Baptist]'s disciples came and asked Him, "How *is* it that we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the *guests* of the *Bridegroom* mourn while He is *with* them?" – Matthew 9:14-15 NIV

The Mosaic Law *required* only *one* annual *fast*, (Lev 16:29) but *seven* annual *feasts!* But the Pharisees *added* *two* weekly *personal-fasts* to *display* their *devotion*. (Lk 18:12) But **whenever God's feast-days fell on their fast-days, they were required to give way to God's party!** And Jewish weddings were *regarded* as *God-ordained*, *week-long* *feasts*. And every *party-goer* was *exempt* from *fasting*, by a *rabbinical* *ruling*, stating: "**All in attendance on the bridegroom are relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy.**"¹ And you *know* it *had* to be Jesus' *idea* to *hold* this *feast* when they were *fasting!* It has His *signature* all over it. *Wanting* them to *wonder* why His disciples *wouldn't* be *fasting*. Because, **the title of "bridegroom" is OT imagery** from *Isaiah* (62:5) and *Hosea* (2:16-19) **regarding the coming Messiah and Israel's redemption.**

[John the Baptist himself had said] The *friend* who *attends* the *Bridegroom* waits and listens for Him, and is *full* of *joy* when he hears the *Bridegroom's* voice. – John 3:28-30 NIV

And John's disciples were *fasting* in *preparation*. **Jesus isn't condemning fasting; He's announcing His arrival!** So when they ask, "How is it we and the Pharisees fast?" He says, "How is it you, of all people, don't recognize the *Bridegroom*? Open your eyes! The lost are found, the poor are blessed, even the blind can see the crippled cured and the lame leaping to the party!" (Mt 11:4-5) And after *this*, Jesus held a *way bigger* – not to mention *miraculous* – *banquet*, with *far* more *spectacular* *undesirables*, when He fed 4,000 gentile families, across the sea, at a *party* for *pagans* on the *shores* of the *pig slopes* where He'd *previously* cast out a *legion* of *demons!* And:



Those [outcasts] who ate [His banquet] were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came [back] to the region of Magdala. – Matthew 15:38-39 NKJ



And in 2010, Magdala was discovered, just *six miles* from Capernaum. And *Magdala's* *synagogue* dates to *Jesus' day*. And that *square stone* is where the *speaker* *stood!* And sections of the *synagogue's* *mosaic floor* are *still intact!* Even parts of the *walls* are *still painted!* And it'd be *highly unlikely* if Jesus didn't preach *here*. Because, while in *Capernaum*, He said:



"[Let us go] [out] to the *nearby villages*—so I can *preach* *there* also. That is *why* I have *come*." [To make them come in] So He traveled *throughout Galilee*, *preaching* in *their synagogues* – Mark 1:38-39 NIV

¹ *The Gospel of Mark*, by William Barclay, pg. 68

And reaching out to the *poor*, the *crippled*, the *blind* and the *lame*. And while He was returning from hosting His great pig-slope banquet, the religious rulers were gathering in Magdala. And:

[He came to] Magdala. Then the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* came, and ... asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. ["Enough miraculous feeding and healing and raising the dead; do a sky thing!"] He answered and said ... "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the [red] face of the sky, but you cannot discern the [red] signs of the times [in the skies]. – Matthew 15:39-16:3 NKJ

[For] [God said] "Let *birds fly* ... across the face of the [sky]." – Genesis 1:20 NKJ/NIV



And Jesus was healing every leper in the land (Mt 9:35) and sending them to these Pharisees and teachers of the Law, (Mk 1:42-44) who were filling the face of the skies with Moses' sign of the Messiah's blood red birds!



This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing ... [take] two living and clean birds ... and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running [i.e. living] water. ... [Dip] the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the [living] water ... [and] let the living bird loose – Leviticus 14:1-7 NKJ

[Jesus] sighed deeply ... and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign?" – Mark 8:12 NKJ

They're literally being tweeted! Can't swing a cat without hitting one! Talk about rejecting God's invitation. They're the worst of the worst, because **they're the servants who'd been sent to invite!**

[Which is why Jesus says] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ... For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. – Matthew 23:13 ESV

On Easter, we saw the Scriptures regarding the wedding feast of the Lamb, who takes away our sin. And just before the cross, Jesus tells the same Pharisees the same story about the same great banquet; but now **the "certain man" hosting, is a king;** and the reason it's great is because **it's a wedding banquet for his son.** But this time the excuse makers get a taste ... of his wrath!

[Those invited] refused to come. ... They paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. [But] The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. [Just as Jesus warned, and the Roman Army did, 40 years later] ... [But] the [true] servants went out ... and gathered [in] ... both good and bad, and the wedding hall was [finally] filled with [the best of] guests. [The great-full] – Matthew 22:4-10 NIV

No matter who you are, or what you've done, **your presence is sincerely requested and highly desired!** And, as faithful preachers, you probably already know who's on His guest list: **those who'd be stunned to receive a sincere request from you.** Basically, anyone who wouldn't expect you to risk your dignity just to make them feel welcome and wanted at the party. So just make a list, from your favorite people to the least of these, and flip it upside down, and **start convincing those you consider to be kind of lame.** Cuz, **Jesus got this party started – and we're called to keep it going!**