

Looking Forward into 2011

The Clarity of the Gospel & The Church as a “safe” Place

For review, read Acts 5 1-16.

Now, read Luke 7:36-50 and John 12:1-6 and draw some parallels between Ananias & Saphira, Judas, and the Pharisee.

Is there some sort of parallel between holding back physical treasure vs. holding back spiritual treasure? Is there some sort of parallel between the motivations of Ananias/Saphira, Judas, and the Pharisee?

Now Read John 8:21-47

We would be fools to believe that people that come in the door at Two Rivers aren't seeking *something*. Granted, that *something* may not be Christ, and it may not even be some concept of “god”, but they are seeking *something*... affirmation, money, healing, piety, religion... who knows... but it *may* be Jesus. It *may* be the Father drawing them to the Son.

Is Jesus reaching out to those he is speaking to in this passage? If so, how?

Is Jesus doing anything in this passage that will result in people not coming to him, or result in those that have come to turn away from him? If so, what?

The conversation from 8:31-8:59 appears to be a continuous discussion among the same group of people. With this in mind, how do we reconcile vv31 to vv45-47?

Is Jesus' declaration in vv47 a final condemnation of these people? (consider vv27-32 before coming to a conclusion)

Is it possible for people (no matter their religious title, “Christians” included) to understand that God exists and requires our worship and adoration, but still miss the point of the Gospel? How long should a church or an individual believer press on with these types of people? Is there really a cut-and-dried answer to this?

In vv31-vv32, what reassurance does Jesus give those without understanding in his Gospel, but still seek the truth he teaches?

If you could summarize (based on this passage) what differentiates the children of the devil from the children of God, how would you say it?

Read John 6:35-70

Is Jesus reaching out to those he is speaking to in this passage? If so, how?

Is Jesus doing anything in this passage that will result in people not coming to him, or result in those that have come to turn away from him? If so, what?

If you could summarize (based on this passage) what differentiates the children of the devil from the children of God, how would you say it?

Here is are some ideas to struggle with:

- If a person comes in the doors at Two Rivers, how do we identify who is being drawn to Christ, and who is not?
- As a church, are we required to make this determination?
- Further, as a church, are we required to do something about it? If so, what when they are being drawn... not being drawn?
- How do we operate and make these determinations without holding back spiritual treasure for ourselves?
- The Bible is clear that there is a level of formal discipline that operates inside of a functioning church (Jesus taught this in Matthew 18:15-20, Peter teaches this in Acts 5:1-10, and Paul teaches it in 1st Corinthians 5). **The Bible is also clear that the church should not have to very much corporate discipline at all (Matthew 18:21-35)... it is up to each individual believer to make this a reality.** The Bible is also clear that the church is to reach out to non-believers through ministries of compassion and overt gospel truth. Acts 5 is a testimony to all of this.
- Consider the following (tough) scenarios:
 1. Someone's (formerly hidden) sin becomes obvious to the entire church (let's say arrest for a DUI). Nothing is said publicly, and, when you talk to them privately they seem repentant... but there is no way for you to tell if they've really repented other than their words... this former sin becomes a burden to some in the church because now they need a ride to church every Sunday.
 2. A known sexual predator seeks to attend 2RC.
 3. A person who professes Jesus has a secret drug sin, there are a few that know of the secret(s), that they are repentant in word and tears, but not deed. This person is doing a lot of obvious damage to many of the believers.
 4. A person who professes Jesus has a secret drug sin, there are a few that know of the secret(s), that they are repentant in word and tears, but not deed. His/her sin doesn't *appear* to be taking a toll on the church.
 5. A person who professes Jesus has a secret sin, there are a few that know of the secret(s), that s/he really does appear repentant and broken... and his/her sin doesn't *appear* to be taking a toll on the church.
 6. A person that is visiting 2RC and is being drawn by the Father to Christ, but you are convinced they may run from 2RC if they witness any sort of “judgmental” discipline.