**Calvary Fellowship 12.18.2022 Matthew 21:23-22:14 “Changing Your Story”**

* **When my daughter Mia was around 5, I was sitting w/ her before she fell asleep & we had a heart to heart moment**
* The kind of moments that U think are going to be more often when U become a parent where U share your heart w/ your kids
* I was telling Mia, “Mia, there was a time when Mom & Dad couldn’t have babies. We actually tried for 10 years & nothing happened.”
* “But we kept trusting God & praying & 1 day Mommy was pregnant & then 9 months later U were born. You were the answer to our prayers.”
* “U & your brother & sister are all very special to us. But you’re special b/c U were God’s 1st answer to all those prayers we prayed.”
* “So Mia, I want U to know how much I love U.”
* I’m saying these words to her & I’m tearing up as I say them & Mia turns to me & says, “Dad”. I say, “Yes Mia.” - “Could U say that again b/c I wasn’t listening.”
* **We’ve all had moments where we are trying to explain something to someone & they just aren’t getting it**
* So we try different techniques & strategies & methods to get them to understand, but they still aren’t getting it
* This is where Jesus is w/ the religious leaders - He’s been dealing w/ them at various times since He started His ministry
* But now things are beginning to come to a head - they’ll really come to a head in chapter 23 when Jesus exposes them for who they really are
* But Jesus is doing all He can to get them to change
* **In our section of the Gospel of Matthew today, Jesus is going to tell these religious leaders 3 parables or stories to illustrate who they are**
* Now, this is message #33 in our series & we’ve been leaving no stone unturned, but we haven’t run into these guys much in our time in Matthew
* Mostly b/c Jesus has spent most of His time in Galilee, but now that He is going into Jerusalem for Passover, all of the chief priest & leaders are there
* If U remember in our last message, Jesus walked into the temple & overturned the table where the moneychangers were
* It caused a big scene - but now the people in charge of the temple are going to question Him & ask Him why is He doing these things
* “Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’” (Matthew 21:23 NKJV)
* **Jesus, in typical rabbinic fashion, answers their question w/ question & says, “Do U think John’s baptism was from God or man?”**
* That posed a huge problem b/c they didn’t want to say it was from heaven b/c then Jesus would say, “Then why didn’t U believe in him?”
* But they didn’t want to say “from men” b/c the common people believed John was a prophet - So they said, “We don’t know.”
* So Jesus said, “Then I won’t tell U where I get my authority from”
* **But there’s something deeper here & this becomes the basis of the 3 parables that Jesus tells**
* If they can’t figure out if John the Baptist is a real prophet, then they can’t discern anything of spiritual significance & it’s impossible for them to change
* They had no ability to evaluate themselves & discern their own sins & shortcomings - they lacked all self-awareness
* This is what Jesus is seeking to point out - listen, these are confrontational conversations, but Jesus doesn’t hate these people
* They might hate Him, but He cares for them & the goal is the them to open their eyes & wake up to what’s happening in their lives
* That’s the goal of all correction - to help get people U love on the right track
* B/c U don’t correct people U don’t care about - U just move on w/ your life & say, “Man, I’m glad I’m not them”
* But U take time & talk to & correct those who U care about - that’s what’s happening here - Jesus wants them to see that they haven’t totally drifted from there purpose of serving God & serving God’s people…

**———(v. 28-32)———**

**#1 - My Life Changes when My Intentions become Action**

* **Jesus tells the religious leaders are very simple parable about 2 sons**
* The dad tells 2 to go work in the field - son #1 says no, but after feels bad about it & then goes & does it
* The other says, “Sure dad. Happy to help”, but then never does it
* And when Jesus asks the religious leaders which did the will of his father, they responded correctly, that the 1 who said no but later went to work
* Here’s the problem w/ the parable - the religious leaders don’t want to be either son in the story - they have a problem w/ both
* They don’t want to be seen as someone who says no & then does the right thing or the 1 who says yes & then doesn’t obey
* Jesus is revealing them to be the 2nd son b/c they give God all the lip service, but ultimately don’t repent or change their ways
* This is where Jesus gets heavy & tell them that tax collectors & harlots are going to get into the kingdom before them
* Now, they would have found this very insulting - but I don’t believe it was meant to be - Jesus is giving them a statement of fact
* Tax collectors who were hated in Jewish culture - harlots, who were seen as people of gross immorality b/c they had rejected God’s law
* Both of these groups heard John the Baptist preach & repented
* The religious leaders showed up to critique John, not to be changed
* “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.’” (Matthew 3:7-9 NKJV)
* **People were being baptized b/c they were walking away from their old life & Ito the new life God had for them**
* **That’s why people are baptized today - It’s a symbol of cleansing & washing away the old life & beginning a new life**
* It was an invitation to the life we were created to live
* Here’s the interesting thing: baptism isn’t actually an English word
* It’s a transliteration of a Greek word “Baptizo”
* Transliteration is when U take the sound of a word & U shift it to your language
* Carey asked me the other night how to say “cake” in spanish - so I said, “Cake”
* She said “That’s it” - it’s just cake - I said, “Just like bleach” - it’s Clorox (decolorante)/ or diapers are “Pampers” (pañales)
* **Baptism means to be immersed, or drenched or drowned**
* But to call John, “John the Drowner” sounds more like a serial killer name than it does a prophet’s name, so we transliterated it
* But “Yohanan the Immerser” as he was known, was immersing people into the water & people were showing up to be immersed
* B/c they knew that this act of baptism symbolized something - a changed life & that this act sent us deeper into knowing God
* **Now, here’s the thing about John that made the religious leaders uncomfortable - John was baptizing Jews - that was unheard of**
* He was telling them to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand, and that their Jewish heritage wasn’t proof that they walked with God
* So these committed people were being baptized to signify their desire to really walk with God. That’s why the religious people were angry
* **Here’s the point that Jesus is making through the parable - good intentions aren’t enough - Giving God lip service isn’t enough**
* Taking about how much we love God, but not obeying Him isn’t helping us or anyone else - it’s actually obeying that matters
* It’s preferable to start well- but if U didn’t, then decide you’re going to finish well
* That’s why baptism is such an important command - b/c it’s easy
* God isn’t asking U to do something impossible or life threatening or dangerous
* It’s so simple & yet, I think that might be why we neglect it
* It’s very easy to do & b/c of that, it’s very easy not to do
* If U decide to be baptized, U are setting in motion a pattern of obedience to God in your life & that leads to the life you’ve always wanted
* B/c the last thing U want to be is the son who looked very spiritual, but underneath it all, he had no intention of obeying his father

**———(v. 33-41)———**

**#2 - My Life Changes when My Decision are Reoriented**

* **This might seem complicating, but w/ a little background the meaning of the parable is very clear - how do we know?**
* B/c when Jesus gets to the end of the parable, the religious leaders knew He was talking about them
* So let’s explain the parable - 1st thing U need to know is that Jesus isn’t creating this parable out of thin air - He’s borrowing from Isaiah 5
* That’s why the religious understood the parable b/c it’s based a passage they would have had memorized
* “My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.” (Isaiah 5:1-2 NKJV)
* Isaiah is talking about Israel & how God established the nation -how do I know?
* “The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in.” (Isaiah 5:7 NIV)
* So Jesus is expanding on Isaiah’s parable by going further into Israel’s history
* The vinedresser in Jesus’ parable are the religious leaders b/c they were given charge over the nation’s spiritual well-being
* But when the landowner sends servants to the vinedressers, they beat & kill the servants - this is what happened to the prophets in the history of Israel
* “Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.” (Matthew 23:34 NKJV)
* So then the landowner says, “I’m going to send my son.” & the vinedressers kill Him - so follow the parable that Jesus tells
* God gave U the land of Israel - He entrusted U w/ God’s people so they would bear spiritual fruit - He even sent prophets to make sure U did the right thing
* But U killed the prophets & now I’ve sent my son & you’re going to kill Him
* And what’s the result? Look at what happens next…

**———(v. 42-46)———**

* **Jesus is now quoting scripture - it’s from Psalm 118, but He’s keeping w/ the same idea of the reject son in the parable is now the rejected stone**
* This was a common metaphor in that day, but it’s lost on us b/c we’re 2 millennia & 1/2 a w world away
* But Jesus is using an architectural metaphor - the cornerstone
* So buildings in that day weren’t built w/ concrete foundations & concrete block & metal studs w/ drywall
* Instead, they laid a cornerstone on the corner of the building & all of the dimensions for the rest of the building were made from the cornerstone
* The lines of the rest of the building were all drawn from the cornerstone
* So if the cornerstone was square, the building would be square
* So if the cornerstone was rectangular, the building would be rectangular
* The cornerstone was the most important stone that was laid
* B/c of this, the cornerstone was the most perfect stone - Builders would spend as much time fashioning the cornerstone as they would the rest of the building
* B/c everything was riding on the precision of the cornerstone
* The cornerstone was also the strongest stone - the rest of the structure was resting on the cornerstone & it had to bear the weight of the building
* And, the cornerstone was by far the most expensive stone b/c builders would invest more in the cornerstone than any other part of the building
* When we built Calvary, there’s a cornerstone that was laid - I’m the 1 who laid it
* In fact, we have a picture of it (pic) - I laid the cornerstone of the building
* It was a great moment w/ my family - until the actual builders had to come & fix it b/c what I did was totally crooked
* But the apostle Peter, remembering this moment, takes this idea & directs it towards followers of Jesus
* “As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5 NIV)
* Peter says, “U come to Jesus & God is now transforming your life into something new & building U into a spiritual house” - How does this work?
* Jesus becomes your cornerstone - U start aligning everything in your life to Jesus & that’s when the whole structure of your life change
* “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:1-3 NIV)
* Peter says, “You’ve gotten rid of all these things b/c you’ve made Jesus the cornerstone of your life”
* That’s what happens - U give your life to Jesus & the things that used to interest U & entice U don’t have the same allure anymore
* **How many of U know what these are? They’re called Razzles**
* I loved Razzles as a kid - the reason? Razzles start out as candy & then they turn into gum - I used to buy these by the box practically
* I hadn’t seen Razzles in years & I happened to see them in a store a couple years ago, so I bought 2 packages of them - they were horrible
* The candy was hard, the gum hurt my teeth & it tasted like death
* And I thought, “How could I have ever liked this?” What’s funny is, before I had tried it, I would have told U that I loved Razzles
* That’s why Peter uses an interesting term - he says, “Laying aside all this stuff”
* How do U lay aside things like hate, envy, & evildoing? Change what U crave & make Jesus the cornerstone of your life
* Babies crave milk so they can grow - They don’t want junk food, they want the stuff that’s going to help them grow - that’s what they have an appetite for
* Your life will change to the degree that U align your life, your decisions, your beliefs to the person of Jesus & to the degree that U crave the things of God
* It’s the only thing that causes us to lay down the destructive things in our lives

**———(v. 1-14)———**

**#3 - My Life Changes when My Heart is Transformed**

* **So let’s talk about ancient weddings - they were very different than current weddings for many reasons**
* 1st, life in the ancient world was hard - there was no Netflix, no Disney World, no vacations, & not much fun - life was really hard just to survive
* 2nd, to get invited to a wedding was a huge honor b/c most people didn’t have a lot of money, so to be invited to a wedding meant U were loved by the couple
* 3rd, weddings were not a 30 minute service where we say a few vows, then eat some cake & do the Macarena - weddings were a 7-day party
* Listen, if U got invited to 3 weddings in your life, U were blessed - now, we think we’re blessed if we don’t get invited
* But in this case, it’s a king throwing a wedding & if U got invited to a king throwing a wedding for his son, that was like winning the lottery
* **But here’s the problem - the invited guests didn’t care about the wedding, to the point where they beat & killed the servants who invited them**
* So the king says, “Get out & get anyone who is willing come to the wedding”
* Now, in this culture, the host of the wedding provided the garments that people wore to the wedding - Isn’t that great?
* B/c 1/2 the stress of going to a wedding is finding something to wear - not in this culture - they give the clothes that U were supposed to wear
* B/c of that, the king provided the wedding clothes for everyone
* But 1 guy decided that he wasn’t going to wear what he king provided for him
* The problem isn’t that he didn’t have the right outfit for the wedding - it’s that he didn’t want to wear what the king had provided for him
* And this is the key to understanding the parable - the Jewish people had all of the promises of God, especially the promise of the Messiah
* But then, when the Messiah was standing in front of them, they rejected Him
* An even those who want to attend the wedding, but don’t want to wear the new garments - that is, they don’t want to change
* And listen, I get it - all of us have clothes that are comfortable - we all have that favorite pair of jeans - we’ve worn them so much, they fit just right
* That’s why I hate washing jeans - people, let me explain to U where most men live - women wear jeans 1 time & then throw them in the laundry
* Guys wear jeans 1…month at a time & then their wives force them to throw then in the laundry
* That’s why guys don’t want new jeans - they’re scratchy & stiff & they feel a little tight b/c they haven’t been broken in
* **Here’s how that works here - some of want to follow Jesus, but do in our own way - I’m sorry, but that’s not the way it works**
* And when U start walking w/ Jesus, life will probably feel different
* It might feel a little stiff or scratchy b/c that’s God smoothing out your rough edges - it’s the process of giving an entirely new way
* You’re experiencing the Holy Spirit convict U of stuff that was just part of normal life before
* **I became a Christian on May 29th, 1993 in my brother’s kitchen & the 1st thing I after I prayed to receive Christ was that I left for a baseball game**
* I was in Boston & I had tickets to Fenway Park that night - now here’s what U need to understand about me - I used to cuss like a sailor
* Every other word that came out of my mouth was a cuss word of some sort
* So we’re at the game - Roger Clemens was pitching (who was my favorite baseball player of all time until he signed w/ the Yankees)
* President H.W. Bush was at the game - probably b/c his son George W. Bush was a part owner of the Texas Rangers, the team the Sox were playing
* I remember the ump made a call & I stood up in the stands & started yelling, “Why U...” & I stopped myself, looked around & sat down
* Carey looked at me b/c these were moments when my mouth would get extra out of control - But I looked at her & said, “I’m a Christian now & I don’t think God wants me to talk like that anymore.”
* Listen, those 1st few weeks of being a Christian, I was practically mute bc I didn’t know how to talk w/o cursing - so I just didn’t way anything
* Then I learned some new words & now my whole life is talking
* Listen, God had given me a new garment to walk in & I would have missed out on everything if I decided to walk w/ God “my own way”
* Instead, I’ve been blessed w/ more than I could have ever dreamed, but it began by putting on the garment Jesus had laid out for me
* “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-23 NIV)
* This is always the metaphor - take off the old clothes - the old way of life & put on the new person that God has created U to be
* **Some of us are so tired b/c we’re expending so much effort & energy trying to prove that we’re smart enough, strong enough, & good enough**
* Here’s what the Bible’s wisdom tell us - we aren’t smart enough b/c we make so many bad decisions - We aren’t strong enough b/c we fail so often
* We aren’t good enough b/c we know what’s right & often chose the opposite
* But the Bible also tells us that U are loved, not b/c you’re lovable, but b/c God is love & He proved that love when Jesus died for U
* So instead of rebelling against God b/c you’re dead set on doing your own thing, what if God’s message to U is to surrender?
* **So here’s what I know - Some of U are here & you’re tired**
* There’s a life that you’re living & there’s no rest, no fulfillment, no peace
* U wake up, go to work, come home, eat dinner, watch TV, go to sleep & then wake up & do it all over again
* And there’s this thought in the back of your mind that sometimes creeps to the front - U ask, “Is there more to life than this?”
* Everything we’ve talked about today is for U to know that there’s a God in heaven who loves U & wants to set U free of all that’s holding U back
* Jesus died for U & He rose from the dead & He’s offering U life
* Not existence - not simply breathing - He’s offering U life - real life
* U might be here & you’re a Christian, but you’ve walked away from the Lord
* God’s inviting U to be part of the story - It’s your moment to come back to Him…