**Calvary Fellowship 1.8.2022 Matthew 22:15-45 “Trick Questions”**

* **Can we all agree that there are questions that should never be asked?**
* I know, knowledge is power, blah, blah, blah - but some questions just make life awkward - if U have kids U know what Im talking about
* So we took our kids to Lion Country Safari last Saturday & it was a ton of fun
* But there was this moment when 1 wildebeest decided to “mount” a female wildebeest & my 4 year old daughter says, “Dad, what are they doing?”
* I said, “Umm…ahh…well… ask your mom.” - Then Xander says, “Livi, it’s obvious. She’s giving him a piggy back ride.” - I said, “Yes. That’s exactly right.”
* **So there are questions that U ask & don’t want an honest answer**
* Ever someone how they’re doing & they told U? - And U walk away thinking, “I was just trying to be polite. I didn’t think they were going to actually tell me.”
* **I was having a conversation w/ someone a while ago & she said to me, ‘You look really familiar. Where do I know you from?”**
* I said, “Have U ever been to prison?” She says, “Well, it was a different time in my life.” She walked away & never spoke to me again
* **That’s when I learned there’s questions U just don’t ask**
* 1 of them being asking if someone has been to a state correctional facility w/in the 1st 30 seconds of meeting them
* **But there’s another type of question people ask - the trick question**
* This is where someone is asking a question, but they aren’t interested in your answer - they are simply trying to prove how smart they are
* This is where we are w/ Jesus & the religious leaders in Jerusalem
* Jesus has shown up in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover & He’s teaching in the Temple each day & He’s had these runs ins w/ the chief priests
* They aren’t His biggest fan & there’s been conflict between them
* **So to prove their superiority over Him, they are going to pose 3 questions to Him that are impossible to answer to prove they are the authorities**
* And people do this to this day - every now & again someone will come up to me & ask me some ridiculous question that they think it so clever
* They’ll ask, “Can God make a rock so big, even He can’t lift it?”
* And I’ll say, “No” - and they’ll go nuts b/c I fell into their linguistic trap
* And they’ll say, “So you’re saying God isn’t all powerful b/c there’s something He can’t do.” - And I’ll say, “Not being to do something doesn’t a lack of power”
* Here’s a few things God can’t do - God can’t lie/ God can’t change/ God can’t fail (and that’s the answer to the rock big question)/ God can’t worry
* God can’t learn/ and God can’t stop loving U
* Here’s the point - these trick questions usually have simple answers
* However, the questions Jesus gets asked are very tough & the way He answers is pure genius…

**———(v. 15-22)———**

**#1 - The Political Question: Who Do I Belong To?**

* **This was a very sensitive topic b/c people were so upset b/c they are taxed so heavily - so there was a lot of emotion attached to this issue**
* People are so different now - back then, people didn’t like paying taxes & giving the government a big chunk of their money - now we love it - then they hated it
* Remember, the goal here is to “catch Him in His words”, so that’s why they’re asking the kind of question they’re asking
* **There are moments when U need the wisdom of Jesus in a bad situation**
* B/c for example, every parent believes their baby is beautiful - but in fact, we know that’s not true - some kids are ugly - that’s just a fact
* I see it happen here at Calvary, where a new parent will say hi & introduce me to their newborn & U see the baby & it’s kind of frightening - but what do U say?
* I don’t want to lie & I definitely don’t want to be rude - so here’s what I say
* I look at the child & then look at the parents & say, “Wow. That’s a baby.”
* The only problem is, now I’ve told U my secret, so I need a new strategy
* **Before we deal w/ the question, let’s talk about who’s asking the question**
* **Group 1 - The Pharisees - they were the religious conservatives**
* This was the group that kept the law of God down the most minute detail
* They believed God was Israel’s only true king & to pay taxes was to concede to this pagan government
* They believe if Jesus says yes to paying taxes, He could not be the Messiah b/c He was selling out to the Romans & those who follow Him would walk away
* **Group 2 - The Herodians - They were Roman collaborators**
* They were Pro-Rome b/c they were actually part of the government
* So if Jesus says no to paying taxes, they will immediately arrest Jesus as a traitor & enemy of Rome - there’s seemingly no way to win in this situation
* **But let’s be a little more specific - the topic isn’t all taxes - it’s a specific tax that they have a problem w/ & want Jesus to comment on**
* There were all kinds of taxes that people in the Roman empire had to pay
* But there was this 1 tax, the “Head tax” - it was 1 day’s wage (called a Denarius) & U paid it for the privilege of being a subject of Caesar
* So think about it - Israel was unwillingly under Roman occupation & they had to pay a tax to fund the army that was oppressing them - kind of strange
* **This is the tax in question - there’s 1 other thing I need to tell U**
* 25 years before Jesus came on the scene, there was a guy named Judas the Galilean who led an armed revolt against the Roman empire
* **He did 3 things that are important for us to note:**
* #1 - He cleansed the temple of all the moneychangers
* #2 - His message was that we will bring in the kingdom of God
* #3 - He told the Jews not to pay the Head tax
* People believed that Judas the Galilean was the Messiah b/c He did these things & he rallied big numbers to his cause until Rome came in & killed him
* So when people are looking at the possibility of Jesus being the Messiah, they are looking to see if Jesus will check off all of the boxes
* He already did #1 & He has been preaching #2, so if He says no to #3, then that’s Messianic Bingo & Jesus must be the Messiah in their eyes
* Jesus’ response to these groups is more than just a clever answer
* It’s an opportunity for them to look in the mirror & be challenged
* **Here’s what the Denarius Jesus talked about looked like (pic)**
* It reads, “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the Divine Augustus.”
* Augustus was thought of as a god, so it’s saying Tiberius is Son of god
* It says on the back - Pontifex Maximus = high priest
* **It had Caesar’s image on it & b/c of that, ultimately Caesar owned it**
* It was Roman money & he was the ruler of Rome - so the money was his
* **But when Jesus says, “Give to God what’s God’s”, He’s saying something profound** **- every person bears the image of God**
* “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)
* So to give to Caesar what’s his is to give him a Denarius - the cost of the tax
* **So what does it mean to give to God what’s God’s?**
* It means to surrendering your whole self to God
* It means surrendering your plans, your possessions, & your future to God
* **We talk about surrendering our lives to God, but when does that get tested? It gets tested in the decisions we make & the actions we take**
* When there’s something we want to do & we know it’s contrary to what God wants - who wins that battle?
* **I remember when the iPhone 4 came out years ago - I decided to conduct a little self-control experiment on myself**
* I decided to wait 30 days before getting the phone - I was eligible to upgrade from the 1st day, but I wanted to see if I could be patient
* When my 30 days was up, I drove to the apple Store w/ my wife to get my new phone, all the while telling her about my spiritual maturity & growth
* So I got there & said, “Hi, I’d like to buy the new iPhone 4.” - The said, “I’m sorry, it’s backordered for 6 weeks.” - I freaked out
* “U don’t understand. I underwent 30 grueling days of waiting & my 30 days are up. So I’d like a phone new… please.” But there was no phone to be had
* Carey said, “Hey, I’d love to hear more about this spiritual maturity you’re developing. Maybe U could call me & we could talk about it.”
* **The political question is, who is going to be in charge in your life?**
* Jesus isn’t just the 1 w/ the answer - He is the answer - if we are created in the image of God, then He is the 1 we owe everything to
* **Think about it - currency has value in the country it is made in**
* I found a $5 Saudi Arabian bill when I was out walking - I showed my kids & they weren’t very impressed once they found out it was worth less than $1
* Too many people give their lives to things & people who don’t see the value in them - it’s b/c they don’t recognize the image you’re created in
* And we’re wasting our days trying to get someone to see the value in us when they don’t recognize whose image we’re created in
* That’s why U have greatest value & joy & purpose & meaning & hope & peace when we live in God’s will & plan for us
* Anything & everything else we give ourselves to is like handing foreign currency to someone who doesn’t see the value in it

**———(v. 23-33)———**

**#2 - The Supernatural Question: What does Eternity Look Like?**

* **To unlock what’s really being asked here, U have to know who’s asking**
* The Sadducees were the power brokers even though they were the smallest group of all of the religious leaders we see in the Gospels
* They oversaw the temple – the high priest was a Sadducee as was most of the Jewish supreme court (“Sanhedrin”) – they controlled the temple & sacrifices
* Rome who was in control, supported them, that’s why they had so much power
* The Sadducees only believed in the Torah – that’s it – the did not believe in the prophet OT books, which is why they didn’t believe in a resurrection, the Messiah, or the coming kingdom of God - That’s why they were Sad-U-See
* **But they present Jesus w/ a legitimate question that’s deal w/ in Deut. 25**
* “If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.” (Deuteronomy 25:5-6)
* So if your brother died w/o having a son, U would marry her & the 1st child they had would be credited as the son of the brother who died
* If U didn’t do it, there would be a ceremony where you’d have to take your sandal off & they’d call U, “The man whose sandal was removed”
* This is why I’m guessing brothers were very involved in who their brothers married - b/c I’m sure there were conversation saying, “if something happens to U, they are taking my sandal off b/c I’m not getting involved w/ that woman.”
* The Sadducees present an extreme case where 7 brothers all marry the same woman & she dies - so they say, “So who’s wife is she in the resurrection?”
* **The purpose is to make the idea of the afterlife & those who believe in the afterlife look stupid - it suppose to put Jesus in an awkward situation**
* If He agrees the afterlife is stupid, He will alienate part of His audience - If He answers the absurdity of the marriage argument, no 1 will take Him seriously
* **Jesus in His brilliant manner answers by telling them that in the resurrection, in heaven, relationships are different than they are on earth**
* Marriage is for the multiplication of the human race & marriage when godly, rightly reflects who God is to a world who doesn’t know Him
* But in heaven, marriage isn’t the same - some people are thrilled to learn this news - “At least I know there’s an end to this arrangement.”
* But Jesus answers then by using the only Scriptures they believe - He quotes Exodus 3 - the Scriptures they believe to prove that the afterlife is real
* **There are really only 2 options - #1 - that eternity is real & this life only has meaning based on the fact that there’s an eternity attached to it**
* Or #2 - There are those who believe they’re sophisticated & don’t believe in an afterlife, but they haven’t brought that belief to its logical conclusion
* If there is no afterlife, then nothing matters b/c eventually you’re going to die & eventually the sun is going burn out & we’ll all be forgotten
* So nothing matters - actions don’t count - people don’t count - kindness is irrelevant - it’s all a waste b/c everything is going to go away
* This existential philosophy is not very popular b/c it is completely hopeless
* If U are an atheist, this is your philosophy - to reject it or modify it is to say that you’re not really an atheist
* That’s why atheists want to reject God but bring in the purpose & meaning & love that Christianity provides - but it doesn’t work that way
* **Jesus said the Sadducees problem was 2-fold - they didn’t know the Scriptures or the power of God**
* That’s why they were w/o hope - our problems always end up being 1 of these 2 things - we either don’t know what God has said
* Or we underestimate what God can do
* Listen, today is the day to hear the Scriptures & believe in what God can do in your life - That greater things are coming if we trust God & obey Him
* That your life can take an entirely new trajectory when U know what the Bible says to U & we trust God for a better future as we walk w/ Him

**———(v. 34-40)———**

**#3 - The Theological Question: How Should I Live?**

* **Lots of people think that theology doesn’t matter - they say, “I don’t care about theology. I just want to walk w/ Jesus & love people.”**
* That’s fine, but that sentence was a theological statement
* Your theology will always impact how U live b/c theology is what U believe about God & that should impact every part of your life
* **About 10 years ago, we were at the Magic Kingdom & Mia & Xander wanted to ride the Tomorrowland Speedway - so we got a Fastpass**
* As we were getting on the ride, I asked the attendant if both of them can ride
* He says yes, but then I tell the kids they need to decide who will ride 1st
* They both say they want to go 1st, so I tell them they need to work it out
* Mia (age 6) puts her hand on Xander’s shoulder & says, “Xander, U should go last b/c remember, ‘The 1st will be last & the last will be 1st.’
* Xander (age 3) says, “Mia, let me tell U something - the 1st are 1st & the last are last. So I don’t know where you’re getting your fact from.”
* Mia says, “It’s in the Bible. I hear Mommy say it all the time.”
* So Xander turns to me & says, “Dad, is that in the Bible.” - I said, “Yes.”
* He says, “You’re right, but it’s only b/c Dad said you’re right.”
* So I went 1st so both of them could be last - b/c the last are 1st
* Now, the Pharisees are blown away that Jesus silenced (or literally muzzled) the Sadducees - so 1 of the Pharisees, a lawyer asks Jesus a question
* And it’s a good 1 - what’s the greatest commandment?
* Jesus goes w/ what’s expected - Loving God w/ all your heart, soul, & mind
* That’s called the Shema & it’s found in Deuteronomy 6
* “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NKJV)
* But then Jesus adds in another - love your neighbor as yourself
* The isn’t something Jesus came up w/ on the fly - it’s OT passage
* “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18 NKJV)
* **But there’s something powerful here that we have to understand:**
* A the way religious systems generally work is that as long as you’re ok w/ God & don’t offend God, then things are good
* The problem w/ that thinking is that it’s caused U & I over the years to meet people who said they were religious or had faith, but were jerks
* And they were completely ok w/ being jerks b/c they said the right prayers & believed the right things, so it didn’t matter how they treated people
* Real Christianity isn’t like that - Jesus is teaching that loving God should transform U into a person who cares about other people
* And by the way, loving your neighbor isn’t agreeing w/ everything they say or do
* It’s loving your neighbor as yourself - guess what? U want the best for yourself
* You want a good future for yourself & sometimes, what’s best for U is to be corrected so U don’t keep making the same mistakes
* This is especially true in the culture we’re living in b/c our culture believes if U don’t agree & approve of every choice I make, then U hate me
* Listen, that’s nonsense - U want to know how U can know for certain that it’s nonsense? B/c U don’t agree w/ everything U say & do & U don’t hate yourself
* Listen, agreeing w/ what every person does isn’t loving them - it’s conflict avoidance & that’s nowhere near what love is
* **Listen, the 10 commandments are operating on this same principle - the 1st 4 commands deal w/ your relationship w/ God**
* The final 6 deal w/ your relationships w/ other people
* We can never extricate our relationship w/ God from how we treat other people
* The expression of how U love God is found is how U & I treat others
* But it isn’t 1 or the other - it isn’t just being really kind to people - it’s also loving God & we do that by loving God w/ all of our being
* Notice how Jesus says we should love God - w/ all of our heart, soul, & mind
* **Loving God w/ all of your heart means choosing God over what our heart sometimes wants** - b/c everyone wants to listen to their heart - sometimes, U need to talk some sense into your heart b/c your heart is thinking stupid things
* **Loving God w/ all your soul means trusting God in the area of our emotions -** the Greek word is “psyche” where we get our word psychology
* But the part of U that has a tendency to drift is your soul, your emotions
* When David was on the run from King Saul - he wrote a Psalm for people who are struggling & in it he started talking to himself
* “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” (Psalm 42:5)
* He starts talking to himself, trying to snap out of it - I don’t know if you’ve ever been there? I have - sometimes U need to get yourself back in check
* **Loving God w/ all of your mind means we are choosing God & His ways over whatever we’re thinking**
* I’m so glad I became at 19 years old b/c I hadn’t settle on a lot of issues
* So when I s tarted reading the Bible & going to church, I just went w/ what God was saying over what I thought
* But I see it happen w/ people who come to faith later in life or they are just really stubborn - they want to take the Bible under advisement
* That’s not the way it works - U can do that, but don’t say U love God w/ all of your mind - loving God w/ all your mind means learning God’s ways
* It means understanding what God wants U to do & then trusting Him
* **Listen, don’t U want this year to be different than every other year**
* Don’t we want to make the changes that will impact our lives, our family, & our future? Then this is where it starts
* It starts w/ putting God first & realizing that He has been w/ U this whole time
* **Here’s the point of all of this & why it matters - we are not alone - we’ve never been alone - Jesus is w/ us & isn’t going to leave us**
* Sometimes we can be like the children of Israel & be surrounded by what God is doing & not realize it
* But if U will take closer look, you’ll find that U have never been alone
* God has been w/ U every step fo the way & the wiser we become to be able to see Him in our circumstances, the more joy we’ll have even in difficult times
* That’s why we complain - b/c we think we’re alone - that’s why we fear, b/c we think we’re alone - that’s why we give our best years to worthless things
* It’s why we lack gratitude - b/c we think were alone & have to fend for ourselves
* But you’ve never been alone - He’s been w/ U - He’s w/ U in the wilderness
* He’s w/ U when things are good - when things are rough - He’s w/ U in the darkest moments - He’s w/ U even when U want to be alone
* He’ll never leave U or forsake U…