

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Grace and Truth

Hearing Our Stories: Jeffery Mahrt

Introduction:

Many would agree that our culture has been becoming more polarized. Geographically, politically, and even spiritually, people are retreating to different “camps” and surrounding themselves with like-minded people. Is that what Jesus did?

There were polarizing ideas in Jesus' day. How did He come down on divisive issues in his day? Which “camp” did He retreat to? Or did Jesus see a bigger picture that we do?

*“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace **and** truth.” – John 1:14 (NASB)*

When talking to young people about Jesus, I sense that many view Jesus and his spiritual message in one of two “camps”: the “grace camp” and the “truth camp”. The “grace camp” emphasizes the undeserved favor of God's love: mercy, forgiveness, second chances, healing, justice for the oppressed, empathy, and inclusiveness. The “truth camp” emphasizes God's righteousness: God's holiness, God's Word revealed in the Bible, truth telling, right-and-wrong, responsibility, wisdom, discipline, consequences, hatred of sin, and tough love. Which “camp” was Jesus in?

The beautiful answer is that Jesus was full of **both** grace **and** truth. While we humans may see grace and truth as two opposites of a spectrum, Jesus wears both at the very same time. Jesus embodied selfless love, justice, inclusiveness, and forgiveness **and** at the same time was passionate about God's holiness, and His perfect Word, wisdom, and righteousness. In many of Jesus' interactions, we can see how he fully embodies grace and truth at the same time.

Segment Questions:

Case 1: Mark 12:13-17

“Later, they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to catch Jesus in His words. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that You are honest and are swayed by no one. Indeed, You are impartial and teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or not?”

- If Jesus says, “don't pay taxes”, what camp would He have been in? What would have been the response?
- If Jesus says, “pay your taxes”, what camp would He have been in? What would have been the response?

But Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, “Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to inspect.” So they brought it, and He asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar's,” they answered.

Then Jesus told them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.”

And they marveled at Him. “

- How did Jesus respond to this question with grace and truth?

Case 2: John 8:2-11

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

- **If Jesus says, "stone her!", what camp would He have been in? What would have been the response?**
- **If Jesus says, "let her go!", what camp would He have been in? What would have been the response?**

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

- **How did Jesus respond to this question with grace *and* truth?**

Action questions:

- How do we try to look for the "grace and truth" solution to issues that we deal with in relationships with each other? Any examples?
- What would it look like to live all "grace" and no "truth"? Any examples?
- What would it look like to live with all "truth" and no "grace"? Any examples?
- What needs to grow in your life? Grace? Or truth? What makes you say one or the other?

Personal Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank you for your Son and our savior, Jesus Christ. Thank you that in Him, we can truly see grace and truth together, inseparable. Thank you, Lord for your sacrificial love. Thank you for your wisdom. We pray that today, You would help us understand Your character more. We pray also that You would shape us to reflect more of your grace and truth in our daily lives. In Jesus name, we pray, Amen.