

How are we? Let's go to Luke 19. My original plan was to get through about 44 verses tonight, but instead we're going to get through 12. It becomes evident, and I think it becomes especially evident over the last eight to ten weeks as you're reading through the gospels, that there is a very pious, religious, moralistic group of men and women who are extremely offended at Jesus Christ. They are offended at what He requires of them, they are offended of what He asks of them, they are offended at what He claims to be and because of this offense, instead of walking away, they engage in this type of cat and mouse game with Him. So what they try to do is, instead of just walking away because they are religious, moralistic and pious, they just continue to play games, which means they don't fully want to submit to Him at all. So what they'll try to do is redefine Him or embarrass Him. And so what Jesus is going to do with this type of person in the next two chapters is expose them for what they are and maybe expose us for what we are.

Luke 19, starting in verse 45, "And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, " It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers.'" Now if you went and looked in Matthew and Mark, this is built out in a lot more detail, but right here we just get a little snippet. Jesus walks into the temple where, since it was founded, there were things sold in the gentile section of the temple. But apparently somehow in the gentile part of the temple there are men and women selling things in a way that's dishonorable. So it's not just the simple, "Hey, here's where you can get a sacrifice." There's something more going on here, and Jesus sees that there is money being made off of the worship of God in a way that's dishonorable to God and confronts them. He not only confronts them, but the Scriptures are clear that He drives them out. This is one of those texts that I love because popular images, for whatever reason, portray Jesus as somewhat effeminate. He's got feathered hair, He's got a warm glow about Him. He's portrayed as very effeminate. He can't be effeminate if He walks in a temple, starts flipping over tables, driving men out and no one decides to whip Him for this. Do you know what they do? They get out. Nobody goes, "No one flips over my table." There's not scuffling going on here. He drives them out. He is not a weak, effeminate fairy. He drives them out of the temple, He confronts them in their sin and in so doing, here's what He attacks for the men in power. He attacks their reputation, their wallet and even at some level the economy of the city.

Women are a mystery to me, they always will be. Certain parts of them I get, but certain parts are a mystery. God has designed it this way. Men I know. For men, there are certain places you can attack them and certain places you can't. If men get in a real fight where they're punching each other, they're usually good friends after the dust settles. But if you open-hand slap a man, it's never okay again. If you straight up knock me out with a punch to the face and I woke up a day later, I'd be like, "I like him." But if you open-hand slap a man, someone's got to die. In the old days, if you took a glove and slapped a guy, there was a duel that followed that. Someone had to get shot or stabbed after that happened. If you attack a man's reputation, if you attack his pride, this is a very serious issue. If you attack a man's wallet, that's a very serious issue. And Jesus confronted these men and women at a very core, a very sensitive part of the spirit. He's come in and said, "You're sinning. Repent." And repentance to Jesus is just a logical progression of reality. To Jesus, He created all things, designed all things to work in such a way that man would have ever increasing joy and God would get ever increasing glory. So for Jesus to demand repentance is a no brainer to Him because He's trying to line you up with how He's created things to be. And so Jesus is demanding that these men and women repent.

Now that's what it looks like in this text. Here's what it looks like in 2009. Either through teaching, through a friend, through our own study, through a gentle rebuke, we are confronted by the truths of Jesus Christ that demand a

response. And in text or teaching or rebuke or whatever way God engaged us and said, "This has got to change. This is what it looks like for you to obey Me in this setting," whenever that happens, one of two things happens. We will either see whatever it is for what it is, usually an idol, something we value more than we value God, and we will repent and confess or we begin to play the game. Usually the game begins when someone says, "It's my right to have this" or "It's my right to do this." That's usually when the game begins.

Now let's see what our boys in the temple want to do. Are they going to go, "Right, You are God in the heavens. Let's repent, let's obey and let's stop making a profit off of His name," or are they going to play the game? And if they're going to play the game, what game are they going to play? Let's look at it. Luke 20, starting in verse 1, "One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.'" The first and easiest game to play with God when He presses you to obey Him is the authority game. Here's how the authority game has played out for thousands of years. God will press through the Holy Spirit, whatever means He wishes to use, He will say, "This is sin. This is what I want of you. This is what obedience to My commands looks like for you," and if that hits us in a place where we have no intention of listening to that, submitting to that or being obedient to that, the most common game is the authority game.

Now most of us, because we're Bible Belt men and women, don't have the courage or the eternal security to go, "Forget You altogether, Jesus," and run. We don't become atheists and agnostics. Because we've been taught since we were born that there's hell and we really don't want to go there. So we can't just go, "Forget it. I'm out." So this authority game plays out a little different among Evangelicals. We don't want to tell Jesus He has no authority; we just want to redefine what His authority is. So I'll tell you the top three of what I hear all the time. When confronted by the Holy Spirit on a direction, people who have no intention of submitting to that Lordship, people with no intention of being obedient to God will do one of three things. The first one is the most common. "Jesus wants me to be happy. He wouldn't ask that of me." That's by far the most common response to obedience. "Jesus wants me to be happy. He would not ask me to do that. He would not ask me to go there. He would not ask me to walk away from that. He would not ask me to give that away. Jesus wants me to be happy." Now this is flawed on an unreal amount of levels. First of all, you're going to have a hard time finding that text. Okay, so maybe we've got a problem. Maybe your problem isn't Jesus; maybe your problem is the Scriptures. You love Jesus; it's just the Scriptures you don't believe.

Now we've got a bigger fundamental problem there. Because now who is Jesus? "Well, He's whoever I say He is." So you're more comfortable with your invented Jesus than the historic one? "Yes I am." Why? "Because my Jesus lets me do what I want." Ah ha, now we're into the depths of the soul. Jesus is far more interested in your joy and in your holiness than in your happiness. I really believe that the bulk of Evangelicals think that Jesus is Santa Claus and we've been nice and He's kept track of that, and so there will never be any coal for us. We believe that what we get is candy and fire trucks every day and that there is no difficulty in following Him. Or there's this hyper-spiritualized following of Jesus where every decision to submit to Him is this joy-laden explosion of spunk. "Yea! I'm selling all I have and moving to India!" I've met friends who have done just that, and it was with great trepidation and great fear that they laid their lives at the feet of Christ and said, "Give me the strength." When you say, "Jesus wouldn't ask me to do that because He wants me to be happy," is you fundamentally shift His authority. "You don't have authority over me. I'm going to recreate You so that you only require of me what is easy or natural for me to do for You."

Here's the second one. This is a little bit more subtle. This one comes from more seasoned church people. The second thing people will do when God confronts them on what it looks like to be obedient tends to be a brand new definition of grace that has historically never been true. Somehow, God requiring you to be obedient to what He commanded you to do in Scripture is somehow ungracious and unmerciful. The new mercy and the new grace is you doing whatever you

want and God dealing with it. Let me unpack it this way. You'll always see these things in the news that talk about the decline in Christianity and how this decline is occurring here and this decline is occurring there. So whether it's overt or covert, there's this idea that somehow God is really struggling on the recruitment and He'd be glad to have us and that He's just looking for as many people who will give Him any kind of credibility at all. Because He's got a PR image right now. And so He's going to start some things virally, and He's going to blog. He's not going to go with the Scripture thing anymore; He's just going to twitter. He's going to uncover things for our generation that's never been uncovered before. So now the atonement is not really necessary because God was never really angry to begin with. And I don't need to footnote that any way in regards to history; I'll just spew that out into the air with no type of biblical or historic framework and call it fact. And because I'm brilliant, everybody can come and listen. This is the kind of thing that's happening right now. It's a complete redefining of what grace and mercy are. "What's wrong with that? Why can't we do that? If God is gracious and love, why would He ask that of me?" It's a complete redefining of what grace and mercy are all about. Apparently the new grace and the new mercy is not God, through the cross of Jesus Christ, looking past our rebellion and regenerating our hearts through constant repentance and submission to Him. It has now become, "You do whatever you want, and I don't have a problem with it." Historically where that has crept in, it's been called "heresy." It's been called unbiblical heresy and has been stomped out. But now it's kind of warm, and it sounds right. Do you realize that the Bible is very, very clear that every human being that has ever existed and everything that has ever existed will bring glory to God? Do you have that? That means even the atheist that shakes his fist at the heavens and denies that there is any God at all is going to bring an insurmountable bit of glory to the King of heaven, either as an object of mercy or an object of wrath. Do you remember last week where the Pharisees told Jesus, "You had better tell Your disciples to quit saying 'Glory to God in the highest' to You. You had better shut that down." What was His response? "If they don't say it, Creation will cry it out. This gets sung. This gets said. This is truth. And I don't need humans to say it." That's the second game.

Here's the third one. The third one is more subtle and far more popular. It's kind of a weird game, but let me explain it this way. The third game is to believe that whatever God has called you to or from is somehow not that big of a deal, so obedience to it isn't that big of an issue. Maybe at some level you're right. Here's what I mean. Maybe through teaching, maybe through a book you read, maybe through your time in the Word, maybe through a loving friend who sat you down and confronted you, rebuked you or pointed you in a certain way you felt the pressure of the Lord saying, "Do this," and you go, "I just don't think I can do that. So at that moment, there are two things that begin to happen. The first thing is we've said no to the Holy Spirit, which is going to begin to deaden our ability to hear and respond to Him. And here is the second thing and the thing that's so crazy. Not only will our no begin to deaden our ability to hear and respond to the Holy Spirit, but we will then try to make up for it in other areas. So God will say, "You need to confess this," and we'll say, "I won't confess that, but here's what I will do." So it's, "You need to confess this." And your response is, "Uh, how about I just get up 30 minutes earlier and read the Bible a little bit more?" As if God is in heaven going, "Let Me weigh that out. Let Me think about that. Jesus, Holy Spirit, here's what he's offering. He doesn't want to be obedient to what we're asking of him, but what he has offered is 30 more minutes of Scripture reading where we can convict him of stuff that he has no intention of doing all the more." And we can giggle all we want, but I bet a bulk of you are right here. I bet a bulk of you are right here where you have been lead by the Holy Spirit that you need to deal with something, but then it becomes easier to not deal with it. And then we begin to feel guilt about that, so we begin trying to add it into other places. It's not a scale. It doesn't work that way. Obedience to Jesus Christ lines us up with how He created things to be and increases our joy, even in our sadness, even in our difficulty, even in pain, even in sorrow. Disobedience where we somehow try to alleviate the guilt of that by increasing spiritual activity in another place just insures that that increased spiritual activity is futile. Because anything God would lead you to do out of it, you've already proven that you have no intention of doing. So you saying, "I'm not going to do this, but I am going to spend some time in the Word or I am going to tithe a little more," all you've done is negated the spiritual power of whatever you decided to act. So now you're back on the treadmill. You're running but not going anywhere. And those of you who think you've perpetually been in the

desert for fifteen years, I think that if you might stop and pray and bring some people in on it, what you might find out is that ten, fifteen, twenty years ago, God said "Go left," and you said, "I can't do that, but what I will do is go right harder than I would have ever gone left." And then for some reason, prayer has dried up in your life, affection for God has dried up in your life, the ability to risk has dried up in your life and you think, "Oh, why does God have me in the desert?" when God's going, "I don't have you there. You walked out there. I was actually trying to take you to a pool of water of which you can't imagine the crispness, clarity and depth. And you decided that sand was better. That's you, not Me." And this is the third way that people like to redefine the authority of Christ. Can you imagine what you would do with your kid if that was always their response to you? "Hey, can you clean up the play room?" "I would, but you don't really mean that." I mean, there's going to be some violence at the Chandler house, I can tell you that. Some of you are more progressive, and you'll just make your kid think about that. But there's going to be gnashing of teeth in the Chandler crib for that. And I really think this is a big section of us.

Okay, so can I plead with you? There are certain people and certain things to play games with. Like my boy and I play games. Even my wife and I at some level play games. There are certain animals you can play games with. But there are certain things you don't play games with. It always ends badly. You don't play games with Jesus Christ. He's not stupid; He's God. You have not fooled Him. He's not tricked. Are you playing games? Has He pressed you? Has He shown you what obedience to Him looks like? Has he shown you what He's commanding you to do? And what has your response been? Has your response been, "That can't be right. That would be ungracious?" Is it, "There's no way God would ask me to do that. He's more interested in my happiness than that?" Or do you respond by trying to make up for it in other areas? If your answer is yes, you are not a victim, you are a sinner that needs to repent. I know that's not very politically correct and not even very good for church growth. You are not a victim. You have a wicked, idolatrous heart where whatever it is that you don't want to be obedient to is your idol that you value more than God.

And Jesus is going to expose this in the back half of this text. "He answered them, "I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." So they answered that they did not know where it came from. And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." Here's what Jesus exposed in this moment. These men care more about their own reputation, they care about their own power, their own wealth, their god is their stomach, not the God of the universe. That's why they have no intention of submitting to Him. Do you need to confess and repent? Community groups at the Village, Recovery groups at the Village, Bible studies at the Village, those work to help grow men and women who have confessed and repented. They will do nothing for the person who hasn't. You will instead become a lifelong Bible study attender. The reason why I call church a lame hobby is because if you have no intention of ever swimming in, diving in, walking in what the Scriptures teach, then I have no idea why you would perpetually come and sit under them being taught. Do you know that the Bible teaches that what happens in that moment is actually your being more and more hardened? So the community here is to love, support, encourage, suffer along side, weep with, rejoice with, lovingly confront and walk with as long as it takes. But until you're willing to confess and repent that you serve chase and love other things than you love God to the point of being disobedient and defiant to Him and chasing our tail.

I know we're busy men and busy women just by default of our time in history. But I want you to take just a minute here. And I'm talking specifically to believers here. Are you with your life walking in obedience to Christ? Because I think there are some of you that the Holy Spirit has been pushing on your heart for years that you need to deal with things in Recovery, that you need to come clean in confession, but for some reason you've been able to justify disobedience and delay being obedient. There are relationships that you're supposed to be out of, relationships that you're supposed to be in and you've said no or that God doesn't really mean that or that He wants your happiness more. There are some

of you who God's been on you about how you spend your money, where your money should go, and we've thought to ourselves, "No, He really doesn't want that. That's not really what He wants from me." Or you say, "I'll get to that," and just never do. On and on I could go here. Are there those areas of your life where you have, for a protracted period of time, decided to delay your obedience? I shouldn't even use that phrase. There's no such thing as delayed obedience. It's called disobedience.

So if there is, what's next? If there is delayed obedience, if there is disobedience, if there is a protracted area of your life where you've just said, "I'm not going to submit there...I'm not going to do that..." what's next? You can keep walking in it. There's not doubt about that. My prayer is that you would take Jesus very, very seriously.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for our time together. My prayer is that You would press what needs to be pressed. And although the process of sanctification is a long journey and You will complete what You started, for that thing that we've been hanging onto, that weight that we haven't wanted to give over to You, that command that we haven't wanted to be obedient to, that part of our life that we've just refused to surrender that has cheapened our walk with You, that has dried up our passion for you, give us the strength and be gracious and merciful and allow us to lay it down. Guide us to confess in this place today. Guide us to repent in this place and walk in Your truth and to be holy. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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