

Sermon 110: The Devasting Consequences of Christless Religion: Luke 20:41-21:6

Text: Luke 20:41-21:6 "And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son? Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation. And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down..."

Introduction: What would things look like if Satan really took control of a city?

"If Satan took over Philadelphia, all of the bars would be closed, pornography banished, and streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. The children would say, "Yes, sir" and "No, ma'am," and the churches would be full every Sunday...where Christ is not preached...It is easy to become distracted from Christ as the only hope for sinners. Where everything is measured by our happiness rather than by God's holiness, the sense of our being sinners becomes secondary, if not offensive. If we are good people who have lost our way but with the proper instructions and motivation can become a better person, we need only a life coach, not a redeemer...A lot of the things that distract us from Christ these days are even good things...all that Satan has to do is throw several spiritual fads, moral and political crusades, and other "relevance" operations into our field of vision. Focusing the conversation on us—our desires, needs, feelings, experience, activity, and aspirations—energizes us...Wherever Christ is truly and clearly being proclaimed, Satan is most actively present in opposition..."
(*Christless Christianity* Michael Horton pages 15-16)

Summary: Christ exposed religion's blindness by highlighting its deficient view of the Savior, its shallow preoccupation with reputation, and its hypocritical devotion.

Proposition: We must reject any system that replaces or diminishes Christ alone.

Part 1: Its deficient theology: 20:41-44 "How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?"

- **Christ's question to the religious leaders:**

- Why do people say that the Messiah is David's son, if he calls Him his Lord?
- Is He David's son or is He David's Lord?
- If both, then how are these two concepts reconciled?

- **Christ's motive for the question:**

- **First:** He highlighted the core problem with their religious systems.
 - They did not need to understand the Messiah.
 - They did not need the cross and resurrection.
 - The law and the traditions of the elders were enough for the Pharisees.
 - There was no resurrection of the dead for the Sadducees.
 - He just needed to be a military hero to overthrow Rome for the Zealots.
- **Second:** He highlighted the danger of their opposition to the Messiah they did not know.
 - "Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool..."
 - **Luke 20:17-18** "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner...Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder..."

- **The Scripture's witness:** The Messiah is eternal God in flesh

- **Romans 1:1-4** "Jesus Christ our Lord...was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead..."
- **John 1:1-3, 14** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made...the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory..."

- **Philippians 2:6-8** "Being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross..."
- **Christless religion is not just a first-century problem:**
 - **Theological Liberalism:** He has been redefined.
 - **Shallow evangelicalism:** He is left undefined.
 - **Legalism:** He is our coach.
 - **Moralism:** He is our moral example.
 - **Mysticism:** He is my imaginary friend
 - **Prosperity Theology:** He is our "genie in the bottle."
- **Biblical Christianity:**
 - He is eternal God in human flesh.
 - He died on the cross for our sins.
 - He rose triumphantly from the grave on the third day.
 - He commands us to repent and believe in the gospel.
 - If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Part 2: Its shallow preoccupations: 20:45-47 "Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers..."

- **Seven examples of using religion to promote self:**
 - **Religious pomp:** "Desire to walk in long robes..."
 - **Hyper-spiritual greetings:** "Love greetings in the markets..."
 - **Honors in religious contexts:** "Love...the highest seats in the synagogue..."
 - **Honors in social settings:** "Love... the chief rooms at feasts..."
 - **Money:** "Devour widows' houses..."
 - **Hypocritical worship:** "For a shew make long prayers..."
 - **Impressive facilities:** "Some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts..."
- **The central concerns of the Sermon on the Mount:**
 - **Matthew 5:3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..."
 - **Matthew 5:11** "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake..."
 - **Matthew 5:20** "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven..."

- **Matthew 6:1** "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them..."
- **Matthew 6:5** "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men..."
- **Matthew 6:7** "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking..."
- **They had an affections problem:** "Desire...love...a shew..."
 - Christless religion has no life.
 - It has no transforming power.
 - It promotes self and develops mechanisms to deaden the conscience.
 - Its passions are misdirected.

Part 3: Its duplicitous devotion: 21:1-6 "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down..."

- **Their disciples reflected their teaching:** "He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury..."
 - **They gave very publicly: Matthew 6:1** "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them..."
 - **They drew attention to their gifts: Matthew 6:2** "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men..."
 - **They thought much of their giving: Matthew 6:3** "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth..."
- **Their most noble disciples were abused and misguided by their teaching: 21:2-4** "And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had..."
 - **Christ drew attention to her noble yet misguided sacrifice:** "She of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had..."

- **She was giving to the detriment of her own physical needs: 20:47** "Which devour widows' houses..."
- **She was giving to a broken and dead system: 20:47, 21:6** "The same shall receive greater damnation...the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down..."
 - The religious leaders benefitted from her immense sacrifice.
 - Her soul was being led astray by their teaching.
- **If she followed their teaching she would die without Christ: Matthew 23:13** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in..."
- **Christless religion is thoroughly corrupt and evil:**
 - It creates self-righteous, abusive people.
 - It preys on the most vulnerable and sincere.
 - It is powerless to save and deadens the conscience to its true spiritual poverty.
 - It replaces redemption and regeneration with moralism.

Applying the Passage:

- **To the non-Christian:**
 - **Perhaps you believe religion is full of hypocrisy:** Christless religion is powerless to transform people; therefore, religious hypocrisy will be common.
 - **Perhaps you believe that religion is manipulative and abusive:** Christless religion will produce manipulative and abusive behavior in its leaders and followers.
 - **Perhaps you can pick apart the inconsistencies in genuine Christians:** While the gospel transforms, we are still simply sinners saved by grace.
 - **Perhaps you are a part of a Christless religious system:** Do not allow yourself to rest in a dead religion and the filthy rags of your own righteousness.
 - **You must repent and believe in the gospel alone:** There is no other place to turn.
- **To the believer:**
 - **Do we see the marks of Christless religion developing in our hearts:**
 - Are we enamored with religious pomp?
 - Is our devotion a show to promote self?
 - Are we using the church or our reputation to get honor from others?

- Are we greedy and using God as the means to our own end?
 - Are we enamored with the things we have built?
- **Is the culture of our church unquestionably built on the gospel:**
 - Are we gospel-centered in our focus or moralists?
 - Are we worshiping Christ as He is or have we created a "Jesus" in our own image?
 - Are we resting in the death and resurrection of Christ or are we laboring to convince God to continue to love and accept us?
- **We must reject any system that replaces or diminishes Christ alone.**
- **Let's delight in His person and work.**