

Show and Tell – Walking the Talk

3/15/23

Matthew 23:1-12

Sunday AM

When I was a kid, one of my favorite parts of school was **show & tell!** Do you remember show/tell? It was awesome. Of course, as a kid, I didn't have much of anything all that interesting to share, but I loved it anyway. But now, as an adult, who's traveled the world, I have some pretty cool artifacts to share.

For example – does anyone know what this is? It's a piece of history – it's a chunk of the Berlin Wall. I was fortunate to travel to Berlin about 6-weeks after the wall came down and I got this chunk of history.

Another item – (5) smooth stones I retrieved out of the creek bed in the Elah Valley in Israel where David likely chose the stones he used to slay Goliath.

I have (1) final item I've brought for show/tell today. Yes! It's a Cheese Puff. Cheese Puffs are like the greatest snack food ever! **What's not to love?** *These puffy little morsels of hydrogenated soybean and corn meal can satisfy the more vicious of cravings – after all, there's a micro-explosion of faux cheddar cheese in every bit – so they say!*

I like Cheese Puffs b/c they remind me that we're not to have a puffed-up faith that's all volume with little to no substance, but rather, we're to have the kind of faith that works – *that's authentic/not artificial.*

Truth is – *it's easy to live a religious life that appears to be more than what we are* – pretending to be a friend of Jesus when we're barely an acquaintance. It's easy to claim Jesus with our words but deny Him by our actions – to *talk the talk* but not *walk the walk!*

So, to have a *Cheese Puff Faith* is to have a faith that's all volume with little/no substance. **CPCs** are people so puffed up with religious air, their only real contribution is they take up space in the church bowl. *They may claim to have faith, yet if you were to crush them, you'd be fortunate to get a teaspoon of substance.*

NOW – if you recall, last August, I shared that this year, our focus would be on *thinking smaller* – that is, thinking more intentionally about our relationships with God, our family, and our church family. Today, I want us to discuss one last group we need to *think smaller* – that's in our ministry/missional relationships.

To do this, I want us to look at an encounter Jesus had in **Matthew 23**. After 3½ yrs of ministry and dealing with the craziness of the Pharisees – things are coming to a head. WITH a few days left, Jesus takes the gloves off to deal with all of the shenanigans of the elites.

Contextually, Jesus had returned to Jerusalem with His posse. On Palm Sunday, to great fanfare, He rode into Jerusalem on the back of a colt, stepped into the Temple, and once again zealously reminded everyone that God's House was being grossly misused.

The next day, He re-enters the city and immediately finds Himself engaged with the chief priests/elders who were determined to take Him down b/c they viewed Him as a threat to their power and way of life.

Initially, after they tried to deceive Him, Jesus levied (3) poignant parables that basically served as (2) jabs and an uppercut to the pious establishment – and they didn't take it too kindly. So, of course, they retaliated, yet, like Ali, Jesus was able to duck/weave – *floating like a butterfly, and stinging like a bee.*

Then comes Matthew 23, and the gloves come off – right there in the Temple courts a bare-knuckle, backyard spiritual brawl breaks out and Jesus lowers the boom – calling them out to expose them for being nothing more than a bunch of Cheese Puff religionists.

*Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So, you must be careful to do everything they tell you. **But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.** They tie up heavy loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. “**Everything they do is done for people to see:** They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others. “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and He is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

WOW! If that’s not throwing down, I don’t know what is! Yet from there, Jesus went full MMA on them pummeling them with what is known as the (7) woes – telling them things like – (1) *you may appear clean on the outside, but you’re filthy on the inside*, or (2) *you do the easy things b/c it’s convenient but ignore the hard things that actually matter*, or (3) *you’re white-washed tombs full of dead men’s bones*.

Why is Jesus so frustrated with them? It’s b/c the very people who should’ve seen Him coming and rejoicing over His arrival were so earthly-minded they were no heavenly good – although outwardly they pretended to be super spiritual. **IOW** – they *talked the talk but didn’t walk the walk*. They proclaimed to have faith but in actuality, had little, if any, substance. **They were more than hypocrites – they were frauds/heretics.**

Listen – while God knows that none of us are perfect, He despises all-out hypocrisy. He wants us to do more than *talk the talk*, He wants our lives to match our words and our actions to align with our beliefs.

Consider the words of James in **James 2:14-24**:

What good is it, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother is w/out clothes and daily food. If one of you says, “Go in peace; keep warm and be fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it’s not partnered by action, is dead. But some will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith w/out deeds and I’ll show you my faith by my deeds. You believe there’s one God. Good! Even the demons believe and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence faith w/out deeds is useless? Wasn’t father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see his faith and actions were working together to become complete to fulfill the scripture that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see a person is considered righteous by what they do and not only by what they say they believe.

James says **true faith isn’t an empty claim; it has an accomplice of God-honoring activity**. So, just b/c you’ve said a prayer, walked an aisle, or dunked – doesn’t equate to true faith b/c **real faith has real fruit**.

Point – God is telling us that our actions always testify to what we say we believe. That is, our faith is proven by how we live more than by what we say.

It’s faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies isn’t alone. *Calvin*

I call this **WALKING THE TALK!**

SEE – *Walking the talk* is living out what you say you believe. It's choosing to live on mission for God by living aligned to His Word and under the influence of the H.S. instead of living conformed to the culture or in opposition to the precepts/principles of God.

SEE – it's easy to claim to believe in something, but it's another thing to live it. The question isn't whether you can claim it, but if your actions/life can back it up!

The criteria for real faith isn't *profession* alone, but profession partnered with *performance*.

IOW – if your faith were put on trial, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

So, how do we live out what we say we believe? Let me show you what the Apostle Peter encourages.

But set apart Christ as the Lord of your hearts, always being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that's in you, with meekness/fear; having a good conscience, that when others defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct may be ashamed. 1 Peter 3:15-16

1 – You have to set apart Christ as Lord (sanctify)

sanctify is to make a decision to make God the holy priority of your life, giving Him His rightful seat on the throne of your heart. Daily following His lead!

2 – You have to be prepared to take a stand

Preparation requires planning/study. It entails putting in the effort and deciding in advance how you're going to respond before it happens. *It's training to be Godly.*

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Note the responsibility we have to make decisions to prioritize the things of God in our lives and the effort required for them to make a difference in our lives.

3 – We have to decide to boldly live our beliefs

We have to decide to put our faith to good use by choosing to live a life of substance/purpose.

(2) weeks ago, I got to experience faith in an entirely new way. I was having lunch with a friend who owns a Tesla. After lunch, since I'd never ridden in a Tesla, he invited me for a drive – and it was awesome!

After a few min., of riding, he offered to let me drive – and of course, I accepted. So, after a few quick starts (like 0-60 in less than 2 sec.) he suggested I let go of the steering wheel to allow the car to drive itself. **Can I tell you** – that was a challenge! Yet I pushed the button and put my trust in the technology of the car. And I have to confess, as we made the long left-hand bend on Minix Rd, I felt the sudden urge to grab the wheel. As we were quickly coming up behind a car in front of us, I had the inclination to tap the brakes.

And if I'm being honest, *I sometimes do the same thing in my faith walk with God* – I feel the urge to grab the steering wheel of my life for some sense of control.

What I was reminded of the other day is that trust is not blind/ignorant but calculated, rational, and responsible. Yet ultimately, it requires allowing whoever/whatever has been entrusted to do their thing with my cooperation but not necessarily my assistance.

This is true of the Christian life – to have a faith that *walks the talk*, we have to trust that God knows what He's doing. He knows when to go right, when to go left, when to move forward, and when to stop – with our cooperation/participation, but not with our assistance.

God doesn't need our help to be God, but w/out question, we need His help to navigate this life.

Video – OneTimeBlind – Trust Fall