

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
25th October 2026
Diocesan Sermon by The Rev'd Canon Paul Kumasaka

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he? They said to him, The son of David. (Matthew 22:41-42)

Temple leaders continue to bombard Jesus by asking some tricky questions. In the previous section of this chapter (22:15-33) Herodians (Political group) asked him about paying tax. Matthew himself was a tax collector, so he knew all of these socio-economic twists in society. Facing a very powerful Roman occupation forces, they pretended to be obedient to them, but they always wanted to get rid of them to revive their glory in the past. Replied by Jesus who said “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (22:21), they realised they failed to trap Jesus, because they were ready to accuse him for being disobedient to either of them; God and the emperor. but Jesus told them that show their allegiance to the power on earth of the emperor) and to the glory of God in heaven at once.

Then the Sadducees turned up, asked him about resurrection. (They did not believe in resurrection. They took the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) as genuine, discarded everything else, including the books of history, wisdom, poet, and prophets.) They quoted Moses’ teaching and asked him about the legality of marriage of a widow who married seven brothers, but ended up childless. If Jesus said something like ‘the first one who married her’ or ‘the last one’, they would have sharply accused him for being unfaithful to the law of Moses. But again, Jesus told them that God is not of the dead (God of the past) but of the living (present time to the future).

Hope I did not recap the previous section of this chapter too long, knowing that I wrote a prepared sermon for St. Luke’s Day last week, but there is an option to take readings for Pentecost XXI, so I felt it is necessary to summarise it so that we can have a clear picture of the confrontations between Jesus and the temple leaders.

Now the Pharisees are the religious group who believed that they are the only people chosen by God. Literary ‘Pharisees’ means ‘the separate ones.’ Unlikely to the Sadducees, they did not involve themselves to the Temple rituals. Instead, they took their role as teachers and preachers. In every synagogue they preached and taught the locals about the law.

They kept their eyes quite intensively to the people, make sure that they do not violate all the commandments and ‘bylaws’ which were developed later on. Every time, when they detected the unlawful behaviour of the people, they accused these people quite violently. So, they became religious watch dogs who functioned like religious police.

Should they be kindhearted, and teach these ‘offenders’ the way how the books of the law guide and direct the faithfuls? Disappointedly, they did not teach or encourage the general

public, but threatened them for 'God's' punishment. Jesus knew how they distorted the love of God and made him an angry 'dictator'. While Jesus was preaching, healing them, showing them some miracles, his message was quite simple, i.e. 'God is Love.'

Why did the Pharisees and others make God a loveless and unapproachable one, I wonder. In the past history of Israel, they experienced destructions, disasters, and invasions. In the Old Testament time, since Noah's flood (which they interpreted as God's punishment against the unfaithful people), a number of catastrophic events took place. For example, the land was invaded and destroyed by the Assyrians and Babylonians. King Solomon's Temple was destroyed and people were exiled, away from their home soil.

Some Old Testament historians thought that the kingship of some 'unworthy' ones brought calamities. They judged each of the kings, how they were on the right track to follow the example of King David. Only the ones who had never walked away from the way how God taught David, were the right kings to govern the nation. In numbers of chapters and verses of the books of history (1,2 Samuel, and 1,2 Kings) their favourite phrase is 'He walked neither going to left nor right'. They firmly believed that unworthy kings. For example, the ones who allowed the people worshipping foreign gods provoked God's anger and letting him to punish them. To them, floods, slavery in Egypt, invasion by the enemies, fall of the temple, and people taken to the exile, they were the result of people's unfaithfulness that provoked God's anger for punishment. To avoid another disasters and calamities, they thought two ways to keep God 'happy and quiet.' Firstly, they accuse the offenders before God gets angry.

Consequently, people suffered from fear of being accused and punished. Jesus was not exempt. Didn't they accuse him for working on the Sabbath (Matthew 12) or seeing his disciples not washing their hands before eating (Matthew 15)? They worried that Jesus' and his disciples' behaviour would risk God's punishment.

But Jesus was, as he always has been, chosen to help, heal, and welcome others even on the day of the rest, instead of denying their access to him.

Secondly, the Pharisees wanted to 'locking God' in the holiest of holies, to isolate him from the people, that they can avoid provoking him. To them, Jesus was the highest danger, because he is publicly proclaiming himself as the Messiah (the anointed one.) Therefore, they found him blasphemous, seeing him as the one who pretends himself as God's anointed one. So they attempted to entrap and delete him, they first asked him about the principal Commandment. Jesus clearly answered, 'Love God, and love neighbours.' He knew they behave contrary to what they teach - not practicing God's love to the others. So, he asked them about the question on the Messiah. For them, the anointed one must come from the line of David with power and authority. On the other hand, Jesus' view of Messiah is the one chosen to serve all others in actions. Quoting Psalm 110 ('The Lord said to my Lord,...) he asked them 'If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' (22:45) While the Pharisees were unable to understand God's purpose of sending his Son as the anointed one, Jesus proclaims the servant leadership of the Messiah as he was fulfilling the essentials of the Commandment - Love God and love neighbours, not just be his words, but by his actions.

Thanks be to God.