

Text: Mt 11.20-30; Lk 7.36-50; Lk 8.1-3; Mt 12.22-37, Mk 3.20-30, Lk 11.14-23

To begin with, the headers from my Harmony of the Gospels on the passages we look at tonight:

- Woes Upon the Privileged – Mt 11.20-30
- A Sinful Woman Anoints – Jesus Lk 7.36-50
- Another Tour of Galilee – Lk 8.1-3
- Jesus Accused of Blasphemy – Mt 12.22-37, Mk 3.20-30, Lk 11.14-23

Last time we had the questions brought forward by John the Baptist while in prison. Jesus answered, pointing to the miracles, then preached about John to the crowds. His message implied pretty clearly that he is the Messiah.

What we did in following the harmony last week actually broke up the sermon material we have in Matthew. There is no clear break between Mt 11.19 (where Jesus is talking about John) and Mt 11.20, where he turns to rebuking the cities that saw his miracles.

We will be reading a good bit of Scripture for this message, so I will be brief in my remarks.

I. The sermon on the signs continued (Mt 11.20-30)

A. Denunciation of unbelief (20-24)

1. The signs Jesus performed ought to have convinced these cities, not just John the Baptist
2. The cities are compared to two notorious cities in their unbelief
 - a. Tyre and Sidon (Gentile cities in Lebanon) – this is insult enough to the Jews
 - b. Sodom – the wicked city overthrown in Genesis
3. These statements could be hyperbole (exaggerations for effect) but they also speak to what is called “middle knowledge”
 - a. God knows all things, including all events past, present, future
 - b. God also knows with certainty what *could* happen – the knowledge of potential choices, or “middle knowledge”
4. In any case, those who see the miracles of Christ and don't believe are doomed to greater judgement than Sodom (24)

Considering this, what kind of judgement awaits those who:

1. Have the full revelation of the complete Bible
2. Have heard the preaching of the gospel
3. Yet still refuse to believe?

B. Blessing of belief (25-27)

C. Invitation to the weary (28-30)

II. The supper at Simon's and the sinful woman (Lk 7.36-50)

A. The occasion appears to be just after this message, in fairly short order (36)

B. A woman, weeping, comes to anoint Jesus feet (37-38)

1. Lavish suppers by the wealthy in this culture were social occasions, onlookers could "spectate"
2. The woman comes in and worships the Lord, anointing his feet with expensive perfume

C. The Pharisee, Simon, judges Jesus in his heart (39)

D. The Lord rebukes Simon with a parable (40-46)

E. The Lord forgives the woman with a word (47-50)

1. The Lord's grace motivates further judgementalism by the Pharisaic guests (49)
2. The Lord identifies the key to his grace: "your faith" (50)

We need to note this: Jesus didn't say, "I save you and give you faith." Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you."

III. The Lord's following: forgiven and faithful women (Lk 8.1-3)

A. These are the days following the sermon, the supper, and the forgiven woman

B. The Lord's preaching ministry continues throughout Galilee

C. Several female supporters are named

1. The list includes Mary Magdalene who was once demon possessed (how, we do not know, nor how removed, we do not know)

2. The social standing of the others implies that all of these women are wealthy — their giving enables the Lord's ministry

The thing to note here is that the forgiven faithful worship and serve the Lord. This sets us up for what comes next.

IV. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mt 12.22-37, Mk 3.20-30, Lk 11.14-23)

- A. On Sunday, we read the Matthew passage. Luke follows Matthew quite closely. Mark provides unique details, so let's turn to Mark.
- B. The accusation of blasphemy occurs as the crush of people intensifies (Mk 3.20-22)
 1. So intense that Jesus and his disciples cannot even have a normal meal (20)
 2. So intense that the Lord's family (Mary and his brothers) want to take charge of him (21)

Note: this verse indicates their setting out from Nazareth; they don't arrive on the scene until v. 31.
 3. So intense that the scribes accuse him of demon possession and attribute his power to demonic power (22)
- C. Jesus rebukes the scribes with the very famous passage on the "unforgiveable sin" (23-30)
 1. A parable about the unity of Satan's kingdom: how can he be divided against himself (23-27)
 2. A warning about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (28-30)
 - a. Note: the reason for the warning, v. 30 "because they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"
 - b. The saint troubled by his own sins who worries about this sin hasn't committed it
 - c. The sin is saying that Jesus is empowered by demonic spirits, thus blaspheming the Holy Spirit

- d. An unbeliever may speak against Jesus and be forgiven, but to refuse to acknowledge the power of the Spirit and attribute it to demons is unforgiveable

Matthew 12.31 “Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³² “Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

3. The next thing that will happen will be the arrival of his family – we often think of that moment as separate from this, but we need to keep it in this context
- a. Unfortunately, that part of the story must wait until next week!
 - b. But let’s say this: the Lord’s brothers didn’t believe in him during his ministry – they were walking on dangerous ground
 - c. They were also influencing the Lord’s mother, who *did* believe in him

We should take note of this and realize the importance of our own influence. Will our words or actions *encourage* or *discourage* faith.

Even more seriously, will our words or actions encourage or discourage *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*?

Conclusion:

I entitled this message, “The Sharp Edge of Controversy” — it is the sharp edge because of the pit on the side of unbelief.

We want to do everything we can to encourage belief in the Lord. We shouldn’t engage in things in this life that would tempt others to any loss of faith, or a denial of Jesus Christ.