

# Matthew 12 - Scandalized by the Message part 2

To Read:

1. Isaiah 42
2. I Samuel 20:35-21:9

## I. Introduction

### A. Last week we started a new section of Matthew that focuses on how Israel reacts to Jesus' message

1. After Jesus sent out the twelve to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, Jesus Himself interacts with the crowd and their response to His message
2. First, some of the disciples of John the Baptist came, and they were struggling with whether Jesus was the messiah or not, because John's message of judgment didn't seem to be being fulfilled - John was in prison and nothing was happening - when the message became costly for John, he wasn't sure that He got the message right
3. Then, Jesus addressed the crowds and said that they were apathetic to His message - they didn't receive either Jesus or John's message because it wasn't the message that they wanted - when the content of the message confronted the crowds, they weren't sure they wanted the message
4. Finally, Jesus addressed the cities that He performed His miracles in and said they ignored His message - they saw the gospel, but they didn't react, they were too preoccupied with other things - when the demands of the message confronted the cities, they weren't sure they wanted His message
5. In Matthew 11, everyone is scandalized by the message, they are offended by Jesus - but Jesus isn't concerned because this was God's plan to glorify Himself and judge His people
6. So Jesus called out to all who listened, inviting them to come to Him and take up His yoke - not to be offended by Him, but to set aside themselves and embrace Him and His offense
7. We might summarize last week by saying: being close to the gospel is not enough, we must act on the gospel

### B. This week we are going to look at a new set of people and how they react to the gospel

1. We might summarize this week by saying: being very religious is not enough, we must submit to the gospel
2. This week is going to focus completely on the Pharisees - four times the Pharisees are going to approach Jesus, and, like last week, each time they are going to reject Jesus' message
3. But their rejection of His message is more intense than in Matthew 11 - by the end of the second interaction, the Pharisees decide that they must destroy Jesus and His message
4. They didn't just ignore the message, they outright hated the message - it stood against everything that they believed and everything that they were
5. But again we'll see that Jesus is not concerned at the rejection of Himself and His message - this is God's plan

### C. Read Matthew 12

### D. Proposition and Outline

1. Proposition: valuing ourselves can cause us to miss the gospel of Christ, so we must set aside ourselves and embrace the offense of the gospel
  - a. The world is scandalized by the gospel
  - b. Jesus welcomes the scandal of the gospel
  - c. We must embrace the scandal of the gospel

## II. The World is Scandalized by the Gospel

### A. Scandalized by self-righteousness (Matthew 12:1-14)

1. Matthew 12 starts with two stories about Jesus, the Pharisees and the Sabbath
  - a. In the first story, Jesus and the disciples are walking through a field and picking grain, but the Pharisees object - harvesting grain is unlawful on the Sabbath
  - b. In the second story, Jesus goes into a synagogue on a Sabbath and the Pharisees ask Him if He would even heal on the Sabbath - and Jesus does, angering the Pharisees at His disregard of the law
  
2. Both stories serve to highlight the Pharisees and their relationship to the law
  - a. The Pharisees prided themselves in their religious keeping of the law - this was what made them Pharisees
  - b. The Pharisees had rejected the Hellenization that had occurred since the exile, the secularization of the people of God - they wanted to keep a special identity as God's people by exalting God's law
  - c. And they believed that God's law would be the basis for restoring the people of God to their rightful position at the head of the nations - the law would, in that sense, save Israel
  - d. So they studied the law diligently and made application after application of the law - they were very concerned about how one is supposed to do the law, maybe they overlooked heart attitudes sometimes, but their intent was to make sure that the law of God was being obeyed in every area of life
  - e. They thought about how to apply the law to every single area of life, and they prided themselves on being able to keep the law in every conceivable situation - their rigid obedience set them apart as the God's people
  - f. So, when Jesus comes and does not value the law in the same way they do, it is an offense to them - He is putting the nation, and their moral leadership, in peril by teaching that doesn't carefully guard the law
  
3. But Jesus says the Pharisees got the Law all wrong, and He says this in two ways
  - a. First, He says, "The Law belongs to the King in order to serve God purpose"
    - i. When the Pharisees come to Jesus in the field and tell Him to stop harvesting grain, we might expect Him to correct their over-interpretation and over-application of the law - that's not what God said...
    - ii. But Jesus doesn't do this - instead He tells a story about David in the temple, which we read earlier
      - a) The interesting thing about this story is it tells us about a time when David actually did something against the law - he ate the Bread of the Presence which was most holy
      - b) The use of the bread is given in Leviticus 24:5-9 - *"You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf... Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due."*
      - c) David shouldn't have been eating of the bread - it belonged to the High Priests and was most holy
      - d) But David had set aside the literal requirements of the law in order to serve God's purpose - David saw that the law was meant to serve God's purpose and guide God's people, not bind them
      - e) And David has a special position from which to do this - David isn't any ordinary man, setting aside the law willy-nilly - He is God's anointed King, using the law to further God's purpose
      - f) So, Jesus is saying that the law belongs to the king and He can use it to further God's purpose, the Law doesn't bind Him, the Law belongs to Him
    - iii. And Jesus follows up with an example where the law literally allows itself to be ignored - showing that this isn't outside God's plan, but part of God's plan
      - a) In fact, it is from the same topic - Jesus says that the priests must work on the Sabbath, they must set out the Bread of the Presence every Sabbath day
      - b) So the priests were exempt from the requirement of the law in order to serve God's purpose, the law wasn't ultimate, the law served a purpose
    - iv. So Jesus finishes by claiming that He is the anointed King with authority over the law
      - a) When Jesus claims that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, He is claiming authority over the law and its application - Jesus can and must use the Law in order to further God's purpose
      - b) And He makes an even bigger claim as well - He claims that He is the "Lord of the Sabbath" - He was YHWH of the Covenant, He was the covenant God come near
      - c) And this is why the law had been made subservient to the king, because the ultimate king would be God Himself, YHWH come to visit His people - the Sabbath literally belonged to the king

- b. Second, He says, "God's purpose in the law is to reflect Himself and therefore, His mercy"
  - i Right between the grain episode and the healing episode, Jesus quotes out of Hosea 6:6 again, saying, "*I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*"
  - ii This quote ties the two episodes together - if the first episode highlights that the law belongs to the king, the second episode highlights what purpose the law serves, how the king should use it
  - iii Jesus says, in the second episode, that the use of the law is not ritualistic, to earn favor with God, but reflective, to direct God's people to represent God
  - iv And God is a God full of covenant love - the word used in Hosea 6:6 - I desire *hesed*, steadfast love, or covenant love, the same word used in Exodus 34:6, God is *abounding in steadfast love*
  - v In Greek, Jesus uses the word mercy to reflect this idea - God's steadfast, covenant love is seen in His mercy toward His people, His desire to do good for them even when they do not deserve it
  - vi The law's ultimate purpose, as we studied in Exodus, was to help the people reflect their covenant God - and so nothing in the law could be construed to be restricting the Israelites from reflecting the kind of mercy that God shows to His people, from doing good to each other
  - vii In fact, the laws purpose should have been understood to encourage such acts of mercy, so Jesus concludes, "*so it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath*"
  - viii If God is a merciful God, then the purpose of the law must be understood to encourage mercy - any application of the law that denied this truth had to be a wrong, self-serving interpretation
  - ix God is a God of mercy and God wants His people to reflect Him - the law cannot be used otherwise
- 4. So Jesus exposes their self-righteousness
  - a. Regardless of what they claimed, maybe even regardless of what they thought, the Pharisees weren't seeking God in the law, they were serving themselves with the law - they were highlighting how good they were
  - b. They were using the law to serve their own purposes, not God's purposes and so wrongly faulted Jesus
  - c. And they were using the law to pass judgment, not to point to mercy, and so wrongly hated Jesus
  - d. The law, had become an instrument of self-righteousness, not an avenue to seek God's salvation

## **B. Scandalized by self-importance (Matthew 12:22-32)**

1. The next interaction Jesus has with the Pharisees takes place in verses 22-32
  - a. Jesus continues His healing ministry by healing a demon possessed man, and the crowds were awed - in fact, they almost started to see who Jesus was and they question each other, "*could this be the Son of David?*"
  - b. But the Pharisees reject the crowd's interpretation - there is no way that Jesus could be the Son of David because His message doesn't match their message, if He is performing miraculous signs, He must be serving some other power, He must be the servant of Beelzebul, we might say the servant of Satan
  - c. The Pharisees set themselves up as the ultimate judge - they saw the signs that Jesus performed and they understood them to be signs, but they rejected the signs in favor of their own interpretation
  - d. In a way, we could say that their pride blinded them - they saw the message, but could not accept it because it wasn't their message, Jesus' message didn't submit to their authority so there was no way it could be right
2. But Jesus exposes their self-importance and destroys their argument
  - a. First, their argument is irrational
    - i If Jesus' power comes from Satan, why is Jesus using that power to destroy Satan's works?
    - ii The answer is, He wouldn't - the argument is irrational, it doesn't make sense
    - iii Their argument hasn't been thought through at all - it is merely a statement of the Pharisees absolute rejection of everything that Jesus represents, they valued themselves over Jesus
  - b. Second, their argument is inconsistent
    - i If Jesus is casting out demons by the power of Satan, how do the Pharisees' followers cast out demons?
    - ii It seems, even from other passages of Scripture, that some followers of the Pharisees went around and tried to cast out demons, although their success may be questionable
    - iii So Jesus asks the Pharisees, "are you accusing yourselves and your followers of being pawns of Satan as well? If you argue that casting out demons is a sign of demonic activity, you condemn yourselves."
    - iv Clearly the Pharisees weren't attempting to identify themselves as servants of Satan, though in essence they do - their argument was merely a grasping at straws from those who saw the truth, but rejected it because they favored themselves over Jesus, their judgment over His teaching

- c. Third, their argument is ignorant - even willfully ignorant
  - i If the Pharisees had truly cared about what they were saying instead of just rejecting Jesus, they would have seen that their argument actually pointed to Jesus being the in-breaking of the kingdom of God
  - ii Satan wouldn't be attacking himself and casting out evil powers was the Pharisees' goal - so clearly Jesus' power didn't come from Satan, it came from God and signaled the arrival of His Kingdom
  - iii Their argument actually shows that they can see that Jesus is God's champion - He is the strong man that has defeated Satan and is plundering his house - but they are rejecting God's champion and have set themselves against the gospel message
- 3. So the Pharisees self-importance and their settled rejection of Jesus put them irrevocably outside the kingdom
  - a. Jesus' words on the unforgivable sin could use a longer exposition this morning, but in context it really isn't that confusing of a concept
  - b. The Pharisees, valuing themselves, set themselves against recognizing who Jesus was - even when the signs that declared who He was were right in front of them, they chose to attribute the signs to Satan
  - c. There was no other sign that could possibly convince them and they rejected the only thing that could change their hearts as being the work of Satan, not the work of the Holy Spirit
  - d. Their pride, their conviction that they were God's spokesperson, prevented them from ever bowing the knee to God's savior and finding mercy
  - e. Their sin could not be forgiven, because they had set themselves up in judgment against Jesus

### **C. Scandalized by self-deception (Matthew 12:38-42)**

- 1. Jesus has one more interaction with the Pharisees in verses 38-42
  - a. After Jesus had soundly condemned the Pharisees for their settled rejection of Himself and His message, some of the Pharisees seem to back off of their point slightly - they try to justify their 'skepticism'
  - b. They say, "we're not really rejecting God's work, we just need to see some sort of sign showing that your work comes from God and not Satan"
- 2. But Jesus' rejects their assertion, He exposes their self-deception and says that no sign would ever convince them
  - a. The Pharisees had seen sign after sign - in fact, they had seen a sign only a few minutes before and attributed it to Satan, not to God - no sign could ever be good enough for them
  - b. So Jesus tells them that for an evil and adulterous generation there would be no sign - if they would not see the sign of Johan they would not accept any sign
  - c. Jesus is actually looking forward in the story a little bit and telling the Pharisees that they will get one last great sign, one sign that is bigger than all the others, but they would reject that sign just like all the others
  - d. When Jesus, like Jonah, is cast away from Israel, buried under the earth for three days, and rises again, there should be no one who denies His deity and no one who rejects His message
  - e. But the Pharisees aren't looking for signs, they are willfully blinding themselves to signs so no sign could ever be good enough for them - for them, there will be no sign if not the sign of Jonah
- 3. So Jesus rejects the Pharisees
  - a. The Pharisees had seen plenty of mighty signs, they even understood the signs, but they rejected the signs
  - b. Nineveh had seen no sign, but repented at Jonah's teaching - and so the Pharisees stand condemned
  - c. The Queen of Sheba had seen no sign, but sought out David's son - and so the Pharisees stand condemned
  - d. The Pharisees reject Jesus and Jesus, in turn, rejects them - they will not be His kingdom, they will be cast out in judgment - Jesus came to His own, but His own did not receive Him

### III. Jesus Welcomes the Scandal of the Gospel

#### A. Just like last week, in Matthew 12, everyone is running away from Jesus and rejecting His message

1. But, again like last week, Jesus is not surprised or dejected by His rejection
2. Instead Jesus continues to welcome the offense caused by His message - He doesn't back down or become discouraged, He continues to hold fast to His message despite rejection
3. And in Matthew 12, we see three more reasons why Jesus welcomes the scandal of the Gospel

#### B. Because the scandal of the gospel exposes the sinfulness of man (Matthew 12:33-37)

1. After the second interaction with the Pharisees, Jesus tells a little parable
  - a. In verses 33-37, Jesus speaks about identifying a tree by its fruit, implying that the Pharisees are identifying themselves as agents of evil by their rejection of His message
  - b. Their words against Jesus expose the evil of their heart, if their hearts were not evil, they would not be speaking such evil words against Jesus
2. Jesus is saying that the scandal of the gospel exposes evil men
  - a. The scandal of the gospel isn't a referendum on Jesus, it is a referendum on the state of evil men
  - b. Rejection of the Gospel shows how deep and how bad sin is - sin is so bad that it will reject God's rule even when that rule is offered in mercy, even when the ruler comes with salvation
  - c. Rejection of the gospel shows that the tree is bad all the way to the core - there are not partially bad trees, bad trees are bad all the way down to the sap and nothing good could ever come out of a bad tree
  - d. Sin has made men utterly worthless and unable to do anything except sin and the gospel exposes that - the gospel, and especially rejection of the gospel, shows how bad sin is
3. So, when men reject Jesus' message, Jesus welcomes it, because it shows that God's judgment against them is right
  - a. Jesus' attitude toward the Pharisees' rejection of Him is a lot like David's statement in Psalm 51
  - b. Psalm 51:4 - *So that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment*
  - c. When men reject Jesus' message, it demonstrates that God's judgment against them is right - God is blameless in His judgment, His is vindicated in His decree - men are evil and worthy of God's judgment
  - d. So Jesus is unfazed when the religious leaders, the powerful men in Israel, reject His message, because it shows that God's rejection of Israel is right and good, God isn't capriciously throwing off Israel, He is justified in His judgment of Israel
  - e. And Jesus is never fazed when men reject His message, because they are merely showing their evil nature, they are merely vindicating God's judgment against them, they are glorifying God in their rejection of His message

#### C. Because the scandal of the gospel emphasizes the necessity of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:42-45)

1. After the third interaction with the Pharisees, Jesus again tells a little parable
  - a. In verses 42-45, Jesus talks about a person that has an unclean spirit, but the unclean spirit leaves - they are free! And they clean up their lives, they sweep out their house...
  - b. But, if the evil spirit is not displaced by a greater power, the evil spirit just returns, re-enters the person and binds the person seven-fold, so that that person is worse off than when they started
2. Jesus is explaining the Pharisees' problem - why they couldn't grasp the gospel
  - a. The Pharisees very much wanted to 'clean house' - they wanted to be righteous, Paul will even say in Romans that they had a zeal for God, especially a zeal for God's law
  - b. But the Pharisees efforts to 'clean house' would never be enough because they were not strong enough to overcome the evil that dwelt within them
  - c. Perhaps they could expel the evil spirit for a little while, but it would only be a seeming victory - maybe they could clean up their lives and look good to others, but that really is no change
  - d. Unless a stronger power comes and thrusts out the evil within, no amount of 'house cleaning' will ever work
3. So the Pharisees' rejection of the message is merely highlighting the necessity of the Holy Spirit
  - a. The Pharisees can't change themselves, if they are to be changed, the Holy Spirit must enter them, must take up residence and He must be the strong man that applies the power of Jesus' message in their lives
  - b. Their efforts will avail nothing, the Holy Spirit is necessary if the gospel is to be accepted and if the gospel is to make a change
  - c. So men again glorify God when they reject the message - they show that the power of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to bring about a radical change in a sinful person

#### D. Because the scandal of the gospel exalts the victory of Jesus (Matthew 12:15-21)

1. Going back up to the beginning of the chapter, after Jesus' first interactions with the Pharisees about the Sabbath when they wanted to destroy Him, it says He withdrew from there
  - a. Then Matthew records that Jesus continued His healing ministry, but charged those who were healed not to tell anyone about the healings
  - b. Jesus' message and healing ministry provoked strong opposition from the Pharisees, but Jesus is staying out of their way - He's not provoking the confrontation, He's keeping His ministry quiet for the time being
2. And, as Jesus escapes from the Pharisees, Matthew says that, once again, Jesus is fulfilling Scripture
  - a. Matthew quotes the beginning of Isaiah 42, Isaiah 42:1-4 - *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.*
  - b. The first verses of Isaiah 42 emphasizes three times that God's servant would bring forth justice in the earth - this is a theme straight out of Exodus and the Old Covenant, God's servant would be working to bring order to God's household, to establish God's normative pattern in His people
  - c. But the Servant would do so gently - He would not be brash or assertive, instead He would be tender, caring for the weak and protecting the injured - and by doing this, by a tender, healing ministry, He would bring order to God's household
  - d. But the Servant's gentleness should never be confused with weakness, because in the face of hardship and opposition, He will not grow faint or be discouraged until He has won the victory, until He brings forth justice
  - e. And His gentle victory will cause all nations, even the coastlands of the seas, to hope in His rule
3. And this is exactly what Jesus is doing
  - a. Jesus is bringing forth *mishpat*, He is bringing order to God's household, He is establishing God's kingdom by healing that which is sick and confronting that which is disordered, like the Pharisees and their interpretation of the law
  - b. And He is doing so gently - He is full of tenderness and care for those who need healing, He isn't seeking a fight, He isn't attacking the Pharisees, in fact they are attacking Him at each point; instead He is withdrawing, He is healing those who come to Him for healing and hiding His ministry from view
  - c. But Jesus' gentleness in the face of opposition, His withdrawal when the Pharisees seek to destroy Him, could be misunderstood as Jesus being scared or Jesus giving up - is Jesus showing weakness? Does opposition signal the failure of Jesus's message? Will justice fail to be established in the earth?
  - d. When the Pharisees attack Jesus and Jesus withdraws and hides Himself, a disciple might wonder if the Pharisees are going to win - does the final victory go against Jesus?
4. This is why Matthew draws our attention to these verses from Isaiah 42, and it is actually the few lines that Matthew doesn't quote which answers the question
  - a. Isaiah 42:4 - *He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth;*
  - b. Jesus' gentleness in the face of opposition are not signals of His weakness or His failure, but actually serve to highlight His final victory - all of the forces of evil may rage against Him, every leader of His people may oppose Him, but He will not grow faint, He will not be discouraged, until He has brought forth justice
  - c. So Matthew finishes the quote saying, "*until He brings justice to victory and in His name the Gentiles will hope.*" - opposition to Jesus' message makes Jesus' victory seem all the more glorious, Jesus victory in the face of opposition will cause His fame to go forth to the ends of the earth, to all nations
5. So, Jesus welcomes the scandal of the gospel because every time He is opposed, His final victory is that much more glorious and His deliverance that much more desirable
  - a. Jesus isn't discouraged, He's rejoicing; He isn't growing faint, He's still fighting
  - b. But He's fighting to bring the mercy of God's law to victory and reorder God's household around salvation
  - c. And no Pharisee is every going to stop Him from winning the victory

#### **IV. We Must Embrace the Scandal of the Gospel (Matthew 12:46-49)**

##### **A. At the end of chapter 12 a curious thing happens that doesn't seem to be connected to the rest of the chapter**

1. In verses 46-49, Jesus' mother and brothers come seeking Him, and Jesus uses the opportunity to address the crowds, telling them that Jesus' closest relations are really those who do God's will
2. Like I said, at first glance, this doesn't seem like it has a lot of connection to the chapter, but I think really it is Jesus' answer to the entire chapter, His prescription for those who see the error of the Pharisees here
3. Jesus says, "instead of being like the Pharisees, you must do the will of my Father in heaven"
4. Jesus' statement contrasts with everything that the Pharisees do in this chapter - they were serving themselves, seeking their own will, not submitting themselves and seeking God's will
5. Jesus says, "do not be like them, if you want access to me, you must set aside yourself and seek God"
6. Jesus is saying, "instead of being wrapped up in yourself, whether it is your self-righteousness, your self-importance, or your self-deception, instead of relying on yourself, you must be embracing God and His will"

##### **B. So the first application is that we must be setting aside ourselves and embracing Jesus**

1. When we set all of the episodes with the Pharisees next to each other, we can see that the Pharisees' central failure was a self-centered pride, an overvaluing of themselves that caused them to undervalue Jesus
  - a. In the first episodes about the Sabbath, we saw that the Pharisees were proud of how they obeyed the law and they demanded that everyone else to do like they did - they were the standard that Israel must live up to
    - i. The Pharisees' self-righteous pride, their self-centered view of the law blinded them to Jesus' message of forgiveness and mercy
  - b. In the second episode, where the Pharisees rejected Jesus power as being from Satan, we saw that the Pharisees believed that they were God's representatives and had the right to reject Jesus
    - i. They were full of self-importance, pride in self had again blinded them to Jesus' message - not pride in their actions, but pride in their position, in their status
    - ii. They were the final judges of what God wanted and who was God's representatives
  - c. In the third episode, where the Pharisees demanded another sign from Jesus, we see the depth of their pride that simply refuses to see what is before their face
    - i. They were so self-centered that they chose self-deception, willful blindness, over humility and submission - they would not bow the knee to Christ and so they refused to see who He was
  - d. The Pharisees were consumed by self, they were consumed by pride - they could not receive the message because it would cause them to be less than they were
2. And this pride and self-centeredness is a danger for us - and perhaps a special danger to believers who take a high view of holiness, a high view of Christ's law and refuse to follow the culture
  - a. It could be very easy for us to go too far and fall into self-righteousness, to start taking pride in how well we obey, to start thinking of ourselves as better than others, to start making our convictions the standard that others must meet, to demand that others do exactly as we do
  - b. Now, I'm not suggesting that we lessen Christ's demands or ignore the law of love, but we need to be careful that we don't start making obedience about us and our goodness instead of love for Christ
  - c. Or again, our pride could cause us to over value what we believe is truth instead of submitting to the truth of Jesus - our preconceived ideas, our personal beliefs, our cultural, or counter-cultural values could take precedence over what Jesus has actually said
  - d. Again, I'm not suggesting that we neglect conviction of the truth, but we should be careful that our convictions are actually in submission to Jesus and His rule and don't merely reflect our own judgments - and this might be a more prevalent danger than we might think, replacing the rule of Jesus with culturally conservative values or our own view of the world
  - e. Or again, our pride could cause us to simply be blind to what Christ is teaching - perhaps we won't reject who He is, but we won't receive counsel from others to help us see what He calls us to, we won't receive counsel from His word to see who He is - we are sure of ourselves and blind to everything else
  - f. Now, I'm not suggesting that we must agree with anything and everything that someone tells us, but we should be careful that we are not puffing ourselves up with pride and refusing to listen and see what is true

3. Pride and self are completely opposed to Christ, so instead of being filled with pride in self - being wrapped up in self-righteousness, self-importance, or self-deception - we should seek to be filled with something else
  - a. Jesus tells us Himself in this passage that the value of self, the sneakiness of pride and self-worth, can only be defeated by a better motivation and a better motivator
  - b. So first, we need to see that we are nothing and be willing to set aside ourselves
    - i. We need to humbly and sincerely admit that we are nothing - neither our actions nor our position nor our judgment are worth anything before God - and we need to keep remembering that
    - ii. So we need to be ready and willing to set aside our pride, our self-worth, our confidence in ourselves, and any obedience that would cause us to turn our eyes away from Jesus and toward ourselves
  - c. And then we need to live for a better motivation - to exalt Jesus Christ instead of our own pride
    - i. This is the better motivator that will cause us to embrace Jesus - we must live for His glory and not our own - we must boast in who He is and not in who we are
    - ii. If in our heart we are not looking for praise from men, not exalting our pride, but instead looking to exalt Christ, this will guard us from self-righteousness and self-importance
    - iii. If we are living in obedience in order to exalt Christ, then mercy will be exalted as it should and Christ's law will find its rightful place in our lives, not as a tool for self-promotion but an aid to glorify Christ
  - d. And we must be filled with a better motivator - to be led by the Spirit instead of our own judgment
    - i. If our judgment is not good enough, if we are prone to self-deception, blindness to the message, then we must seek a better guide and better revelation, and Jesus tells us that this is the Holy Spirit
    - ii. If we seek, through heartfelt and earnest prayer, to be filled with the Spirit and guided by the Spirit, then the Spirit will open our eyes to who Jesus is and what He desires
    - iii. If we are filled with the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit, then we won't be deceived, either by ourselves or anyone else - we will rightly see and obey Jesus Christ, we will do the will of the Father
4. So these things are real dangers for us to watch out for
  - a. But, I don't think that this is the main application Matthew wants us to make from this section - I've spent some time here because this is important and we should apply it, but it isn't the main point, I don't think
  - b. Clearly Matthew doesn't want us to reflect the attitude of the Pharisees, but He is writing to a community that had already embraced Jesus and rejected the Pharisees
  - c. His main purpose isn't to warn them about themselves, but to warn them about the world

**C. Second, we must not be concerned or discouraged when the world reacts to our message this way**

1. This is the crossover application from the last two weeks - all of these stories are recorded by Matthew to show us the normal pattern for how the world reacts to the gospel
  - a. It is very normal for the world to ignore the truths of the gospel - the cost, the message, and the demand of the gospel are antithetical to sinful man, they are naturally going to reject the message
  - b. And it is very normal for the world to hate the truths of the gospel - they are blinded by self, self-righteousness, self-importance and self-deception and cannot see and submit to Jesus' message
2. So we shouldn't be discouraged when the message is received like this
  - a. Just because the message is ignored or even if it is hated does not mean that we have preached the message wrongly - in fact, if it is not ignored and hated to some degree, that might be a problem
  - b. By no means do we need to try to make the message boring, unattainable or offensive - we should make the message as pleasant and understandable as possible while being faithful to the message
  - c. But the message that we bring is one that will offend sinful people and we can't be afraid of that
3. Our message should not be changed to mollify the world, to lessen its offense
  - a. If we start to change the message so that people don't ignore it and don't hate it, we are doing harm to the message, we are losing the message
  - b. Jesus message is the best message in the world, a message of hope for sinful men, a message of healing for those bound over to destruction - but the world is going to hate it
  - c. If we make the message such that the world doesn't hate it, it is no longer a message of hope and healing, but a message that leaves the world exactly how it was before
4. So don't be discouraged by rejection of the message
  - a. If the world rejected Jesus when He preached the message, then we should expect just as much
  - b. As Jesus said in His instructions to the disciples, Matthew 10:24-25 - *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."*