



When RELIGION Hits the Fan!!!

Isaiah 1, Mark 2, Matthew 22

July 28th, 2019



When RELIGION Hits the Fan!!!

I am a CHRISTIAN

If at any point I am directly asked what my 'religion' is, I have NO PROBLEM identifying as a:

- 'Christian' (even though that word is only used 3X in the bible)
- 'Jesus Follower' (that's kinda what I like the best)
- 'Disciple of Christ' (I am comfortable putting myself in that category)

I would include myself and identify as a 'Religious Person/Leader'

And that is SCARY because:

I am also WELL AWARE that for MOST of human history.
HORRIBLE THINGS have been done in the name of 'RELIGION'

This Summer - When IT Hits the Fan Series

Sometimes.....we realize that the religious systems that we find ourselves in - willingly and unwillingly - can create CHAOS in our lives.

What do I mean by:

When RELIGION Hits the Fan!!!

- Religious Systems become more important than Personal Relationships.
- Leaders become Self-Righteous
- Followers become Hypocrites

Leaders

-Dumb down the rules so they look like they are GOOD at it

It makes them self righteous

Self-righteousness makes people ANGRY

B/C - they are angry that they can't sin the way the rest of the world is

Followers

-PRETEND to follow the laws perfectly

- don't want to make the leaders angry

-End up being Hypocrites

-Because NO ONE can follow them perfectly

WHEN Religious Systems > than Personal Relationships

Leaders - manipulate the system to serve them

Angry at the Followers

Who are pretending to follow the rules to keep Leaders happy

NO WONDER no one likes RELIGION

When it hits the fan - it SUCKS

And if THAT is YOUR experience - I GET IT - I'm Sorry - that SUCKS!

But that didn't start with YOUR EXPERIENCE

We see this all the way back in the OLD TESTAMENT

And God didn't like it then anymore than he does NOW

That is why today is a VERY touchy subject.

Some people would say that RELIGION is #1 -THEOLOGY & DOCTRINE

And I understand-because I have NO PROBLEM identifying as a 'Christian'

In fact...it is the MOST IMPORTANT thing about me

The way I look at myself is based in THAT

The way I view the world is based in THAT

My theology and doctrine shapes so many things about me and for me

But I am also aware that many HORRIBLE things have been done by people (TO OTHER PEOPLE) who would also call themselves 'Christians/Jesus Followers/Disciples of Christ'

Didn't start with Christianity.

For all of human history, religion has been synonymous with:

Human/Child/Virgin Sacrifices, Honor Killings, Holy Wars, "CRUCIFY HIM"...in the name of a religious system.

So - When RELIGION Hits the Fan!!! is NOT just for Christianity

-Religious Systems MORE important than Personal Relationships

-Lots of horrible things have been done in the name of RELIGION

But it is CERTAINLY true within the Christian Religion as well:

Christians believe CRAZY STUFF -

But's it's not because we ran out of normal stuff to believe

It's because the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
Recorded by credible men - who DIED because of what they believe
So I believe it too - based on their account and the evidence of faith in
my own life

So....if you ask my my 'RELIGION' - I'll say Christianity
But 'Christians' have done some stupid stuff:

***Most Famous** - Crusades - 11th Century - Pope Urban II
He invented the category of war - 'HOLY WAR'
European Christians set out into what is now considered the Middle East
To 'build The Kingdom of God'
They needed more soldiers - resources - supplies
Turns out that the Jewish and Muslim Armies were pretty tough
He - in a famous speech - PROMISED ANYONE who would help
TOTAL absolution and remission of their sin
FREE PASS
Which was GREAT - they were all SINNERS
They believed that 'GOD WILLED IT'
So they set out - with a FREE PASS TO SIN - Heaven no matter what
They killed 10's of 1000's of Jews - Reclaimed Constantinople
They killed 10's of 1000's of Muslims - Reclaim Jerusalem
They raped, pillaged and murdered their way through a HOLY WAR
In the name of their RELIGION
In the name of JESUS

***In YOUR LIFE**

I bet YOU have been the victim of someone treating YOU badly
Judging, turning their back, writing you off, etc.
Because of RELIGION
Might have even done it in JESUS NAME

So....why don't we just get rid of 'RELIGION'???

It's obviously being used in a BAD WAY
Many people would agree with that - HATE Religion

YOU may HATE religion - not like church - not trust pastors - B/C of this
And I get it
BUT.....religion is important

With the Christian Religion

Came out of Judaism and the teaching of the Old Testament/Covenant
There are lots of GREAT THINGS that we get from that

Religion gives us:

- Context for Questions
- Systems of Belief
- Moral and Ethical Principles
- Laws and Rules to Live By
- Certainty in an UN-Certain World
- God's created order of design

And those are all good things

I believe that WE were and the WORLD was CREATED

And that God put things in a CREATED ORDER

When we do things outside of that - LIFE HITS THE FAN

Those RULES that we often HATE or REBEL AGAINST - created order

It goes BAD when we step outside of that

NOT always because God is 'punishing you'

But because its his created order - Running Diesel Truck on Unleaded Gas

I am thankful for the laws of God

I am so glad that we have scriptures to help guide us

I believe those laws were setup FOR OUR BENEFIT

I even see the benefit in OT Law that wasn't for me!

But we have to understand that

With God, RELATIONSHIPS are more important than RELIGION

God is described in the New Testament as our Heavenly Father

NOT the reflection of YOUR Earthly Father

BUT the perfection of what a Father SHOULD be

With a GOOD FATHER:

The kids come BEFORE the rules - the rules EXIST because of the kids

***My Kids** - Getting old enough to keep their rooms clean -get ready on time

So...we have set some boundaries

They have to keep their rooms clean

They have to pickup after themselves

They have to be nice to each other

They have to FOLLOW THE RULES

If they don't - there are consequences

BECAUSE - those rules will help them be BETTER PEOPLE

Here is the deal though:

I didn't HAVE KIDS - so I would have someone to keep their room clean

Didn't create the perfect 'kid system' and then have kids

The rules exist for them - they don't exist for the rules

God did not create people to follow his religious systems anymore than:

I did not become a father so I would have someone to pickup toys

He did NOT invent this great set of Old Testament Laws

And then decide to create humanity to follow his list of rules

The People came first - from the VERY beginning

I believe the Christian Narrative - Started with Adam and Eve (*literal?*)

He created them

Then he set some rules - DO NOT EAT FROM TREE - for their protection

They broke the rules - fractured their relationship

Old Testament is all about God RE-establishing a relationship with humanity

Chose Abraham - Isaac - Jacob - then Moses

And he gave Moses the 10 Commandments - for THEIR BENEFIT

God to Moses:

I thought y'all (humans) would have figured out the way the world works....but y'all haven't....so I'm going to give you a list of things to do and not do....IF you do/not do these things....your life will be better and you will be better at life.

We ALL can agree that following the **10 Commandments** would do that:

1 Love God, 2 Idols, 3 Respect God's Name, 4 Sabbath, 5 Honor Parents, 6 Murder, 7 Adultery, 8 Steal, 9 Lie, 10 Covet

And the rest of the Old Testament (Levitical Law) was put in place to GUIDE and DIRECT God's Children - **for their benefit!!!**

God didn't create people to follow His laws
He created a system of laws to help his people live BETTER LIVES
The problem is - people (as you know) are jacked up
They could NOT keep the laws that God had laid out for them
EVEN THOUGH they were for their own BENEFIT

And when you do things outside of God's Created Order - Hits the Fan!!!

BUT - God is a GOOD FATHER
You know what a GOOD FATHER DOES when their kids break the rules?

A GOOD FATHER - helps his children deal with the consequences and find a solution to the problem that THEY created

THAT is what God did.

God's people NEVER followed God's Law
So...he gave them a way out

Jewish Sacrificial System

Different than other world religions - NO HUMAN SACRIFICES
BUT - the consequences for breaking God's Law - DEATH
So....something had to die

God gave Israel a way to pay for their sin (breaking the rules of religion) by allowing them to offer animal sacrifices.

The problem is - they turned God's Solution into a LoopHole
They just decided they were cool with animals dying for THEIR sin
So they quit following God's Law - and just killed animals

They would rather pay the cost than actually follow the law

THAT is what Israel did...they just did what they wanted - killed animals and thought they were OK...but they weren't...it HIT THE FAN!

When RELIGION Hits the Fan!!!

-Religious Systems become more important than Personal Relationships.

-Leaders become Self-Righteous

-Followers become Hypocrites

Israel - comfortable in their sin - just willy-nilly with the sacrifices

They THOUGHT they were making God happy

Leaders were Self Righteous

Followers were Hypocrites

They found the loophole

But God wasn't happy about it:

Isaiah 1:11

“The multitude of your sacrifices—
what are they to me?” says the Lord.

“I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;

I have **no pleasure**
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.”

Isaiah 1:13

Stop bringing meaningless offerings!

Your incense is **detestable** to me.

New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—

I cannot bear your **worthless** assemblies.

Isaiah 1:14

Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals

I **hate** with all my being.

They have become a burden to me;

I am weary of bearing them.

Isaiah 1:15

When you spread out your hands in prayer,

I **hide my eyes** from you;

even when you offer many prayers,

I am **not listening**.

Your hands are full of blood!

You are doing all these things - and I HATE IT - not even paying attention!!!

But God - I thought this is what you wanted - sacrifices

God - NO!!!

I just want you to follow my law (for YOUR benefit)
but you would rather live life YOUR way - and kill innocent animals
THIS is what I want:

Isaiah 1:16-17

Wash and make yourselves clean.

Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.

Learn to do right; seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

God was saying:

YES! I want you to follow the law

Because it will make your life better and make you better at life!

The sacrificial system was just a way to restore you when you messed it up
It was NEVER 'the way' - it was just a way out when you LOST your way!
Just DO WHAT I TOLD YOU -be good people- THAT is what I want!

But they still didn't get it - it was a **PROBLEM**

The sacrificial system was a bandaid - so God became a man - **SOLUTION**
By the time Jesus arrived, it had gotten even worse than Isaiah's Day.

And Jesus didn't come to throw out the Old Testament Law

He came to fulfill it

In fact, he defended the 'Law of Moses' repeatedly - didn't want to change it

Jesus CONSISTENTLY put Personal Relationships > Religious Systems

REMEMBER: It was HIS Religious System - Jesus = God

And it REALLY bothered those Self-Righteous/Angry Leaders

They were always trying to catch him breaking the law

One of the law (BIG 10) - Sabbath - Day of Rest

Mark 2:23

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples
walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.

You were NOT supposed to harvest grain (work) on the Sabbath
This wasn't exactly 'work' - this was a snack - trail mix

Mark 2:24

The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

REALLY???

I mean....don't you think you are going a little overboard
This isn't EXACTLY a hard days work - just eating a snack
But those Self-Righteous Religious Leaders thought he was breaking the law

Jesus throws out an OT Example from the Life of David

David was a BIG DEAL - no Jew would have talked about about him
And David ate some food one time that was outside of God's System

Mark 2:25-26

He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

Even David made an exception to the rule

Are you going to get mad at David??? - knew they wouldn't

Mark 2:27

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, **not** man for the Sabbath.

God told Moses, to tell YOU, to keep the Sabbath - FOR YOUR BENEFIT

God wants YOU to rest

Because God LOVES YOU and wants you to be rested

You have taken something, that was given for YOUR benefit and turned it into a way for you to be a Self Righteous, Angry Person

**But they HATED Jesus - eating grain & healing people on the Sabbath
These Angry/Self-Righteous Leaders:**

Two Groups - Sadducees and the Pharisees

And we have Religious Leaders TODAY that look and act like them

I am not thrilled to inform you that I have looked and acted like this
They were ALWAYS trying to GET Jesus - catch him breaking the rules
They would ask him hard questions in public to STUMP HIM
But it's REALLY hard to stump GOD

In Matthew 22:

Sadducees ask a weird question about spouses in the afterlife - didn't believe
Jesus blew them away with his answer
So the Pharisees decided it was their turn to 'get Jesus'

Matthew 22:34-36

Hearing that Jesus had **silenced the Sadducees**, the Pharisees got together.
One of them, an expert in the law, **tested him with this question**: "Teacher,
which is the **greatest commandment** in the Law?"

They didn't really want Jesus' Opinion
They knew....they just wanted to see if He knew

Matthew 22:37-38

Jesus replied: "**Love the Lord** your God with all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your mind.' This is the **first and greatest**
commandment.

He was right - this WAS the 1st of the 10 Commandments:
Then he threw them for a loop:

Matthew 22:39

And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor** as yourself.'

This wasn't what they expected
We are talking about YOU and GOD
What do OTHER PEOPLE have to do with it.
You do you - They will take care of themselves
This was a RADICALLY different view of 'The Law'

You can FAKE - 'Loving God' - no one knows but YOU & GOD
But you can't fake - 'Loving your neighbor' - EVERYONE knows

Matthew 22:39-40

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

Jesus says - in an incredible answer to a routine 'gotcha' question:

EVERYTHING you know about God

Law & Prophets

All of the Old Testament

Every Bible Story (*Jonah, Moses, etc.*)

HANGS ON - Boils Down To - Main Reason for EVERYTHING is:

Love God & Love Others

In fact...you Love God BY Loving Others

Jesus commanded John to do this - after resurrection - after he denied Him

"If you love me, feed my sheep!" - take care of others - love them well!!!!

THAT is a RADICAL IDEA

Jesus is saying that EVERYTHING about the Jewish Faith/Religion and

NOW the Christian Faith/Religion HANGS on how we:

#1 - Love God

#2 - Love People

AND IF: you open the pages of scripture (Old or New Testament) and you are tempted to put those religion systems, laws, requirements, teachings, traditions, customs or sacrifices BEFORE other people - or use them to condemn, hurt, judge, size up and write off other people

YOU are doing it wrong

It ALL HANGS on Loving God - and we demonstrate that by Loving Others

If we keep THIS at the CENTER of our Faith - Religious System

We can keep RELIGION Out of the Fan!!!

If we want to keep RELIGION out of the Fan, we must FOLLOW JESUS:

**Jesus consistently prioritized PEOPLE
over His own religion, customs and traditions.**

And that's what I want for me.

And I have screwed it up ALOT

I have judged, sized up, written off and walked away from
PEOPLE because of my RELIGION

And it's NOT ok

So.....this is where I am on the subject:

We may (probably will) disagree on something

We may look at sexuality, politics, theology, doctrine differently
You may be involved in some things that I would identify as SIN
And I'm not afraid to tell you that - but it doesn't mean I hate you

I know what I believe.

I know what the Bible says.

I know LOTS of people that disagree with me (Christian and Not).

I believe in the sovereign, inerrancy of scripture - Biblical World View

I have a stance on MOST political, social, moral, and religious issues

But YOU are more important than my VIEW

And that gets messy, grey area, NOT all Black & White, difficult idea:

THAT means I am going to hang out with, be friends with and LOVE
PEOPLE that DO NOT fit into my 'Religious System'
BECAUSE that is EXACTLY what Jesus did!!!!

I want to model MY ministry....not after other ministers/teachers/preachers

I want to model it after JESUS!

Friend of Sinners - People that were NOT like Jesus, LIKED Jesus!

He got along with the outlaws

Could NOT get on the same page as other religious leaders/teachers

When you LOVE like this - Sometimes that means being INCONSISTENT

Because EVERY situation involved a PERSON - individual - different

And if you are a Christian/Jesus-Follower/Disciple of Christ:

In EVERY Situation, ask yourself the question:

What would love require of me?

HE SAID -that it ALL comes down to Loving God and Loving Others

SO.....DO THAT.

That's tough....complicated....it's going to get messy.

But when we do what LOVE requires

We are at the CENTER of what Jesus came to be and do

Ask THAT question - you will start to look more like Jesus

And if you are NOT a Christian/Jesus Follower/Disciple of Christ:

And maybe you are skeptical - I GET IT

Religion HAS hit the fan!

Human History - Christianity - YOUR Life

But I want to tell you this today:

MAYBE the first time you have ever seen faith/religion/Jesus like this

You have been (inaccurately) taught that it was a list of rules

Do's and Don'ts

God was the Holy Buzz Kill

Mean Old Man in the Sky

Eternity's Referee or Enforcer

You need to know:

Jesus didn't die for religious principles.

Jesus died for people.

Jesus didn't die for the law.

Jesus died for lawbreakers.

Jesus didn't die for a set of rules.

Jesus dies for rule breakers.

Jesus didn't even die for sin.

Jesus died for sinners.

Jesus didn't die for a biblical world view.

Jesus died for you.

And my hope, prayer and desire for your life, is that you would quit worrying about a RELIGIOUS SYSTEM and start pursuing a RELATIONSHIP with the God of the Universe, that is available because Jesus came to be the ultimate solution to the human problem.