

Bad Lip Reading: God Helps Those who Help Themselves - Romans 3:19-28, 6:23
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Have you seen the bad lip reading videos. There are all kinds of them on the interwebs. The idea is simple, take one or several clips from a movie, TV show, news broadcast, or sporting events and dub in alternative conversation that coincides with movement of the people's lips. There are some really funny Bad Lip Reading clips of Darth Vader and Yoda from Star Wars and NFL and NBA players. And of course, some hilarious ones of really bad "Jesus" movies. While these may be funny, it is a really bad idea to put words in Jesus' mouth. Yet, this is often what we do when we assume phrases and ideas are in the Bible when they really are not. We start a new series this week looking at some of these phrases that many assume are in the Scriptures, yet often, not only are they not there, but they push us toward beliefs and spirituality that is actually opposed to the Gospel. We start with one of those.

Researcher George Barna tells us that 82% of Americans believe "God helps those who help themselves," is in the Bible. Why not, seems to make sense. We have to do something for God to act on our behalf. It only goes to reason that if I do my part God will do His. Work hard and good things will happen to you, and God will meet you in your effort. This is the basic spiritual ethic that is embedded in the human heart and the functional framework of every single religion on earth. If you pull yourself up by the bootstraps and get involved in the good works and right living prescribed by said religion you will find that God meets us there.

Yet, what we actually find in the message of Jesus is the repudiation of this mind-set. God does not help those who help themselves. The Gospel reaches only those who have come to the end of themselves, who know they can no longer help themselves. Romans 6:23 states simply, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." Here Paul sets forth two basic economies whereby we approach God. The first is an earning economy, the approach to God that says, "If I do my part God will do His part and will give me what I deserve." But notice what happens when we approach God on the basis of what I deserve in an earning economy. My sin so deeply mars these attempts that we find that the wages I have earned are death. We all know the meaning of a wage, it is what we earn for our effort, our work. An earning economy at your job is a good thing if you work hard and show initiative. You will get a pay check and maybe even promotions. But no matter how hard we seek to show initiative with God, our effort is always mixed with our own self-centered sinful motives so that even our best works are as filthy rags. If we approach God with an earning mind set, with the belief that God helps those who help themselves what we will find is that the wage we have earned is death. This is much more than our last breath, death here means we are separated from the life of God because we are guilty before Him. This is the outcome of all human effort and religious works, the wages of sin is death.

Yet, this verse also offers a different economy, a different approach. "But the gift of God is eternal life..." The way we actually experience God's redemptive salvation is when we come empty handed and receive his grace as a gift. In a gift economy the recipient comes with a need and the giver provides the solution to that need wholly. The giver pays the full price, usually as an expression and overflow of love for the recipient. Think Christmas morning. Picture a kid who gave mom and dad a list way back in November, and then made sure their list was confirmed while sitting on Santa's lap. Then, on Christmas morning she reaches out and takes a wrapped box, unwrapping it with zeal ripping the paper and then the box apart to find the wonderful toy she had been waiting all month hoping to find. Then imagine the girl marches right upstairs to find her piggy bank and comes back down with a pile of pennies, silver coins, and a few dollar bills, asking, "Mom, how much was this, I want to pay you back." Not only is this silliness, it would be offensive to the love of a giver and would

reveal that the recipient on a basic level does not understand a gift economy. No, the real response is to crawl up in mom and dad's lap and with joy show gratitude and love for the giver, and then go enjoy the toy that was the gift. This is the Christian life. It is realizing I contribute nothing to my salvation and sanctification other than the need for it because of my sin. But Jesus paid it all, providing the wonderful grace of God as a gift. My response is to receive it by grace and then enjoy the glorious gifts of grace God has given in forgiveness, the blessing of the Spirit, redemption, righteousness (and so much more) while living in loving thankfulness to the One who is the perfect giver. The only way we ever receive grace is if we approach God as needy recipients of grace. We are saved by grace, we are sustained by grace. Our whole spiritual life is to be found in a gift economy. At any moment we shift to a wage economy we will find that God will give us what we deserve rather than grace, which by definition is His giving us all that we don't deserve. So God does not help those who help themselves. He helps those who know they can no longer help themselves and therefore fall on His grace by receiving Christ, the ultimate gift.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Exodus 32	Exodus 33	Exodus 34	Exodus 35	Exodus 36	Exodus 37	Exodus 38

Reading from this past week: Romans 3:19-28, 6:23

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Jeremiah 17:1-10

Family Worship

Song - *Behold Him*

https://youtu.be/izK4kl_wmA

Gospel Project

Story: Melchizedek blessed Abraham

Big Picture Question: Who is in control of everything?

Answer: God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. Nothing is outside of God's good plan.

Scripture: Genesis 14

New City Catechism

Question #43: What is baptism?

Answer: Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Verse: Matthew 28:19

Scripture

Romans 3:19-28, 6:23

- Why is the idea that God helps those who help themselves so attractive to us?
- If God were to give us what we earn or deserve what would be the outcome?
- Why is grace so radically different from the idea that God helps those who help themselves?
- When Paul tells us that salvation is a gift, what are the implications?

Prayer

*Pray that we would realize that everything we have from God is a gift and live enjoying all His good gifts.

*Pray for our Marriage Tune-Up night this Saturday and for all of the marriages represented in our church body.