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This may be the single most important statement in the Bible in our current cultural moment. I hope I can explain clearly. That's a big statement.

This passage is almost dismissed by most expositors. At face value, it's the Lord Jesus calling out the hypocrisy of the culture that was present when He walked on the earth 2000 years ago.

And that's exactly right. But the underlying issues, the conditions that made the problem that Jesus exposes here are magnified in our own culture. It was bad then. It's frightening in our moment.

To try to lay some background, and I hope this isn't tedious, I wish I was a more effective teacher, but never-the-less, this is important, incredibly important, so stay with me these first few minutes.

The greek word for thought, and by thought I mean actually figuring stuff out. Critical thought. The greek word for that function of our intellect is the greek word noos. noos

And from that root there is an entire science which we call noetics. It's the science of thinking. Conclusive thinking. The science of the mechanics of thought. How our brains form conclusions and beliefs.

We might sharply instruct our 18 month old children to not get near a hot wood burning stove. And for some that might be enough. Stove. Danger. For others, like me, I've got to wait for mom or dad to go in the other room and go touch that thing myself.

But once the burn heals, I'm going to keep a 4 foot zone between me and that thing. All of that is noetic. Thinking function. We take data, that thing burned me and it hurt like crazy. Dad was actually right. Apparently he has my best interest at heart.

That's actually a lot of thinking for an 18 month old, but even in those brand new little brains that are gathering data, some of those ideas are formed. Stove bad. Stove hurt me. Dad helps me. Dad gives me comfort. Dad spanks me when I don't do what dad says. All of that is noetic function. Gathering data, arriving at conclusions.

In christianity we talk about the noetic effects of the fall. You'll hear that term. The noetic effect of the fall. And we need to talk about what that means. That's why I've laid out some ground work.

The noetic effect of the fall is the understanding that when paradise was lost in the garden, when sin entered the equation, and God was removed to arms length, we became spiritually dead, because we inherited that same sinful nature that Adam and Eve had after spiritual death occurred because of sin.

They chose to sin, dis-obeying their heavenly Father who had warned them that if they eat of that fruit, they will die. Adam probably lived 900 more years after that day, but from the moment he sinned, his spirit, that part of him created to have fellowship with God, his spirit died.

They were driven out of the garden, separated from God. But something else happened at that moment. And we have inherited this part along with death and separation. It's like a package deal with sin. Our thinking machines are broken.

When God stepped back and death took over because of sin, we lost any capacity to know God. We're helpless to know truth about God. Completely lost. We have the creation around us that tells us something about God. We have the firmament, the heavens to marvel about God. But that's the limit of available knowledge about Him.

Unless. Unless He reveals Himself. We can't find Him on our broken separated own, but He can reveal Himself to us, if He so chooses. And He did. It pleased God to reveal Himself to men, and He has extended a lifeline to us. You have it in your hands this morning.

Over a period of perhaps 1500 years and with 66 different books by many different authors, God, by His Holy Spirit, inspired different men to write a book that reveals God.

So then, to recap; 1) our thinking machines are broken. 2) We can't find God on our own. 3) Every conclusion about gods and deities outside of this book are flights of fancy created by broken thinking machines. Worthless. 4) This book, this Holy Bible is our only lifeline out of brokenness. Out of wandering in total darkness.

Why am I spending time on this? Well, Jesus is going to address this very issue in our passage this morning. And we'll get there, so hold on, but I'm not quite done with my groundwork lesson about the noetic effects of the fall. Broken thinking machines that arrive at erroneous conclusions. Often ridiculous conclusions.

This past week we have witnessed amazing things. Our whole thought experiment that created our culture that is hanging on by a thread is crumbling into pieces. Defund the police. People are advancing that as a serious argument.

How would that work? Well, it starts with the pre-supposition that people are good. People are noble. People become corrupted because of corrupt

societies and the police are part of that problem, they're actually causing the corruption.

Society is corrupted because of inequality. Someone has more privilege than someone else, for whatever reason. White skin. Beauty to the eye. Rich parents. Better schools. Privilege. Privilege is evil because it creates the situation where someone with no privilege becomes harmed. Privileged people harm the non-privileged people, and the harmed group burns things down because it's wrong for them to have less privilege than someone else.

So then, police and prisons are just institutions to empower the privileged classes to hold onto their position and privilege. The prisons and the police are just battering rams that the have's use to keep the have not's in their place.

This week I listened to an hour long discussion about the two competing viruses. We have Covid and we were doing nutty stuff to contain covid, but it turns out that the virus of white privilege actually trumps Covid 19, and thinking minds put forward that burning down our civilization actually trumps the other virus.

It's more important to set Covid aside and gather with the rioters that are, they hope, beginning the revolution that will set all of this wrong to right. So joining a riot, with or without a face mask, perhaps you're a bigger hero if you leave your face mask home, we haven't gotten to the bottom of that one yet, but none-the-less, gathering in close proximity with people who are marching against civilized society trumps Covid. More important to do that.

Remember the premise for all of this. Man is basically good. Surprisingly, actually astonishingly, in boot camp, in 1972, in a Navy classroom, I was taught that man is basically good. Taught that exact thing by our government nearly 50 years ago in a classroom situation.

My hand shot up and when the higher ranking teacher called on me I said, sir, excuse me sir, but Jeremiah 17:9 says *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* We are not basically good, we are

despeately wicked.

I was astonished 50 years ago and I'm more astonished today. If man is basically good, why do I need nuclear submarines with nuclear warheads to try to beat back other men who would come and take everything away from me. The Navy thinks men are basically good?? Yeah, he told me to shut up.

Broken thinking machines have come up with a false beginning point, man is basically good, left to himself without all the corrupting influences of an inequal society to make him desperate and do bad things, he's good.

What does our book say. It says that man is evil, and left to himself, he'll quickly do what Cain did. Kill his brother to get what he has. It says that governments are necessary because we are evil and without them the only thing that remains is anarchy. It actually says that governments are set in place by God as a common grace for all men, even all of the lost men, a grace set in place by God so the whole world doesn't devolve into anarchy.

Our book says policemen don't kill people who are behaving. It says governments and police reward those who do good. Do good and there is no reason to fear the policeman. This book! That's what it says.

Beloved, according to this book, if we defund the police, then every man is his own police. I think gun manufacturers and ammunition manufacturers might be a safe place to invest a lot of money right now.

If you defund the police, sorry, I'm going to need an AR15. An 8 foot wall is going up around my property, and I'm going to build a little staircase that goes up to my 360 degree rotating gun turret. I'm going to have to become a police department of 1. And so is everyone else.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* Jer. 17:9

This whole thing with broken thinking machines is going rampant in our

culture right now because we have abandoned this book. And we're playing a very dangerous game with reality.

Anybody else watch the drama this week at the New York Times. Some guy publishes a dissenting view of the new reality, bring in the troops to restore order, and the whole place goes up in flames. The leftist commie people who have been running the place found out they weren't left enough.

The new order is that the reality of the necessity of bringing in troops to restore order is against everything the new left believes. Order is the root of all evil. And an entire new generation at the New York Times went on strike, because a dissenting opinion about actual order made them feel unsafe.

And there you have the new catch word. If you're not on board already, you mark my words. Safe - unsafe. It's all about my feelings. Do I feel safe. Or do I feel threatened. Someone who says something I don't agree with makes me feel threatened. You must stop threatening me.

Folks, this is real. A whole generation of old commies that used to run that paper were expelled. Listening to an opposing idea is taboo if it makes the new generation feel unsafe. My ticket to ride in the new culture is about how I make you feel.

When we abandon this book, it doesn't take long for our broken thinking mechanisms to devolve into impossible nonsense. That's where it goes. The other part of this problem is that when you abandon this book, there is no anchor with actual un-arguable truth. Everybody has their own version of truth and it isn't necessary for it to be based in reality.

I can't tell you your truth is wrong, and you can't tell me my truth is wrong. There's no foundation to build on. Truth is anything and nothing. But if I somehow challenge your truth, I become a threat and you retreat and say that I make you feel unsafe.

In this new order of floating changing truth, reality gets set aside. There's no

such thing as gender. No such reality as boys and girls. We can no longer speak with adverbs that describe some kind of gender or difference. That's the other non-reality that goes hand in hand with all of the previous stuff I've been talking about.

Did Jesus ever address something like this? Well, yes. Yes He did. And it may become our survival guide. Let's give Jesus a listen, shall we.

Now, I know that if anyone at the New York Times reads these words of Jesus, they're going to feel threatened and unsafe. But, looking at the numbers who are finding our web pages, I'm not too concerned. From Sunday June 7th to Wednesday June 10th we had 8 visitors. So I'm not too worried about troubling the new left.

*54 And He was also saying to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out. 55 "And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way.*

Primitive people were all scientists. Did you know that? This is basic scientific theory 101. We observe repeatable patterns and we come to conclusions. Jesus is recognizing reliable noetic function. At this level these ancient folks brains were working well.

Nothing's new under the sun. Where I grew up in Southern California, we had what we called Santa Ana's. Wind that came at us from the desert. Hot dry terrible. Get a fire going when the Santa Ana's are blowing and entire mountains burn up plus everything else in it's path. We all knew about Santa Ana winds and their effects. Like a hot dry furnace comin at you.

If you live in Maine, you know what a Nor'easter is. Those are cold winds that swirl over the Atlantic ocean and pick up mega tons of water from the ocean to deposit on the land.

These folks in Jesus day knew how to use the scientific method to come to

good conclusions.

*“When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out.*

West of them is the ocean. Just like Los Angeles. Almost identical climates. When clouds come from over the expanses of water, the possibility is strong that they will get you wet. Those are the opposite of the Santa Ana's.

When the sky turns black over the ocean and it's moving your direction, you're going to get wet. Very scientific. That's actually good science. It happens so often we can formulate data and come to reliable conclusions.

*55 “And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way.*

South of them, nothing but desert. These air movements are like our Santa Ana winds. Hot wind coming off the desert. Also a good conclusion arrived at scientifically.

*56 “You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?”*

You hypocrites! Wow, Jesus is sort of direct. This is pretty confrontational. Why is He getting so confrontational. In their faces.

The reason is all bound together with the entire thrust of His long sermon that we've looked at together now for a couple of months. This is the wind up to the end of His sermon. But His sermon is built upon the fact that He's at the end of His ministry. All of the evidence they're going to get is already behind Him.

The pharisee's, the rulers of Israel, the religious experts, the lawyers, the chief priests, however you want to say it, the mucky mucks of that land have gotten all of the evidence about who He is; and have reached a verdict.

Jesus is NOT from God. Jesus is NOT the messiah. Jesus is a lunatic fringe element that's trying to lead you off of a cliff. Ditch Jesus. Kill Jesus.

Q. Well, how does He do the miracles? Thousands of miracles. Like nothing before or ever again. How does that happen? A. He is in direct cahoots with Satan. He does the miracles and orders the demons to do His bidding because He is in direct relationship with Satan. Power source; Satan.

They're at the end. The muckymucks have declared their verdict. The masses are still there watching the Jesus show. By the 10 thousands. And Jesus has been telling them, you've got to leave your world behind, whatever the cost, and follow me. The evidence is complete. What do you do with it. Heaven and hell hang in the balance.

Almost 50 years ago I had the incredible privilege to go to the land of Israel for a conference on Biblical Prophecy. And meek and mild as I was as an almost 19 year old, I spent some hours on the campus of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem.

And I had some conversations with some students about Jesus. Why do you reject Jesus? And their answers were consistent. Our fathers had first hand information. They were there. They rejected Him with all of the evidence first hand. We have to base our rejection upon the validity of those who had first hand evidence and rejected.

People are still rejecting Jesus because of the mucky mucks in Israel who saw all of the evidence first hand and then crucified Him.

What does Jesus say to that phenomenon? It's right here in this verse.

*56 "You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?"*

Hypocrites. hupokrités (hoop-ok-ree-tace') It means . . . hypocrite.

Someone who's actions do not match their speech. "*a two-faced person; a hypocrite, whose profession does not match their practice – i.e. someone who "says one thing but does another."*

The idea that Jesus is driving home is inconsistency. Inconsistency. You use the scientific method to predict the weather. But you don't use the same powers of discernment to arrive at the obvious deeper answer about who Jesus is.

*You know how to **analyze** the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?*

Another interesting greek word. We have it translated analyze. That's what the scientific method does. It's analytical. We take data and we draw conclusions. The science of noetics. Thinking function. this, this, this, and this, add up to that. They could do that about the weather, but somehow the process broke down when it came to analyzing Jesus.

The word here is dokimazo; (dok-im-ad'-zo). And the greek dictionary defines it thus; to test, by implication to approve I put to the test, prove, examine; I distinguish by testing, approve after testing;

This is what scientists do. They assemble the data and they arrive at conclusions. And Jesus says you people are hypocrites, because you know how to do this. You sample the weather data and you make good conclusions. But when it comes to spiritual matters, you are inconsistent.

You have all of the data you're going to get. Miracles upon miracles upon miracles. Demons take flight. The dead are raised to life. The wind ceases on His command. 5000 men are fed from nothing. He creates food. Bread that never grew as wheat. Fish that never swam. You ate the evidence!

If, after all of that, you cannot arrive at the conclusion that is impossible to miss, all I can say is; Hypocrites!

Time is about up. Jesus is making some final appeals to these folks. If you insist on the inconsistent conclusion, the conclusion that goes against all of the evidence, then you are lost. Forever lost.

57 *“And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?”*

This is incredibly important. **DON'T LISTEN TO THE MUCKY MUCKS OF ISRAEL. YOU HAVE THE EVIDENCE. MAKE YOUR OWN CORRECT CONCLUSION.**

He's saying, you've got the data. Don't listen to anyone else, come to your own correct answer even if all of the leaders of Israel do not. **YOU** have to make your own decision based on the data. It's not going to hold up in the courtroom of heaven when you're like the kids on that campus that shrug and say, those guys were there and they had all the evidence and made their call. We're just sheep following those shepherds.

Jesus will hold every person who hears and understands this evidence responsible for their conclusions regardless of what anyone else decided.

We have an incredible problem in our modern culture with herd mentality. We're too lazy to do any thinking on our own so we do whatever the people on TV are doing. Follow the herd.

I read a fantastic tweet this week. By someone named; Wilfred Reilly tweeted: *My frank opinion is that the US has gone through multiple tulip bulb manias in ~6 months:*

I had to look up tulip bulb mania. It seems the first recorded public mania that went haywire was in 1631 in Holland. There was a mania over new tulip bulbs and prices skyrocketed and everyone put there money into it, and it collapsed. Tulip bulb mania.

*My frank opinion is that the US has gone through multiple tulip bulb manias in ~6 months: Greta Thunberg at the UN/the world ending in 10 years, the*

*original "Don't EVER leave home (!!!)/IFR (infection fatality rate) 4%"  
presentation of C-19, and now "race war." I absolutely blame the mass media  
for this.*

Mania is what happens when you don't think for yourself. Jesus is telling these folks, don't let the rulers and mucky mucks decide this for you. Think this through on your own. The truth is obvious!

They had a big cost to calculate. Follow Jesus, become a leper to this culture. Be an outcast. Maybe get killed. 57 *"And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?"*

He says you're responsible to calculate the evidence and come to the correct conclusion, regardless of what it will cost you.

Our thinking machines are broke. Does Jesus really expect more from these folks with broken thinking machines than they can arrive at themselves?

No. This group of people has had 1500 years of revelation preceding this day. They are responsible to assimilate all of the evidence their eyes have seen compared to all of the words of God's book that has promised them this Messiah.

What about people today whose thinking is going bonkers bizzarro. They will be held responsible for more evidence than even these folks were. They have the new testament piled onto what these folks had.

The people who are doing the bizarre crazy thinking today have abandoned and rejected this book wholesale. They believe this book is the basis of the problem! It's actually sort of pathetically hopeless if you start thinking about it. The book that can deliver them to real freedom is the book they'd like to pile up into a mountainous heap and burn.

They are more accountable than even these Jews who observed Jesus every day of His ministry.

You say, how can that kind of inconsistency even exist? Reject mountains of evidence and just go crazy. Boys are girls and girls are boys and don't you dare confuse me with the facts. Don't you make me feel unsafe with facts from an ancient book. People are just deep down good and if we could get rid of cops and prisons, and that horrid dangerous book, all of that goodness could thrive.

Here's the underlying reason to reject God and all of the miracles and all of the evidence that is so perfect it would stand up in any courtroom. The reason you choose crazyness is because you love sin. You hate God and you love sin.

Therefore, any inconsistency it takes in order to keep sinning is what you'll do.

Need evidence? Flip on CNN. Send your kids to college. Craziness is the order of the day, and not only that, this thing I'm saying, it causes harm and discomfort. These words and ideas from the Bible are de-stabing.

Threatening. Unsafe. Harmful. And they must be stopped for the good of everybody.

*58 "For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, in order that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. 59 "I say to you, you shall not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."*

Let's consider this another way. Even without the evidence of the full revelation of all of God's words to us, canonized and intact for 2000 years, let's set that aside for a minute and go at this problem another way. Is man still guilty even without the book?

Look into the sky. The perfect order of all of creation. So dependable is it that we can make nuclear clocks that cannot lose a moment in thousands of years. Perfect order. Perfect beauty.

*1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.*

*2 Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.*

*3 There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.*

*4 Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.* Ps. 91:1 - 4

The creation shouts of God's perfection without ever uttering an audible word. OK, then go flip on CNN.

Even with your broken thinking machine it is impossible not to come to some conclusions. Creation is perfect. Man is running absolutely amuck. Could we not draw from just that much that the Creator will hold judgement over mankind that is dis-orderly. Unlike the rest of His creation. Will the Creator not require it of men?

Those conclusions could be drawn even without the "rest of the story" so to speak. This book, these revealed truths tell us exactly what went wrong, and the story of God's redemption.

But, time is of the essence. You need to come to an agreement with the King of kings before you leave this world.

*58 "For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, in order that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. 59 "I say to you, you shall not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."*

That "settling" of accounts, although free, you can't purchase it or earn it with your own good works of righteousness. The standard is too high. God gives it for free.

But just as on this day, it would cost these folks everything to follow Jesus, He's still asking the same thing. Leave this world behind, no matter the cost, and follow Jesus.

These folks are in a tough spot. Follow Jesus and become a leper in that culture, and maybe dead. Follow Jesus and become an enemy to your homies. Or don't follow Him and go to hell. It was tough then, and it's tough now!

It's a parable. Someone is on his way to court to appear before a judge who has authority to extract justice. And in the parable, Jesus says, you have an opportunity. Before you get to the courtroom and the judge, settle out of court.

Settle out of court! Make a deal with the one holding the charges against you.

It's a picture of lost men who have grievously sinned against the one who created them and owns them. The walk to the courtroom is this lifetime, here and now. That's the timeframe when settling out of court somehow is possible. After we die, we'll be in the courtroom standing before the judge of all the earth.

This lifetime is our moment. We're guilty and we know it. Turn on CNN. That's who we are. All of us! We are born into a rebellion against God. Contrast the beauty of creation against man. Nothing else is rebelling against the creator. We're throwing dust into the air and throwing maltoff cocktails and screaming obscenities against the creator of perfect order and beauty.

Jesus says, you have this moment. This life. You're walking to the courtroom. When you die, the moment is over and court will be in session. You need to settle accounts now. This day. No one knows when their moment will be over.

That's actually our lesson for next week. You have this moment. You don't know if some calamity will snuff out your life on the way home from this place this morning. This is the moment when you can settle accounts.

But settling accounts can be expensive. Are you willing to leave your sin behind. Willing to leave this world behind, no matter the cost? Willing to follow Jesus and alienate this world. He spoke about the cost in the verses before this one. This is the call.

Settle out of court. Give your life to Jesus. Repent of the former rebellion. Agree with your opponent that you are in a debt you have no resources to pay. Beg for His forgiveness and accept His terms. This is the moment. It's now or never people.

*in order that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. 59 "I say to you, you shall not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."*