

Bookends of the Gospels: Matthew 12 and John 9

John's bookend

John 9:24-25 *"So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man (Jesus) is a sinner." 25 He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."*

In Matthew 12 they saw the law. They saw Jesus breaking the law. These men saw many things. What they failed to see was compassion, hunger, and need. People's needs should be satisfied before the law is satisfied. It's a sad place to be. These days the governments are taxing people to take care of global warming. Even if they can't afford to pay their bills. The heart of the tax is to save us. Even if we starve and freeze to death. It's extreme but the heart of the tax law is similar to Jesus fight with the Pharisees. Heart over law?

In John 9 we have a blind man. It was accepted and understood that blind was a curse. Possibly it was a punishment for the sins committed. In Old Testament scripture God said peoples sin would affect up to the fourth generation of that person. The disciples asked Jesus if that was true for the blind man. Jesus said the man was blind for Gods reasons and Gods glory. Jesus then proceeded to heal the man. Then all hell broke loose.

An argument broke out between the religious authorities, the people, the blind man and his parents. It's a sad and comical exchange. The people could not see that God did it. The Pharisees wanted to condemn Jesus for doing it. The parents wanted nothing to do with the miracle for fear of losing their status. Matthew 12 has people not seeing the heart in the laws of God. In John 9 they see a miracle but can't see God in it.

What's it all mean?

Verse 39 of John 9 says it all "Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." In Matthew 12 Jesus was asking them to see. In John 9 Jesus helps a man see. He also exposes spiritual blindness. So many people in that story could not see how good a miracle from God could be. Instead they wanted to know why, how, and many other things. It was not good enough that the man could see.

Both of these bookends expose hard hearts and spiritual blindness. Can't you see that people are hungry? Can't you see this blind man can now see? Do you care? The law cared enough to make room for the poor to eat extra grain. The law cared enough to help the poor like the blind man. Yet the religious rulers and those around them never saw the blind man. I bet they passed him daily. When Jesus healed him they only saw the impossible. Somehow, they all considered that of the devil and sinful.

What it all means is that we are too quick to condemn. We are too quick to be strict. Laws were not meant to be broken. They were meant to help those in need. If a law is bent to help the blind and poor, then I believe that law is not broken, but just bent. Rules and regulations were never meant to restrict but to assist, protect, and help. The heart inside is a dangerous thing. When our hearts are bent towards laws, rules, and judgments, then we miss the heart of those very laws, rules, and judgments. These make two great bookends.