

Mat 5:22

'BUT I SAY TO YOU.....'

PRELIMS. Some weeks ago I spoke on the benefits of **Catechising** - a long forgotten art in the Church. One of the reasons for promoting catechising is that the **world out there** has its catechisms!! Without our **realising** we are **indoctrinated** subconsciously in its teaching!

While its teachings are not exactly in the form of Questions/Answers, it nevertheless **communicates** its message well - it has a teaching that goes right into the **mind** and **heart** the culture. Catechising is meant to do that - it is a system of teaching which gets certain truths across, and although these truths **appear dormant**, it actually **forments** in the heart and can later give rise to conviction/wisdom.

Our generation is now **politically correct** - there is a **fear** amongst many of us, perhaps **especially** among the **clergy**, to speak wholeheartedly against what is commonly accepted as good. Fear of being called **intolerant** or **arrogant** has made many Xns silent. Of course **wisdom** is required in countering a popular viewpoint. In fact wisdom is needed in all our conversations with the world, especially when we mention God and Jesus Christ and the Bible.

We can **learn** from **Jesus!** Here He is countering the **falsehoods** of **His** day! *You have heard that it was said...!* He did not start '**Don't** believe that **rubbish** you hear in the taverns or even in the Temple'! He did not unnecessarily **criticise!** 'Blowing out the other fellow's candle does **not** make your own shine brighter'!!

But I say to you... He **promotes** the truth. He **declares** it, He **repeats** it. He seeks to immerse His doctrines into people's minds. He does **not SEEM** to be contradicting/condemning His opponents, but **HE IS!** The best way to destroy error is **promote truth** *But I say to you...* People **love choice!** Especially in our culture today it is the **IN THING** to be able to **choose** from all the options. Our politically correct generation believe (wrongly, of course) in various truths and whichever one 'fits' your needs at the time is the '**right**' one!

This is the **method** Jesus choose to counter His generation's errors. Of course there **IS** a time for **direct confrontation!** But such

occasions are not as frequent as many Xns think. We can be far too **ready to fight**, when the occasion only calls for **clear thinking**, or **discerning distinctions**, or hearing **alternative views**, or **understanding** the **reasons** behind people's **opinions!** *Most people believe what they have been **brought up to believe**. Parents, church, university, culture have all had an input! If you/I were brought up as Pharisees and **taught** that this Man from Galilee who claims He is God is a **heretic**, we would be **prejudiced** against Him **before** we heard Him! But once we heard Him, we would be **challenged** to **choose!** You see, life is a **constant series of choices!**

Israelites were **taught** by Moses about God and about **idolatry**, and they had the Ten Commandments to guide them throughout life. But once they entered the promised land they were **challenged** by the surrounding culture and the **alternative** religions and teachings of the other nations. They had to **choose!** Thus Joshua had to hold a meeting ***choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your (unfaithful) fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell - OR are you going to be like me & my house who are going to serve the Lord*** [Jos24:15]

The **previous generation** forsook the true God. The choice was **difficult** in that choosing Yahweh **broke** and **ran counter to** their present fathers' choice of false gods. So ...***fear the Lord serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt*** [Jos 24:14] **APP** The **choice** we have today in the **gospel**, is a choice which, generally speaking as a nation is a **break** with our current generation which have rejected the God of Israel, the Ten Commandments and the NT teachings of Jesus/Paul

Our generation, like every generation lives in a **competing culture** of **TRUISMS**. Ie, popular **platitudes** and **cliches** which people believe are 'self-evident truth', but which may not be! Eg: Death is the end of everything. There is nothing after you die'! Many people believe that is true! 'Enjoy yourself, you are only young once'! Its **true**, but is it **wise?** 'Whatever it takes to get ahead, go for it'! Truisms **influence** our decisions! They are very powerful statements.

Truisms are derived from our culture - from the various gods of our secular humanistic society. All societies live under **truisms!** Truisms are either secular or Biblical. Truisms are really ‘**catechisms**’ of the age in which we live. People **subconsciously imbibe** them! An **ungodly society** produces its own subtle teachings which regulate the life and conduct of its people. The Israelites began to live under the truisms which the gods of the nations around them taught them. *So we see again, that if the Church does not teach the Truth, then popular truisms from the ungodly will **condition\regulate** the nation!

You have heard that it was said....But I say to you.... That is the answer. We must listen to the Son of God. We need to **instill** into the minds and hearts of our generation **Biblical truths** - the sayings of Jesus who is *the Way, the Truth, the Life*, and whose sayings and doings is the **foundation** on which the Apostles built their teachings. Teachings which **turned the world upside down!** [Ac17:6] Matthew writes *when Jesus finished these sayings the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as One who had authority and not as their scribes* [Mat 7:28] People **recognise** ‘authority’!

When someone speaks with authority, it makes an **impact!** It might not be pleasant but it rings true - even when it condemns us! A **little child** can have ‘authority’ when it asks some pertinent question which stabs our conscience! There can be people/preachers **with** authority as the Scribes, but do not have it in their messages.

Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount with a well-known parable about the two men who built houses! One on a rock, the other on the sand! We all know the parable - and the **main point** of course is - the **sayings of Jesus** is the **rock** upon which you/I ought to build our lives. The truths of Jesus Christ will stand the **test of time** and the **tempests of life**. We ought not to **fear** saying what He said, for it will be true - and as Xns, we ought not to fear from the **consequences** of saying what Jesus taught, for He **promised** to be with us right up to the end, **especially** in times of difficulties.

So, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is **contrasting** the ‘**sayings**’ of the culture *You have heard that it has been said....* with His own!

Just as in every culture, in every age, we have to **distinguish** the true from the false! There are always false 'truisms' going around. When a society develops a truism, it is genuinely trying to **help/improve** life. But it is **worldly advice**, it is *the wisdom of men!* And this is what Jesus is doing, He is giving us **heavenly advice!**

We are living in an age of mass technology, which has generated **information** at our finger-tips, in a second! Smart-phones, iPhones, texting, emailing, mp3s, etc. What we actually have now is **not a lack** of information - rather it is **information GLUT!** We have to **sift-out** the rubbish - for there is plenty rubbish out there! It is not more information we need, it is **accurate/true/reliable/wholesome** information we need. *But I say to you....* Its truth we need!

Neil Postman [Technopoly, p70] 'We proceed under the assumption that information is our friend, believing that cultures may suffer grievously from lack of information, which of course they do. It is only now beginning to be understood that cultures may also suffer grievously from information glut, information without meaning...'

And of course for us as the Church, **erroneous** information is a great enemy! I read that **Stephen Charnock** said, it is **less** injury to God to **deny** His being, than to make Him a **corrupt** God! Meaning that to present God as unholy, unlovely, unkind, unforgiving, delighting in sending people to hell, is **far worse** than being an atheist! When you think of it, he is right! [The Pursuit of Holiness, Jerry Bridges, p70] *Of course, the Sermon often emphasises, **insists** that it is not just **hearers** of what Jesus said, but **DOERS** of it that will be saved!!

Well, who have **YOU** been believing? What **sayings** have you followed? Whose sayings are you **NOW** going to follow? Friends, you cannot do better than following the Man who said, and who is, *The Way, the Truth and The Life!* The Man who is God and **left** the comforts of everlasting glory, **not only** to dwell with sinful mankind, but to **suffer** and **die**, in **their place!** The Man who, to use a present day **cliche**, who truly '**put His 'money' where His mouth is**' said *I am come that **THEY** might have life and have it abundantly* [J10:10] and *I lay down My life **FOR** the **sheep*** [J10:15] And He did!