The Chosen: S2E7 “Reckoning” Scripture Verse: Mark 12:13-17

October 27th, 2024 Memory Verse: Colossians 1:15

**SLIDE 1**

We have reached episode seven of *The Chosen* season 2. Last week we saw Jesus digging a deeper and deeper hole for himself when it comes to the religious leaders of his day. They are not happy with the way he seems to interpret the law. They can’t comprehend where someone like him could have gained such authority to be doing the things he does. He is healing on the sabbath! He’s allowing his disciples to harvest grain on the sabbath! But, as we discussed last week, all the rules of the Torah, all the laws God put in place point to Jesus. The very purpose for the law existing in the first place stands before them, healing and teaching, but it is so very hard for them to see the truth. In all honesty, are we any different? Jesus stands before us, he stands at the door and knocks – How often do we miss him?

**SLIDE 2**

 As we get into this episode, the filmmakers give us some insight into how Rome may have felt about Jesus. From soldiers to Praetors, what was their view of Jesus as he lived out his ministry? And what was Jesus’ view of Rome? In the Bible, we have no ill will that Jesus expresses toward Rome. He does not denounce the Romans; he does not seem vexed at the influence Rome exercises. In fact, in Mark 12, Jesus is asked about paying taxes. Should faithful Jews give over their hard-earned money in service to the Roman regime? In answer, Jesus takes a look at a coin, sees the Emperor’s image etched on to it, and famously replies,

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 “Give to Ceasar what belongs to Ceasar and give to God what belongs to God.” Notice in that equation…what amount belongs to you? But this gray area, this question of taxes, was meant to stump Jesus. It was meant to force him to choose sides. But Jesus is ushering in his own kingdom. He is not so interested in quibbles about money, or land or even who is in charge. God the Father is in charge. No matter who is sitting on some particular throne somewhere, or indeed, sitting in some oval office somewhere, God is in control. We give to uncle Sam what is uncle Sam’s (the money) and we give to God what belongs to God (the heart behind the money).

**SLIDE 4**

 In the show is a character named Atticus Aemilius. They call him a Cohortes Urbanae which is explained as basically a detective who works for Ceasar. When we initially meet him, he is following Simon the Zealot, trying to disrupt the plans of the zealots and bust them for attempted assassination. But now Simon is following Jesus and so Atticus is now on his trail, collecting information and making careful observations. He shares his impressions with another soldier saying, “Jesus does not strike me at all as threatening or scary…and that scares me.”

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Later, in a made up event, Jesus is actually detained and brought in for questioning. He sits across from Quintus, that Preator of the region. He has heard of Jesus and it’s been both good and bad news. It’s been a mix and Quintus tells Jesus, “I don’t know what to make of you…I like you…just don’t make me kill you.” Who is this Jesus? He is not a threat but he kind of is…he is very disarming and yet he is not servile…he seems so weak and yet behind his eyes lies great strength. From Rome’s perspective, Jesus is not threatening, he is not scary…and yet there is something about him. Something these soldiers cannot put their finger on. Quintus wraps up the meeting by pointing at Jesus, looking him in the eye and he says in a matter-of-fact way, “No more meddling.” That’s all Rome wants. Just stay out of the way, keep your head down and there will be no trouble here.

 It’s a fictional conversation, but I think it does help us see the attitude of Jesus. Whether you are a destitute Jewish widow, or a powerful Roman prefect, Jesus will look on you with compassion. He has a quiet confidence, the kind of confidence that comes from knowing who really holds the power.

**SLIDE 6**

You might have met a kid like Kent. Kent was unruly in class as usual. He was disrupting other students and talking out of turn. Finally, his teacher removed him from class and sent him to see the principle. Kent marched down the hall, entered the office and sat in the familiar spot across from Principle Jenkins. The principle rolled his eyes and adjusted his tie, while Kent sat smiling as he put his feet up on the desk, popped am int into his mouth and said, “I’m back Jenky”. Now how could such a scene occur? How could this student have such distain for the authorities in his life. Well, it turns out Kent’s father was the president of the school board and principle Jenkin’s job might be affected by how things go with Kent. Of course, this is just a fictional scene, but it’s not too hard to imagine a kid like Kent who disrespects and terrorizes his teachers because he knows his dad is ultimately in power. Such an attitude would not only reflect badly on Kent, but we would also know something about his father as well.

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 The son reveals the father. We might assume Kent’s father is also pompous and rude. We might also assume that he is very permissive and does not hold Kent to any sort of standard at home. But we could also conclude that in his disrespect for his teachers, Kent also disrespects his father. If Kent will not live under the authority placed over him during a temporary school day, then Kent will also not live under his ultimate authority. Kent and his father most probably have a very tenuous and distant relationship.

But Jesus is not like the son of the school board president who gets dragged into the principle’s office for being unruly in class. Jesus did not walk around with a condescending smile causing a mess just because he knew his Father would bail him out. The Son reveals the Father and he is patient, compassionate, merciful. Jesus has ultimate respect for his ultimate authority. And because he respects God the Father, he has proper respect for Quintus the Roman.

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Jesus is content to let Quintus think he is in charge for the time being. He is content with such a situation because Jesus is content in his Father.

Can you imagine such contentment? Can you imagine such submission? In an earlier episode, as Jesus and his disciples were walking into town they passed by some men who were being crucified.

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The camera slowly pans as it captures Jesus pensive look. He knows what lay in store for him. “Father, you want me to submit to that? You are the one in charge here! Maybe the Sons of Thunder are right? Mayber a little fire from heaven could take care of the problem…” But it was God’s will that Jesus should surrender to the powers that be. Those powers are not really in charge…Jesus knows, and yet it sure seems like they are. Jesus does allow those powers that be to have their way, and as someone who claimed to be the Son of God and the King of Israel, it is a real headscratcher as to why he would allow for such injustice to happen to him. But in his submission to the cross, he is really submitting to his Father. Rome didn’t know what to make of Jesus and our world today does not know what to make of Jesus. Do we? Do we understand what Jesus was doing? What Jesus is doing right now?

There is a wonderful passage in Matthew 16 where Jesus asks his disciples point blank, “Who do you say I am?”

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This is such a crucial question. It is really the only question that we absolutely must answer. And there are two ways to answer it. One way is with your mouth in words and the other is with your life in action. And I believe we answer the question in both ways. We need to have the right answer in words, but how we answer must also be corroborated by our lives. Here are some possible answers we might give in words and in action:

“Who do you say I am?” Jesus, you are a very important person from history. You said many wise things and you helped show us how to be better people. I will hang up a piece of art that has a quote from you on it written in cursive.

Who do you say I am?” Jesus, you are a complete charlatan who lied to everyone and fooled many. I don’t care about you and you have no affect on my life.

“Who do you say I am?” Jesus, you had some very unfortunate delusions of grandeur and, though you become famous for it, you were kind of out of your mind. You said a lot of things, but nothing can really be verified. Christians are simply mistaken. I’ll stick with what can be scientifically verified.

“Who do you say I am?” Well, Jesus, I just don’t know. And I’m really busy right now…I’ll have to get back to you.

“Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter’s answer:

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“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” You are God, you are holy, you are the beginning and the end. I will follow you to the ends of the earth! I will die for you just as you have died for me.

 Our answer to this question sets the trajectory for our lives. What we make of Jesus, who we say he is, what we really believe about him, sets us up for the way we live. Our beliefs about Jesus determine our behavior. Simon Peter proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. He and the rest of the disciples all gave up their lives for that belief, it determined how they lived their lives. And, by the way, it also determined how they died as well.

 “Who do you say I am?” Think through this question carefully, because you will live out the answer you give.

**SLIDE 12**

 In Luke 11 we find Jesus off praying by himself. When he finished and returned to the group, his disciples asked him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.” And Jesus does so. He lays out basic principles of prayer that today we call the Lord’s prayer. Luke’s version is a bit shorter, but the main tenants are there: God is holy, he is bringing a kingdom into this world, we need bread or food every day, we need forgiveness as much as we need to forgive, and we need to avoid temptation. But I think the biggest lesson to take from this prayer, is the very first word: Father.

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Certainly, the disciples would have prayed, they would have had many different prayers memorized. Most likely they would have prayed to God as Adonai, which means Lord, or they might have used the term Hashem, meaning “the name”. These titles are more than fitting and yet Jesus settles on “Father” *pater* in the Greek. It’s a word that denotes authority, yet in a very specific way. If I wanted to speak of someone with great authority, I would not use the word “Father” I would probably say “King or Ruler or President or Emperor”. But while those words indicate power on a grand scale, my father, as a parent, has authority over my life, it’s personal. I might know who the president is. I might know their name and what they think of certain issues, but the president does not know me. My father does. God does. He has personal authority over me.

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 If God is my Father, then I can have the same attitude that is in Christ Jesus, the Son of the Living God. I too can be a son that reveals the Father. I can humble myself, I can submit to authority peacefully and respectfully all the while knowing who is really in control: My Father in heaven whose name is holy.

 So as we come to trials and bad news, and we experience the madness of this world, we can be at peace knowing that God, our heavenly Father is truly in control. He might ask us to submit to things we would rather avoid, things that seem bad for us, like the cross, but we can know better because we have a clarity that the world does not. We know what to make of Jesus Christ and we know what our confession means. With Peter, we live our answer with our mouth and our lives. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and I will live accordingly! Amen!