

Search the Scriptures

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:39-40).

Following the teachings of Jesus does not suggest that God will look favorably upon our effort. In our text, Jesus points out to the Jews that they did “*search the scriptures*” and trusted that by doing so “*ye think ye have eternal life*”. The point being was that mere head knowledge and strict observance of the law were not the essence of His gospel message. By focusing on the mechanics of religion, the Jews were willfully overlooking the very Christ spoken of in the words that they painstakingly studied. Selective use of the scriptures coupled with other sources of information to support one’s leanings are not what Jesus meant by studying the Word.

In the opening verses of the chapter of our text Jesus heals a man of an infirmity that he had for thirty-eight years. The Jews, rather than rejoicing, “*sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day*” (Matt 5:16) for it was against the law to work on the Sabbath. They knew the scriptures in minute detail, even adding observances based on the words and ideas of others, but their pious understanding did not show love to God or to their neighbor. They became further enraged when Jesus pointed out that God was His Father. This blasphemy was worthy of death in their religious understanding, “*Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God*” (John 5:18). The self-righteous Jews were using their vast knowledge to advantage themselves rather than to glorify God.

We are not only to search the scriptures, but to do so to be approved of God so that the Word can be truthfully preached, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). Thus, it matters not how fervently we may think we search for God, but on the inward working of the Holy Spirit in our heart, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed*

appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

Scripture provides many examples of pleasing outward appearances that lacked the power of God. We will touch on five such examples. 1) The Jews of our text had an intimate knowledge of scripture but lacked spiritual understanding. They could out-reason anyone else when it came to the law but yet could not lead a single soul to Christ. Their true fruit of unrighteousness was manifest in their desire to kill Jesus. 2) Elsewhere, Jesus speaks of those who proclaim their goodness because they preach from the pulpit, teach in the streets, cast out demons, and do many wonderful works in His name. Certainly, we might say that these individuals should be held up as being good Christians, yet Jesus says, “*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matthew 7:23). 3) Again, Jesus tells us of how we can deceive ourselves by fitting in with believers, looking and acting the same as they, and yet not possess the Holy Spirit to be ready to meet the Lord today, “*And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready (the five wise virgins) went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut (to the five foolish virgins)*” (Matthew 25:10). 4) Being vigilant about living a clean life is no assurance of being saved as a certain young man believed that he had kept the commandments but found out otherwise. Jesus told him that having a good self-image will not suffice, “*... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*” (Matthew 19:24). 5) Professing a belief that passes as faith is exposed when one tries to do God’s work. Simon, although he was well-liked by the people and professed the same faith as the apostles, fell short when it came to preaching the Word of life, “*Give me also this power; that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost ... thy heart is not right in the sight of God... Repent therefore of this thy wickedness*” (Acts 8:19-22).

It is one thing to search the scriptures but, from the foregoing, we can conclude that believers are justified by faith before God with no dependence on intellectual understanding. As Peter proclaimed (Acts

2:38), we must all repent and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins. Paul echoes this sentiment in his epistle by stating *“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:5).

God’s Peace,
Charles Korhonen

Online Broadcasts

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services.

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Winter Schedule

Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9:45am
Church at 11:00am
Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

Oct 2	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Oct 9	Charles Korhonen	
Oct 16	Ken Storm	
Oct 23	Nathan Ruonavaara	Potluck meal following
Oct 30	TBA	