Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” (Luke 12:59).

Rom 7:18-29a; Luke 12:54-59

Jesus would make a good meteorologist as he describes just how predictable the sky is about future events. Clouds blowing from the west signal it will rain. Or if the wind is coming up from the south, it means a hot day. Palestine’s location by the Mediterranean to the west and above the deserts of Arabia to the south made predictions easy if you recognized the direction of the wind.

But of course, his purpose in taking about the weather was to challenge the crowds for failing to draw the same obvious conclusions about the signs of the times. Human events also stirred up predictable storms. Tensions were evident in the activity of the Zealots against the Roman occupation that made it easy to predict the dangerous conflicts building in the nation. The ministry and preaching of John the Baptist had increased the expectation of God’s intervention.

In fact, Jesus wanted the crowds to recognize that his preaching and presence was itself a call to repentance and conversion. Why were they so blind to what was happening spiritually? He uses the example of someone going before a judge who fails to settle early with his opponent and is thrown in jail. Failure to reconcile when you have the chance can lead to deeper problems, so be reconciled.

The added detail of finding yourself in prison until you “pay the last penny” is a brilliant metaphor for just how conflicts fester if allowed to take hold. We must

resolve them totally to prevent any residual trace of hurt or resentment. Marriage counselors know the value of early resolution and urge couples to never let the sun go down on their anger, for by morning even some small ill feeling will be deeply embedded.

St. Paul also reflects in his letter to the Romans how evil desires hide in our best intentions. I want to do the right thing, but compulsively do the opposite. Selfish habits trip us up on to way to some disciplined intention, trapping and humiliating us. This unconscious conflict within human behavior is resolved only because God is merciful. Failure aids in teaching us humility. No one is without faults, especially those who cannot admit their weaknesses.

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