

Matthew 13:38-58

“Joseph & Mary’s Kid”

In the classic Chuck Jones cartoon, *Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century*, the main character (Daffy Duck) plots out a ridiculously complex course to get to Planet X, then asks his partner (Porky Pig) if he understands how to get there. When Porky replies he does, Daffy turns and looks at the impossible path he has drawn out, then says, “Well, I wish you’d explain it to *me* sometime, buster!”

Some people follow the same absurd path trying to see Jesus to be *anyone* other than who He is.

One day during His ministry on Earth, Jesus came home to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue. By now, word of their notable neighbor had gotten around and perhaps some had even heard people wondering aloud if He might be the promised Messiah.

Now, Carolyn and I have been in quite a few towns in our travels, and if there’s a place that has produced someone of note (even if *we* may never have heard of the person), it is almost guaranteed there will be a sign on the outskirts of town informing visitors of their local legend. You might even find a little store in town or a museum where you can learn the story. So when Jesus returns to His hometown after making an increasing name for Himself, you’d think people would welcome Him. You might even think that people would be happy that the promised Messiah is coming from their town.

Instead, the folks back home take the attitude, in short, of “Why *Him?*” (With its implied follow-up question of, “And not *me?*”) They couldn’t get past the idea of *little Yeshua, Joseph and Mary’s kid*: “He played with my son when they were children. Who does He think He is?” Their offense prevented them from seeing who He really is. Because of this, they would not receive the miracles He was prepared to do for them. And so, He did not do them, except for a few people (Out-of-towners, perhaps?) who *could* get past “local boy makes good” and wrap their minds around “Son of God.”

The locals’ reaction in Nazareth is much the same as people today who desperately take the most convoluted paths to avoid calling Him “Son of God,” and the name everyone – even Satan – will one day call Him; “LORD” (Philippians 2: 10, 11). You’ve probably heard the arguments: *He was a good man, a great teacher...* some might even go so far as to call Him a prophet (having *some* connection to God in order to explain the miracles). But *God in human flesh?* The Second Person of the Holy Trinity? *That He meant what He said?* Oh, no – I can’t handle that... Such people will twist their thinking into the most extreme contortions until the thought process resembles a roller-coaster (or Duck Dodger’s roundabout path to Planet X) in order to avoid the blatantly obvious, despite the testimony of Scripture and millions of people who can verify Scripture through miracles done by and through His Name.

The real issue, both in Nazareth and our own hearts, is that God calls us to something better than the sin(s) that we hold tightly to, that we don’t want to let go of. The particular sin is irrelevant; it’s not that whatever it is we do really ticks God off, because it won’t be around in His presence or His Kingdom. It’s the fact that it’s something we don’t want to surrender to Him. We try to call it something “unnatural” or use some other form of human reasoning to explain it away, but the truth is that anything we hold on to that tries to supersede God in importance (even if it is something not necessarily sinful, *per se*) is rebellion against Him. We all have them, and we all wrestle with them. Sometimes it’s the same old thing we indulged in before we received Jesus as Savior, sometimes it’s something new that was never a stumbling block for us before this. Whatever it is, Satan uses it to try and divert us from the path God has laid out for us. And

he always has an argument, a counterfeit to God's plans at the ready for our use; it takes many forms, but it's the same old tactic Satan used back at Eden – pride.

The revelations of God are not something He throws at us in order to spoil our good time. They are not some new burden He throws on our backs that requires careful, diligent performance (do and do and do...). They are *invitations* by God to “come up higher” into areas we have not dreamed of. He calls us to leave behind what isn't going to be around eternally anyway, and to embrace those things that are eternal and will last long after even the Earth has passed away. God's nature is that of loving kindness, not tyranny – *that* is the way of our flesh, our selfish desires which demand constant satisfaction. If we are willing to listen to Him, surrender to Him and do what He says, we find the way not only much easier, but a lot more pleasant.

For the Glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ
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