

Discipleship Moment

Text: Luke 3:1-22

I hate social media. I mean, I love it. But I hate it.

There are a lot of good things on social media, I'm able to connect with high school friends that I haven't seen in nearly a decade (yikes!). I see pictures of their weddings and children's births. It really is great. But social media also has a lot of bad things about it. The worst thing social media has done is devalue conversation between people who disagree. Social Media actually steers information to you that you already agree with.

As people scream at each other on social media, there are a few different kinds of arguments that people make that are called "logical fallacies." These are commonly used ways to argue that actually break the rules of debate, begun in the Ancient Greek culture. One of the most common is called "victim playing." This is when the person who is arguing spins the information in such a way that they seem like the victim. This is used regularly by our politicians, pundits, and talking-heads.

Have you ever noticed that there is both a conspiracy against the Democrats (if you watch MSNBC), and a conspiracy against the Republicans (if you watch FOX)? How can the two most powerful organizations in the country both be victims of widespread conspiracy. They aren't, that's how. They both play the victim in order to win arguments. And this is exacerbated on social media.

In our text yesterday, we heard about people who were the worst of the worst. Tax collectors: turncoats who taxed their own people in order to keep the Roman Empire in power, and who became rich in the process. Soldiers: the thugs of the Roman Empire, bullies who extorted money from the poor masses, and used violence to scare people into obedience. And as John called out these groups of people, they could have played the victim: "I was mistreated as a child," or "the Romans are making me," or "What about that nasty King Herod?" They could have pointed at others in their world that were just as bad, or worse.

Pastor Ben said on Sunday that transparency in life brings healthiness. And confronted with the hard truth (John's scathing blame) these people did not deflect or play the victim, they said "what is it that we can do?" And then we heard that "everyone was filled with expectation." Transparency for these people led to obedience and expectation. They heard the Word, they did not try to hide from it, obeyed with immediacy, and expected God to act.

Transparency is being truthful about who you are and your situation. Transparency rejects the desire to make ourselves seem better than we are, or make our situation seem worse than it is. Transparency in our spiritual life is being honest with ourselves and our sin, it is recognizing where I need to grow and where God is working in my life currently. Transparency is the discipline to be honest.

Lent is a time to renew our focus on honesty and transparency. It is a time for us to repent of our falsehood and embrace the truth. Don't play the victim. Don't blame others. And enjoy God.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once

1. When was the last time you experienced someone "play the victim"? Was it on social media? Was it on cable news? What was it like?
2. Have you ever played the victim? Be honest. When was the last time you were in an argument and you misrepresented either yourself or your situation in order to win the argument?
3. Why do you think we do this? Why do you do this?
4. Make a list of recurring sins/issues in your life. Do you struggle with shame? pride? contempt for those different than you? prejudice? racism? lying? cheating? greed? gambling?
5. Pray that God would take these things from you and free you from your sins.
6. Find someone you trust and is willing to listen to you in confidence. Confess your sins to them and ask for forgiveness.