



Passion

Part 3 – Confrontation & Warnings

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Today, we are studying through the Tuesday of the Holy Week titled *Confrontation & Warnings*. How many of you generally are non-confrontational? Me too. How about confrontational? They are very excited about declaring that they are confrontational. How many of you are in a relationship where you're both confrontational? Okay, that can get a little fiery sometimes, can't it? The truth is, as we study *Confrontation & Warnings* today, in the fashion of Christ, as followers of Jesus, there are some things which we must confront. So, non-confrontational people, it's important to know that we have to be confrontational sometimes. Confrontational people, we're also going to talk about how it's important that we are careful about how we confront, when we confront, the tone with which we confront. So, this message is for everyone.

We're working through this passion week. Two weeks ago, Adam covered the Triumphal Entry, Palm Sunday, talking about crowds and the excitement of the crowd and how the crowd quickly turned. And then last week, Ted talked about the Clearing of the Temple, and this confrontation that Christ did, which was really the only example we have in scripture where it became a physical and escalated confrontation. Otherwise, the rest of his ministry was not with that physical escalation.

Today, we're talking about *Confrontation and Warnings* as Jesus went back into the city after he had cleared the temple the night before. So, he goes in, clears the temple of the money changers, the unrighteousness that was taking place there and, of course, causes a great stir, really disrupts things. And then he comes back the next day, on Tuesday.

What's happening is... And they confronted him as he cleared the temple. The religious leaders of the time did not appreciate this. They didn't appreciate what he was doing. First of all, he comes in and all the people are saying, "Hosanna, hosanna, save us now." They were the ones that were supposed to be the leaders that were leading their people and here comes Jesus into town. They didn't like that. They were the ones that had the most power, the most money, the best position. Life was good for them.

What's happening here is Jesus was disrupting their way of life. He was really stirring things up. He was turning things upside down. Things were going well for them. Almost like the spring of 2020, right? Things were going well, work was good, the family was good, everybody was healthy, things were well. And then here we go – the whole world gets turned upside down. That's what the Pharisees, the scribes, the chief priests, the religious leaders were experiencing here. Jesus was disrupting their way of life. This was a day of teaching and exhorting, encouraging and warning, many examples throughout. We can read through these and get a lot of lessons through the confrontation and through the warning,

but there is one main lesson that we want to learn today and that is observing and experiencing the passion of Christ through his confronting. Now Jesus returns into town. He had just cleared the temple. Again, the next morning, he's coming back into town, and he goes back to the temple. And he's going to be teaching. Imagine the reception at this point. Two days before, everybody is screaming, "Hosanna." Then the next day, Jesus comes in and he starts turning over tables and chasing people out for the things that they are doing in the temple.

I'm guessing part of that crowd stepped and back and thought this does not seem right. Now, he comes back into town and I'm sure even more people are kind of standing back to watch to see what's going to happen. Now, we have this audience of people watching as the religious leaders are really going to start laying into him. They're going to start challenging him, they're going to start questioning him.

We are going to dive into the first experience that he has here with the confrontation with the religious leaders. If you have your Bibles, turn to Matthew 21. We're going to pick up in Verse 23.

23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?" To paraphrase, "Who do you think you are? We kind of have a good thing going here and you're really stirring things up. Who do you think you are?"

24 Jesus replied... And he didn't just answer the question they asked, he said, **"I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 25 John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"** They discussed it among themselves... You see, what happened is they didn't just answer his question, they were like, "Hold on just a minute." They are going to talk about it amongst themselves and figure out what it is they are going to say.

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'" He knew that they didn't believe that the baptism of John was from heaven. **26 "But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people..."** Remember the crowd that Adam talked about a couple of weeks ago? The religious leaders were afraid of the crowd. **"...for they all hold that John was a prophet."**

27 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." What kind of an answer is that? Now, I am fully in favor that if you don't know the answer to a question, answering, "I don't know..." As a matter of fact, when someone comes to me with a question about something from scripture or for something theological or about something I believe or even something not theological, if I don't know the answer, I answer, "I don't know." And I want to try to go find out. But why did they say, "We don't know"? Not because they didn't know what they believed, but because they were afraid of what the crowds would do and say to them for saying what they believe. Is that ever us where we're concerned about the crowd, afraid of the crowd and don't want to say what we truly believe because of the crowd?

27 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus understood what this confrontation was. They weren't just seeking information, they were trying to trap him or to get him to say something that they

wanted him to say. ***Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."*** He's saying, "I'm not going to play this game." So, he challenged their intellect, he challenged their position, their authority. And in doing this, he challenged their integrity. He called out their integrity. There is a lesson in here about staying above reproach, about having integrity because that's a very good feeling, isn't it? Doing the right thing and staying above reproach, which they had not done.

Tax day is coming up, right? Some of you prepare your taxes and you send them and you're excited, hoping the IRS says you're being audited. You're like, bring it on; let's do this. That's because you go through every little detail and you're ready. And you're the same people that went to test day like, *I am so excited to show the teacher how much I know.* It's the same personality. But there is freedom in that. It's very liberating to not be under the pressure of unrighteousness and poor integrity.

You see, these religious leaders, when they retreated and they were talking amongst themselves, they were figuring out what they needed to say. They were figuring out lies to cover up lies. They were figuring out stories to tell to cover up deception, which is what takes the place in the mind of someone who is caught in sin and unrighteousness and called out in it, right? If you're not telling lies, you don't have to tell lies to cover up lies when confronted. If you're not caught up in unrighteousness, you don't have to tell stories to make excuses for unrighteousness, and that's where they were. Their meeting was to discuss how to answer. And there is freedom in staying above reproach. **These religious leaders were wrong, they knew it, and they were unrepentant.**

Now, what follows after that first confrontation, is many confrontations, many lessons that Jesus delivers by pointing out examples and different things that took place, different arguments, different questions that were asked and this was a very busy day in the Holy Week. We can't cover all of them, but I want to just give you an overview of a few to give you some idea of how Jesus was teaching lessons to the people he was confronting and to those around him.

The rejected cornerstone in Mark 12: 1-12. This was a parable Jesus often taught in parables or stories. This was a parable of the tenants of a vineyard that the master sent his servant to collect what he was due from the tenants, They killed the servant, so he sends another servant. They kill that servant, and it happens over and over until he sends his beloved son. "Surely, they won't kill him," but they do, hoping to obtain his heir to the vineyard. This one enraged the religious leaders because they knew that Jesus was calling them out. They knew he was speaking about them. He was the son, he was the cornerstone and then he referenced scripture that he was the cornerstone that was being rejected. So, you can see then that they are really starting to get escalated because he's really calling them out now, even using scripture to call them out.

Paying Taxes to Caesar Matthew 22:15-22 This is a common one that we read and that we hear about and that we study where they tried to double cross him to ask him a trick question. They said, "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar? Yes, it's lawful, right. Within the community, they are supposed to pay taxes to the government, but they are saying, "Is it lawful for us, as religious Jews, to pay taxes to Caesar?" To which you probably know what he said. Jesus said, "Give me the coin with which you pay taxes." They give him a denarius. He says, "Whose likeness is on this coin?" And they say, "It's Caesar's." He says, "So it's Caesar's to begin with. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Give to God what is

God's." They couldn't trap him. And he's giving wise answers throughout these questions they keep coming with.

Beware of the Scribes Mark 12: 38-40 And he gives warning, showing how the Pharisees and the scribes and the chief priests are behaving in their religion. They are very proud of the way they dress, the way they display their religion. He warns, through this example, about prideful people giving confrontations and warnings.

Widow's offering, Mark 12: 41-44 We read about how he's sitting across from the treasury where the offerings were given and many rich people and proud people came in, giving large sums of money, making it seem to everybody. To which Jesus says, "They are giving out of abundance and out of pride." But then this widow comes and gives two small copper coins, the equivalent of a penny. He says, "She gave so much more than them because she has nothing, and she gave everything that she has. Calling out good examples. Making lessons out of the things that he was observing that they were seeing here in this holy city.

Then after all these questions and challenges and things that took place, there was one, a scribe, one of the religious leaders, who approached him very differently. We read about this in Mark 12: 28 -34.

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating – Jesus and the religious leaders. **Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer...** First of all, notice what he noticed. Jesus was answering them well. In the other accounts that we read about, it was that they were enraged by what he was doing, by what he was saying. Or they looked to trap him. He was seeing that Jesus answered them well. **...he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"** He didn't ask him a trick question, a double sided question, something to try to catch him. He asked him a legitimate question because he noticed that he was answering well. So, the attitude you can get from this scribe is he sees that Jesus is legit. He says, "I want to ask a question that is a legit question to see if he is who we think he is."

29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right..." He acknowledges that Jesus is right. He doesn't get mad, he doesn't ask him another question, and he uses the word *teacher* or *rabbi*, which is a term of respect. He says, "You are right." You see how this is very different from the confrontation that we've seen so far. **...in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself...** And look at this. He goes on. He says, **"is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."** He continues quoting scripture where Jesus left off. Jesus didn't say that, but then he says that back to Jesus. You see this interaction that's taking place now? He asked Jesus a question with an open heart, and with kindness, Jesus answers him. And these two men that know scripture start quoting scripture back and forth with one another. So, you can imagine the scene here.

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” We talk often about wanting to hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” How about these words as we’re living out our faith: “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”? **And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.**

I love this interaction with this scribe, this man, who was one of them, who approached Jesus with an open heart, asked a legitimate question, gets an answer, quotes scripture back and here they are just like this with one another. I imagine if this was modern times, they might slap hands and do a bro hug afterwards. That’s the attitude that this one confronted Jesus with – inquisitive, not challenging. And Jesus was open to him. He was indignant towards these other leaders and this scribe was one of them. But this religious leader saw that Jesus was right, he acknowledged it, and his heart was ready to repent. That’s very different from the challenges that Jesus had received from these other religious leaders.

Let’s talk about confrontation now. When we talk about confrontation, we’re going to say that confrontation is like a chainsaw. No, I’m not going to start it; don’t worry. That because I fear I will not be able to start it. Confrontation is like a chainsaw. When used carefully and properly, with skill and precision, it can accomplish great things. It can really get things done, right? But when used carelessly and with reckless abandon, it can cause harm to the one using it, to the people around the one using it, and to the property and structures within striking distance of what the one using it is using it on.

Confrontation is like that. Let me give you an example of what I’m talking about. Maybe we come up on this scene on the road (picture with trees down, blocking the road) We’ve seen this too many times in the Ozarks after a storm. And you’re on your way to work and you’re late to work. The chainsaw would help. You’re thinking the chainsaw is what’s needed for this problem. Confrontation is like a chainsaw and sometimes we don’t like to use the loud, powerful, can cause a lot of damage tool that confrontation can be.

When we see a problem that requires confrontation, sometimes we say, “I don’t want to start that thing up; it’s too loud, it’s heavy, it’s hard to use. Then we see this picture and we say, “I’m just going to avoid the really hard work that may be involved in using that chainsaw. This hand saw is lighter, it’s not going to hurt me or anyone else, most likely. I’m just going to trim around the edges of this problem so I can get around and get where I need to go.” What can happen? I could be there days, weeks, months trying to clean that up. All the husbands are like, “You see, I need a chainsaw. This is why I need a chainsaw.”

If we do this in relationships, in our marriage, in our family, with our kids, in the workplace, in our organizations and our businesses... If we say this is a mess, but I really don’t want to run that chainsaw through this. I’m just going to kind of dance around it, just deal with, just get around it for now, what happens. It’s there for days, weeks, months, years, and it can linger. Confrontation is like a chainsaw – when used properly and carefully, it can accomplish great things, but when used improperly, it can be very damaging. And when used carelessly, it can be very damaging. Also, when used properly, it can be very productive. Some of you see that first picture and you go, “Hey, we’re heated for the winter. You can make a big pile of firewood out of that. Not only can it solve a problem, but the other side of it is you can have something that is productive and a resource. But then again, when used improperly, it can cause destruction.

But if you don't use that chainsaw properly on this tree that you're trying to get rid of, it can end up laying across your house or, even worse, your neighbor's house. And this is what confrontation is like. It can solve problems, it can produce good things, or it can be very damaging. So, understanding that confrontation is like chainsaw. This is the guy that none of us want to be (picture of Michael Meyers with a chainsaw). Reckless abandon. You don't want to be the one that walks into the room and everybody goes, "Ugh, he's wielding that chainsaw. She's revving it up again."

That's where we have to be careful. Confrontation is like a chainsaw and how do you use that chainsaw? You see, I can be right but highly unrighteous. And that's what use of a chainsaw is like. So, when I pull up to an intersection and let's say the light turns green and I can go. It's my turn. It's right for me to go. But I stop and I look both ways still because I see that in the cross traffic, someone is coming, and they don't see that they have a red light, and they are going to barrel through that intersection. Would I be right to pull on out into the intersection and go? Well, I mean I see that I have a green light, it's my turn, I'm right to go. Would I be righteous in pulling right out in front of that person, causing major disaster? You can be right and highly unrighteous at the same time. Proper use of confrontation is important.

What are some ways that it is proper to use confrontation?

1. Time, place, and circumstances matter. It's not always the time for confrontation and sometimes it is the time for confrontation. It's not always the place. Is this the right setting for confrontation? Yes or no. And the circumstances. There may be someone that needs confronting and maybe they are not fertile soil for confrontation and repentance at the time. Maybe the circumstances are not right for confrontation.

2. Tone matters. Proverbs 15: 1 says, ***A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*** And later on in Verse 4, it says ***A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*** Your tone matters. I imagine the tone. You can't hear the tone, but you can hear the language tone in that confrontation with the scribe, right? The tone in his words. Tone matters with the confrontation. Soft – turning away wrath, or gentle – a tree of life, or stirring up anger. Tone matters.

3. The audience matters. The people around. You see, Jesus was confronting these religious leaders and I'm pretty sure most of the time, he knew that he wasn't going to lead them to repentance from their unrighteousness. But it was highly important that he consider the audience around him. If those that were following him saw that he just caved to these leaders or that he went along with the unrighteousness or their sinfulness, how damaging would that have been to the audience, the people around him.

For me, I think about our kids and our family a lot in this situation; they are listening. And there may be co-workers, there may be other family members, or other settings where for you, the audience really matters. People are watching and listening. And righteous use of confrontation requires consideration of the audience.

Now, what does that look like to confront properly, to use the chainsaw, so to speak, in a good way with care and precision? I believe there are two different ways that we can confront. That's directly and indirectly. We'll talk about direct confrontation and indirect confrontation. We see Jesus used both of these methods.

First direct confrontation. This means going straight to the source of sin, unrighteousness, false belief, whatever you hear or see happening. Jesus did this. We have many examples from that passion week Tuesday where he's going directly to the source of the unrighteousness that he's confronting. Notice in these that I'm going to read to you, and also in many others, Jesus confronts directly with scripture as a source. That's important to recognize.

Mark 12: 10, ***Haven't you read this passage of Scripture...*** To the scribe regarding the greatest commandment, the good scribe, he quoted Deuteronomy 6. After clearing the temple and healing the sick, the people were again proclaiming Hosanna. The religious leaders said to him, "Do you hear what they are saying?" Jesus reply to them was, "Have you never read..."

Matthew 21: 42, in that confrontations he said, "Have you never read in the scriptures?" And in kind of this big mic-drop moment, after they are trying to trap him again, asking him about resurrection, which he answered correctly. But after he answered correctly, he said, "Is this not the reason you are wrong because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God." He declared scripture when confronting unrighteousness directly to people.

I think that's important for us to understand because if we are going to confront something or someone directly, it's important that we go in the name of Jesus, in the truth of scripture.

It's very important for us to understand as well that as we take scripture to someone in confrontation, we use it in context and in proper application. The reason that's important, to give you an example, don't you hate it when someone misquotes you? When someone says, "He said this..." "She said this..." And it can be wrong in two ways. She said this but twists it a little bit so that they can make the point they want to make. Or, he said this, but not in context. Yes, he said that, but do you know what he was talking about? In different context. The media are fantastic at that, aren't they? They take things out of context and twist words.

When we are confronting someone with scripture in the name of Christ, we're representing Christ. So, when we represent Christ in confronting someone, we don't want to misquote him and we don't want to quote him wrong altogether – out of context or wrong words.

Now this is a great opportunity. If you see an unrighteousness, a sin that you want to confront, what a great opportunity for you to dive in, edify yourself in the scriptures that you are confronting and learn about it. It's a great opportunity. You represent Christ in your confrontation and sometimes, he directly confronted sin and unrighteousness.

Direct confrontation, in that way, is sometimes necessary, but there is also indirect confrontation. Indirect confrontation, meaning not going straight to the source, to the person that is committing the

sin, the unrighteousness, but in an indirect way. We can still, indirectly confront hypocrisy, heresy, unrighteousness, sinfulness, so many different things where we don't have to go right to the source. For example, Jesus addressed false teaching by the Pharisees by warning his disciples, his people, to watch out for what those people are saying. Have you ever said that to your kids or someone else that's going to go be somewhere? Like, "Hey, you're going to hear some things here and I just want you to know to take what you hear with a grain of salt." We can address unrighteousness. "You're going to see some things. You need to understand this is not right."

In warning and talking about good examples, we can confront heresy by calling out truth according to scripture. One of the things I love to do as a family as we're watching television or watching a movie or watching a game and an after-game interview. After a game interviews are some of my favorite. The games over and I'm like, "Okay, everybody listen." And the person being interviewed says something and I go, "Oh, wait," I hit pause and say... and the kids will roll their eyes. I'll say, "What did he just say?" and they'll say, "He said this." I'll ask them if this is right, if this is what we believe? "No." "What do we believe." "This is what we believe." "Why do we believe this?" "Because scripture says this." I can't talk to the person who just said that on television. I'm confronting false belief indirectly.

We can confront unrighteousness indirectly. "Did ya'll see how he handled that?" whatever situation. Or they come home and tell a story. "So and so did this at school." "Really? How do you think that went?" Confronting unrighteousness indirectly. You don't have to go right to the source. Sometimes it's necessary to go right to the source. How someone handled a situation. And we have so many current events about which we can confront sin, unrighteousness, false beliefs regarding sexuality, abortion, human rights, racism, the list goes on. Leave the television on for a while and you'll be given plenty of opportunity to confront unrighteousness, false beliefs, and so many different things indirectly.

Jesus used indirect confrontation by calling attention to good examples. The widow that gave the offering, he pointed to her. He said, "Her sacrifice matters because it's of the heart. She gave everything." Calling out a good example.

Another place in scripture, Jesus called out the centurion that told him that the Roman soldier said, "Jesus if you just say the words then my sick servant can be healed."

Jesus called out unfaithfulness, those that he wasn't talking directly to, he said this man has more faith than anyone else in the land. By anyone else in the land, he meant the religious Jews, the religious leaders, all of God's people. How offensive for a Jew among them to say he has more faith than anyone else. Calling out good examples.

We do that with our kids too. "Hey, have you seen how so and so handles herself?" "Have you seen how so and so goes about his business?" "I just want you to know this is a good example." And we can confront unrighteousness by pointing out good examples and encouraging good examples.

One of the problems that's getting worse with time, I believe, in an age of relativism, which kind of means what's true for you is not true for me. "What's right for you is not right for me." With that, you often hear this phrase, "You shouldn't judge people."

On the surface, maybe it seems right, but you need to know this is a concept that is not based in scripture. We judge things every day. For instance, if I'm going to make a sandwich and I encounter molded bread, I'm probably not going to use that bread to make my sandwich. If I'm on vacation somewhere or in a large city for whatever reason and I see that there may be a shortcut to get on the other side of town, I'm probably not going to go down that alley. I'm judging that alley. If I see a picture (someone taking a selfie out the window of a jet) that looks kind of neat but it's probably not true, right? I mean 500 mph at 30,000 ft, I'm guessing his wrist is not strong enough to hold the selfie stick. We judge things all the time. Is it good, is it bad? Is it safe, is it not?" Is it true, is it false? In the same way, we judge the words and actions of people all day, as we should. Is what their doing and what they are saying good or not? Is what's happening safe or not? Is what they're saying true, or not?

Jesus said in John 7: 24 when he was being called out again by the religious leaders for healing on a Sunday, working on the Sabbath, which they did as well when they did circumcisions on the Sabbath. When they were working on the Sabbath, but they were calling him out He said, "**Judge with right judgment.**" "They are not judging me because I'm healing on the Sabbath. They are judging because they don't want me healing."

We have to be careful also because again, in context and application, judge not. Jesus literally said those words – "judge not." In context, he said, "Judge not lest ye be judged." He goes on to say, "First get the plank out of your own eye before being concerned about the speck in someone else's eye." In other words, you're going to be judged with the same measure. Stay above reproach yourself and then judge unrighteousness in others.

We have to be careful in not getting confused with what scripture also calls final judgement. We're not talking about God judging at the end of time. We're talking about casting judgement as in is this good, is this bad, is this right, is this wrong, is this safe, is this not.

You can judge without harshly criticizing and condemning. I believe this is the phrase that's more appropriate – Someone says you shouldn't judge people. No, you shouldn't harshly criticize and condemn people because we're carrying a chainsaw and what are you going to do with it? Because this can come across pretty harsh and pretty condemning. Condemning means to declare guilty and to say this needs to be punished. We are not to do that. We are to judge, we are to understand what's right and what's wrong. So, in your confrontation, your chainsaw, are you going to be productive, cleaning up the mess, making some firewood, making sure no one gets hurt? Is someone going to lose an arm? Is a house going to get smashed?

You see, we tend to confront things about which we are passionate as well. Jesus confronted things he was passionate about. We tend to confront things maybe like our constitutional rights or our position at work or in some organization, our income, taxes, keeping our income. Remember that Jesus confronted those who were concerned about preserving their way of life. These were all things that were way of life – our income, our position.

The question is then do you spend more time and effort confronting things that threaten your way of life or things that threaten truth and righteousness? We see the passion of Christ coming through his

confrontation on that passion Tuesday. Are we more concerned about our way of life or about oppression of the powerless, about unrighteousness, hypocrisy, greed, pride, false teachings as Jesus was? And we may be concerned as we confront, directly or indirectly, what the backlash might be in person, at work, online. Remember the Pharisees, the scribes, the religious leaders were concerned about what the crowds would think. So, we may be caught up in that.

I think Charles Stanley said it well when he said, *"Obey God and leave the consequences to him."* I'm more concerned about defending truth and righteousness than what the crowd might think. As a follower of Jesus, may we stand for truth, may we confront false teachings, may we confront unrighteousness, directly or indirectly. And in such a ways that is with precision and care and not so that we or others all around us become hurt and that much destruction may take place.

Father, we love you. We're grateful for this gathering this morning and we pray that your Word would be heard, Lord, and it would be applied. We thank you for your examples in scripture, Lord, of confrontation and how we can use the right tone, the right time, place, and circumstances, acknowledging our audience, knowing that truth can be heard, that we can confront the schemes of the devil as he works throughout our life, throughout or day, in all circumstances. We pray that we would be passionate about which you are passionate, and that we would therefore confront the things you are passionate about.

We love you, we praise you, and it is Christ's name that everyone agreed and said... Amen.