

# THE APPROACH

## MATTHEW 16:1-12

Approaching the other team from a coaching standpoint.

The point: the way we approach an issue or target is normally based on whether we are a superior or inferior position. (strength vs. weakness; pride or humility; anger or fear)

Let's look at how two different groups approach Jesus.

### **MT. 16:1-4**

***1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. 4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.***

- Pharisees and Sadducees, odd bedfellows
- Testing – tempt, test, discipline – not a nice motive, no matter how you slice it.
- Give us a sign... another sign
- Jesus addresses their weather lore, which was correct.
- Hypocrites! Actors! You aren't as smart as you think you are. You know the lesser things in life. They are obvious to you. But the things with which you should know as students of the scriptures, those things are not obvious to you, though they are right in front of your face.
- "Signs of the times" used only here in the NT. Normally used as an eschatological sense, but here speaks of what was right in front of them.
- For you the only sign is that of Jonah.

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Mt. 12:38-41

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

The only sign they will get from Jesus is that of the resurrection. And the men of Nineveh, Gentiles, will rise up in judgment of them. The Gentiles repented hearing Jonah's message, while the Scribes and Pharisees won't repent even though Jesus, who is greater than Jonah, both in His title and His miracles is right in front of them.

Then Jesus walked away. They didn't really want to another sign. Their motives were not honest.

*Mt.16:5-12*

*5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."*

*7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."*

*8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? 9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? 10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? 11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

- They are now back on the Western side of the Sea of Galilee. This will be the last time Jesus is in this region prior to the crucifixion.
- Jesus gives the disciples a warning of the doctrine of the Pharisees, but

does it in an off the cuff, metaphorical way. The disciples misinterpret His meaning.

- An important hermeneutical lesson. You can't take everything literally. That is just not the way communication works.
- The disciples believe He is goading them concerning whether or not they have packed bread for the trip.
- But why would they worry about bread when Jesus has already shown that He can produce enough bread to feed thousands, literally on demand?
- They have already forgotten about two major miracles.
- How can this be?
- I believe the answer lies in how they are approached Jesus. Notice that Jesus overhears them reasoning among themselves. Why would they reason among themselves? Why would we do this if we were in their shoes? Why do we go back later to another person and do this instead of listening or even asking the one who made the statement? "What do you think he meant by that?"
- The problem lies in their approach to Jesus.
- The way the Pharisees and Sadducees approached Jesus – demanding, antagonizing. Seeking more proof, even though ample proof has already been given.
- Do we approach Jesus that way? The skeptic does. And I believe the believer does at times, also.
- The S & P have overlooked the prior things Jesus has done out of heart of unbelief. Do we focus on the present trial, overlooking what Jesus has already done for us?
- They didn't really want to see. They had an ulterior motive.

### The Disciples

- The disciples have been with Jesus for year by this time. They know Him. But they still aren't always sure about how they should approach Him.
- Why are they reasoning among themselves? It cannot be that they are conscious of an issue of miraculous provision. They don't get the metaphor.
- It is their recognition of their own frailties that causes them to fear.
- As soon as Jesus makes the statement concerning leaven, they go into a sort of panic mode. They don't get it and at some level, they know they

don't get it, so they began to panic among themselves in order to figure out what He means.

- Why do they fear? Why is their approach flawed? Because they still haven't grasped how a relationship with Jesus works.
- Grace still hasn't fully taken root in their minds. The fear rebuke and their own failure.
- This isn't true humility. Fear is sheepish because there is the knowledge of inferiority vs. superiority. And we may say that is a good thing when approaching God. In one sense it is good, but it forgets about grace and love.
- Humility is an acknowledgement of God's superiority and man's inferior sin nature. But it also takes into account the grace of God. It takes into account the fact that **we can never be loved any more than we were the moment we became children of God. And we can never be loved any less than we were the moment we became children of God. That's how grace works!**

The Pharisees have the wrong approach because they don't see Jesus for who He is. They come at Him from a perceived advantage of strength and superior knowledge. The Disciples are coming at Him from a perceived disadvantage of fear, which doesn't take the grace of God into account. In their minds, they have to answer every question correctly and understand everything, all the time or they have lost the favor and love of Jesus. This isn't true. God loved us before we were even born. We can't add to that love or subtract from it because of our failings. The believer is His child.

The sign: 3 days and 3 nights. Death, burial and resurrection. This should be proof enough that Jesus is who He said He was. The eyewitnesses attest to it.

We have been talking about the approach of the Pharisees, Sadducees and disciples. And it is important to approach Jesus from the standpoint of His love and grace. But even more importantly, we need to see that He came to earth in order to approach us.

- In the OT, for the most part, God was inapproachable. (Temple, priesthood, the curtain in the Temple.)
- But God loved us so much that His plan of the ages would eventually have it that He would come to us because we couldn't go to Him. When He conquered death and sin on the cross, it opened the door for us to approach Him, because He first approached us!

- We do have to approach Jesus in humility, but humility comes from understand WHO He is. It comes from understanding what HE has done and not what we have done.
- If I can't be unloved by Jesus, then I can approach Him any time, knowing that He still loves me just as much as He did when I was first born again. I can know that I'm loved just as much on a good day as I am when I have failed Him. That's how grace works! And that is how the Gospel works.

#### **Hebrews 4:14**

**14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**