

This Is A Hard Saying

Jn. 6:53-60

Introduction:

1. T. W. Manson wrote a book, published in 1949, entitled The Sayings of Jesus.
2. In that book (p. 35) he made the following observation:
“The teaching of Jesus is difficult and unacceptable because it runs counter to those elements in human nature which the twentieth century has in common with the first—such things as laziness, greed, the love of pleasure, the instinct to hit back, and the like.”
3. Yes, the teachings of Jesus are difficult. They are hard because we prefer laziness rather than hard work; we prefer greed to giving; pleasure, rather than that which is uncomfortable; and getting even, rather than accepting the pain of being hurt.
4. Sometimes the teachings of Jesus are hard to understand, and sometimes they are hard because we understand them all too well. Mark Twain said that it was not the things in the Bible that he did not understand that bothered him, but the things that he did understand.
5. Learning what Jesus is saying is sometimes hard enough, but often doing what He says is even more difficult.

Discussion:

- I. Some of us had rather remain ignorant.
 - A. If you do not understand the teaching of Jesus there is a certain blissfulness in that.
 1. You are ignorant of what you do not know.
 2. You remain unchallenged.
 - B. Some of us are willingly ignorant. We do not read and study Scripture.
 1. We are content to be where we are.
 2. We may be lost, but we do not know it. We may be wrong and be oblivious. We may be blind and leading others. And both of us will fall into a pit (Matt. 15:14).
 - C. Some of us are content with what we already “know” and do not consider alternatives. We just want to confirm what we already “know.”
 1. There is nothing wrong with confirming what we already know as long as what we already know is the truth.
 2. But sometimes it is not. Ex. “Since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains (Jn. 9:41).
 - D. Uncertainty is often created by our study.
 1. This can be very frightening.
 2. When we are learning what Jesus is teaching we must let go of past ideas and grasp on to new things.
 3. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night (Jn. 3:1-2). He was learning but with some level of caution. How do I let go of what I have believed before and accept the teaching of Jesus? See Jn. 3:19-21. If you accept the teaching of Jesus a transition must be made.
 - E. Remaining in ignorance is not a viable option.

1. "The words I have spoken are spirit and are life" (Jn. 6:63).
2. We cannot be "conformed to this world, but must be transformed by the renewing of our minds" (Rom. 12:2).
3. We are children of Light and must "try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (Eph. 5:8-10).
4. "Like newborn babies we are to long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it we may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2).
5. But even then we must proceed to solid food (Heb. 5:11-14).
6. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

II. The teachings of Jesus are designed to produce change.

- A. Jesus said, "The world hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil" (Jn. 7:7).
- B. While there is a sense of security in maintaining the status quo, following the teachings of Jesus upsets the status quo.
 1. "You have heard it said . . . but I say to you . . ." (Matt. 5:21ff).
 2. Jesus takes what was recognized as the "best" teaching of the day and shows its inadequacy (Matt. 5:20).
 3. It was difficult for the disciples, even more difficult for the scribes and Pharisees.
 4. The "status quo" for us involves what we have been taught in the past, what our cultural heritage transmits, the voices of the past, and just what we have come to believe, etc. Sometimes these are correct; but sometimes not.
- C. Sometimes the "sons of the kingdom" have more struggle with the changes than those who are not "sons of the kingdom" (Matt. 8:5-13).
- D. In John chapters 7, 8, 9 there is a section about the challenges the people had in accepting the teaching of Jesus.
 1. 7:40-53.
 2. Jesus presented Himself as "the light of the world" (8:12-13).
 3. He emphasized continuing in His word as a mark of discipleship (Jn. 8:31).
 4. As further indication of the difficulty John records the incident of a blind man (Jn. 9).
 - a. The disciples ascribed the man's blindness to sin. Jesus corrected this myth.
 - b. The Pharisees could not see, because they did not believe one should heal on the Sabbath (13-17).
 - c. The Jews did not believe the man's testimony and questioned his parents. They were afraid (18-23) and hesitated to support the teaching of Jesus.
 - d. The Jews refused the teaching (23-34).
 - e. The blind man accepted the teaching and was forgiven. The Jews said, "We see," and their sin remained."
- E. There are many warnings in Scripture against false teaching and false teachers, but these cannot be used to attack the teaching of Jesus.
 1. They must be used to attack everything but the teaching of Jesus.
 2. Distinguishing between the teaching of Jesus and false teaching is critical and challenging.

III. What does all this have to do with us?

- A. We are disciples. That means that we are learners of the teaching of Jesus. We are in the process of being transformed by the renewing of our minds.
- B. Changes in our thinking are inevitable.
- C. Such changes are often uncomfortable.
- D. Continuing on in ignorance is not a viable option.
- E. Simply maintaining the status quo is not appropriate.
- F. Caution is reasonable, but it is not appropriate to be so cautious that we cannot accept the changes that we need to make.
- G. Others are going to oppose our acceptance of the teaching of Jesus. They may “put us out of the synagogue.”
- H. Understanding that learning the teaching of Jesus is a process may help us to be considerate of others in their learning process too. Sometimes we are anxious that others are not where we are and we become impatient with their process.

Conclusion:

1. The sayings of Jesus are hard. They result in division (Jn. 10:19-21).
2. Some said, “He has a demon and is insane.”
3. Others said, “A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”
4. How are you responding to the teachings of Jesus?