SOLA JESUS—FEB. 14

Handbook available to review Lenten practices:

• Identify a personal BIG ASK, something special you would like God to do for you. Don’t scrutinize how worthy your BIG ASK is. An exercise in child-like faith. God is BIG, we are small. God is parent, we are children. We have needs & desires [E.G.]

• Identify up to six people just outside your close circle of family-friends, to pray for every day. Just list them, and then name them in prayer each day. [share my six]

• Finally, we’re having our first-ever immersion baptism this Easter. So if you would like to take that leap of faith, sign up...

• Lenten theme: Sola Jesus. Daily word [show book, sign up]

Sola is Latin for “only” or “alone.” Using feminine form, “sola,” rather than “solus” to invoke historical connection to one of the main slogans of Protestant Reformation: Sola Scriptura. We are offering Sola Jesus as an alternative to Sola Scriptura

Background: Slogans are a product of their times. 500 years ago, Luther offered Sola Scriptura as answer to question, “Where do we locate authority? Who gets final word?” RC church had a monopoly in Europe at time. The church said the church (Pope/ Bishops/ Church Councils) have final word. Luther said, “Church can be mistaken! Sole authority resides in Scripture, not the church. The church is under authority of Scripture. Sola Scriptura.”

Some Protestants never adopted Sola Scriptura (Anglicans Methodists/Anabaptists) but it dominated & defined Protestantism.

Helps explain why such conflict over “What Bible says about X?”
If sole authority vested in Scripture, then our big battles will revolve around the question, “What does Scripture say?
Taken 500 years to realize Sola Scriptura is overreach of its own. Comes with two corollaries:
1. That all we need to know is in Scripture.
2. That Scripture is clear on all we need to know. Problem is, serious readers come up with very different interpretations. 30K denominations. Can’t be that clear.
Sola Scriptura was a big advance over the overreach of a corrupt church hierarchy. But it obscured a deeper truth found, ironically, in Scripture. If question is, “Where does authority reside? The answer provided in Scripture seems to be, “in Jesus.”

Mk. 2, Jesus is defying religious expectations. He’s not only eating with tax collectors & sinners but his disciples are mixing comfortably with tax collectors & sinners who are among his followers.

Jesus’ disciples neglect fasting, a mark of piety in his day, to great distress of religious leaders. Then we have this: **Mk. 2: 21-22**

His way of saying, “Can’t simply add my message to your existing system. My message changes everything, requires new container.”

Jesus is signaling that his way is radically new.

600 yrs earlier, Solomon’s Temple destroyed, Jews sent into exile. Began transition from Judaism as temple-based to text-based religion. It wasn’t until this time in exile, that various writings and oral traditions were assembled into what we call the Bible.

At time of Jesus, Jews back from exile but under Roman occupation Temple rebuilt by Herod, corrupt half-Jewish client-King of Rome, who serves at Rome’s pleasure. High Priest serves at Rome’s pleasure. Temple system so corrupt, one of major Jewish factions (Essenes) boycotting temple worship altogether.

Judaism is well on its way to becoming a text-based (Bible-based) religion. Text-based religion is specialty of Scribes and Pharisees.

Heart of Bible is Torah, Law of Moses, and heart of Torah is Sabbath. Sabbath keeping has become the mark of faithful Jew.

Hard to appreciate how central Sabbath keeping was to Jewish identity, reinforced by Scripture. Law of Moses (10 Commands no less). Part of Jewish view of nature (God rested on Sabbath day in Genesis 1) Reinforced in prophetic tradition, a Reformation movement in Judaism. Question of whether or not Sabbath observance is binding on all Christians is not resolved in NT.

Which leads us to the next section: **Mk. 2: 23-28**
There were **strict interpretations** of “no work on Sabbath, not even during harvest time.” And there were **loose interpretations.** (Scripture not clear enough to rule out differing interpretations.)

But notice claim Jesus makes in relation to Sabbath Law, rooted in Bible. He’s not just claiming to be **best interpreter** of Sabbath Law. (“School of Jesus better than school of Hillel”) He’s claiming to be **Lord of Sabbath.** To claim he is Lord of Sabbath, would, by powerful inference mean, **Lord of Scripture.**

Also clear: Jesus will exercise his Lordship over Sabbath for **humanitarian** reasons. If there’s an approach to Sabbath that is not a blessing for humans, then he will step in to overrule.

Notice example he cites: David and his men eating consecrated bread that was reserved for priests alone to eat. Why because “they were hungry and in need”

He is Lord of Sabbath, **for the sake of humans.** Title he uses to declare his Lordship over Sabbath is “**son of man/human**”

Lord of Sabbath is different than Sabbath rebel. Jesus wasn’t a sulky teenager chafing at Sabbath observance. He honored Sabbath, observed the Sabbath, but if Sabbath keeping wasn’t *for humans*, a blessing, he **played the Lord-of-Sabbath card.**

This sounds so reasonable to our ears, but so radical to their ears. Section ends on gloomy note, “**Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.**”

**One big objection** to Sola Jesus is this: Look we have the Bible right here in plain sight, in black & white. We can read it, and figure out what it says without a lot of hocus-pocus and woo-woo.

Unstated implication: **Appealing to Jesus isn’t practical.** Because Jesus isn’t **right here** like Bible is. If Jesus speaks directly, communication with him is **dodgy.** Relying on this isn’t **safe.** Appeal to a text is much less **subjective.**

Can you see some problems with this objection?

1. We now know that our subjectivity affects our reading of Scripture as much as anything else. So, our knowledge of Scripture is **not objective,** without bias, etc. **Subjectivity is the price we pay for being human. God can deal with it.**
2. Early church wasn’t at all skeptical that Risen Jesus could guide people directly. Church came into being thru daring proclamation of a Risen-Jesus, an active agent available to anyone through the Holy Spirit—with expectation that people unfamiliar with Scripture (Gentiles) could experience Jesus through the Spirit.

Faith that spawned Jesus movement said Jesus is alive and can make himself known to people. Scripture was a sacred-inspired support, but Jesus himself was guiding people, sometimes in ways contrary to conventional readings of Scripture.

Another big objection to Sola Jesus is fear that it dishonors Scripture or breeds neglect of Scripture as a source of inspiration.

But we don’t honor Scripture by loading it with expectations it can’t sustain.

Take marriage as an example of something harmed by unrealistic expectation. Modern marriage suffers when it has to carry too much weight. In modern world, marriage is under strain because so much is expected of marriage. Spouse is not just only lover, but too often, our only close friend, only other person we can turn to in time of need, only trusted counselor.

The weight of impossible expectations can harm marriage.

Scripture can function better, can play a more fruitful role, when we don’t try to load it up with expectations it can’t meet.

Remember that old saw: don’t put the cart before the horse.

Picture a horse trying to push a cart rather than pull it, because the cart has been misplaced, ahead of the horse. It’s hard on the horse and the cart gets banged up too.

When Jesus is given his due, the cart and the horse are both better off.

REFLECTION

Jesus Prayer (for use with prayer beads)