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The Parable of Brats: Style Versus Substance
Scripture: Luke 7:31-35
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The Parable of the Brats: Style Versus Substance

Let's open our Bibles for the study of God's Word to the seventh chapter of Luke. One of the things I missed most in my little respite was studying and preaching Luke. It seems to me that every paragraph in this book is so rich, so insightful and so magnificently presents the truth of Christ. It is definitely habit forming.

You'll notice the title of this particular message is, "The Parable of the Brats." And I confess that I may be the first person who ever used the word "brat" in a sermon title. It is, after all, a very coarse word. It is, I suppose, pejorative. It's a word that you would only use in referring to someone else's children because it carries such a severe connotation. And actually the word "brat" is an unlikely word to appear in a sermon, but it is precisely fitting for the text before us in Luke 7. And the word doesn't need a definition, it's one of those words that just carries in its very few letters vivid experiential meaning. We've all seen repulsive children. We've all seen the kind of children that we would categorize as brats. And if we need synonyms to help us with the definition, the synonyms would be things like objectionable, obstreperous, refractory, recalcitrant, incorrigible, obstinate and intractable. And even though you have no idea of what those words mean, you all know what a brat is. And we're going to meet some today in a parable that Jesus gave.

And in this parable He identifies His generation as brats, impossible to please, impossible to satisfy, belligerent and all of those things we just mentioned. Let's look at verse 31 of Luke 7. "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation and what are they like? They're like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another and they say, 'We played the flute for you and you didn't dance. We sang a dirge and you didn't weep. For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine and you say he has a demon. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking and you say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax gatherers and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

It's a fascinating brief passage, isn't it? And just having read it to you, I know your mind is filled with all kinds of questions because on the surface it may not appear how it all hangs together. But that's why I, sooner or later, have to come back and explain this passage to you. Such a rich one, such an insightful one.

These words of Jesus are directed at the people who are surrounding Him at the moment in which He spoke. He describes those people as brats. And while they are the immediate object of His words, the principle here is timeless. And there have been and there are and there will be brats by this kind of definition in every generation. He is speaking of people who respond to the gospel like a brat. The message of God to sinners about repentance, faith, forgiveness, salvation does not receive from them the response that it should. And we know in the context of this particular chapter, since back in verse 18 John the Baptist has been the main topic of discussion, so it really features Jesus talking about John the Baptist. And, of course, at this particular point in the history of the gospel there are only two preachers. There is John the Baptist and there is Jesus. The Twelve have not yet been sent to preach, but there is John and there is Jesus.

So there are essentially two gospel preachers in the world. Two that are preaching repentance and faith and forgiveness and salvation. But whether or not it has been the preaching of John or the preaching of Jesus, the men of this generation have given the same essential response and that's that intractable recalcitrant, obstinate, bratty kind of response.

Now the people already, for the most part, had acknowledged that John the Baptist was a prophet. After all, earlier in this study of Luke we learned that when John began to preach down in the wilderness by the Jordan River, all Judea and all Jerusalem, meaning the whole land of Israel, was going out to hear him preach. People were acknowledging him as the true prophet of God. As Jesus said earlier in verse 26, "What did you go out to see, a prophet? Not just any prophet but you went out to see someone who is more than a prophet because this one was the one about whom the prophet of the Old Testament spoke," verse 27, "when he said, 'Behold, I send My messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you.'" This is the prophet prophesied by Malachi at the end of the Old Testament. So you knew John was a prophet and not just any prophet but THE prophet who would be the forerunner announcing the arrival of Messiah. You acknowledged that. You went out there. Verse 29 says, "All the people and the tax gatherers heard John, they acknowledged God's justice or righteousness and they were baptized with the baptism of John." So they went the whole route. They heard him preach. They acknowledged he was a prophet. They listened to his message of repentance. And they said that applies to me, I want to be baptized. And they went through the baptism to testify to the need for cleansing.

At the outset of John's ministry he was immensely popular...immensely. But verse 30 tells us the Pharisees and the scribes or lawyers, rejected God's purpose for themselves not having been baptized by John. The religious elite, the self-righteous legalists who thought they weren't sinners

and didn't need a cleansing, didn't like John. They didn't like his message of judgment. And they had all along rejected John. But the people, you see, had made this commitment that John was the forerunner of the Messiah and therefore when they acknowledged John, they then had to acknowledge Jesus because if they said that John was the true prophesied prophet to announce the arrival of Messiah, and John said Jesus is your Messiah, they then had to receive Jesus. As time went on, however, they became very uncomfortable with Jesus. And becoming uncomfortable with Jesus, they had to go backwards and rethink how they felt about John. So now both Jesus and John are risen in suspicion. And the populous being influenced by the leaders who never accepted Jesus or John are beginning to question both of them also. The effect of these religious leaders was significant. They basically turned a populous who had affirmed their trust in John as the true prophet of God away from John. They effectively turned a populous who saw the miracles of Jesus, the wonders that He did and heard His teaching and saw Him cast out demons and even raised dead people, they turned the people away from Jesus as well by their powerful influence. And ultimately in the end they got the whole population to scream for the blood of Jesus and have Him executed. Nobody seems to have minded either that Herod Antipas chopped John's head off.

So what started out as almost a revival euphoria in the preaching of John the Baptist is quickly disintegrating. The people not acknowledging Jesus Christ under the influence of their religious leaders are then going back and rethinking about what they feel about John. And the bottom line is they are rejecting Jesus and they are rejecting John. In John's gospel chapter 5 and verse 30...or verse 25, Jesus said, "You basked in John's light for a little while...for a little while." That was really true. And I think there was a certain euphoria about Jesus for a little while. But there was a massive campaign going on assaulting both John, who now is a prisoner way out in the wilderness in a fortress called Machaerus which was a supper palace for the Herodians. He's been put there because he confronted publicly the sins of Herod Antipas who was the petty ruler over his area. John is out of the picture and the attack centers on Jesus. The leaders resented and hated both and are effective in getting the people to buy into their animosity.

So Jesus says, seeing all of this, "How am I to understand this generation? What can I liken it to?" That's a Hebraism, that's an old Hebraic way of speaking. In fact, in the Jewish midrash which the rabbis wrote, that is the most common way to introduce an analogy, with the words "how am I to compare this," or "to what shall I compare this," or "what is this like"? That is a very typical rabbinic way of giving an analogy to explain a spiritual reality. That's precisely what Jesus does here. This is a tremendously important passage because this is Jesus' own assessment of His generation. And what does He say? He says they're basically brats, they're like spoiled children who can't be satisfied, who refuse to be satisfied. And all of this was the influence of the religious leaders...the scribes and the Pharisees who were self-righteous. And because they were self-righteous they thought they had by their keeping of the law and the traditions entered into a state of pleasing God and therefore they were not sinful, they were not headed for judgment, they didn't need to repent and they certainly didn't need to be baptized with some Gentile baptism...John's baptism, you remember,

was simply the baptism that was used for Gentiles coming into Judaism applied to Jews. So if you went for John's baptism, you were in effect saying...I'm so sinful I'm no better than a Gentile. That was a pretty big leap for people who had such resentment and animosity toward Gentiles. And the religious leaders weren't about to confess that they were no better than Gentiles, they assumed that they had achieved righteousness by their works and their law keeping.

They also not only loved their own righteousness but they hated grace. They hated mercy. They were so twisted that they hated forgiveness. And it bothered them that God would forgive wretched sinners. If you need an old illustration of that, remember Jonah. He'd rather be dead than see God forgive Ninevites. They hated the message of sin and they hated the message of grace. They were self-righteous, didn't need to worry about sin. And they were righteous on their own and didn't need grace and it was ludicrous to imagine that God could overlook the wretched sins of the outcasts.

So Jesus confronts them and describes them as brats. And I just would remind you that Jesus never hesitated, neither did John the Baptist for that matter, to label people. I know that's sort of not politically correct today in a tolerant environment, but it's amazing how many pejorative terms are used to describe people by Jesus and John. When the religious leaders came down to the Jordan River to meet with John, he greeted them with this, "You snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And in Luke's record it would indicate to us that he even went...he even used those terms to extend even beyond the scribes and the Pharisees and to embrace all the people who were under their influence. And then after that description of them he further said to them, "You are nothing but chaff for burning."

What Jesus said is even more extensive. Jesus called these self-righteous people hypocrites, blind, sons of hell, fools, robbers, self-indulgent. He said they were unclean tombs, outside whitewashed and inside dead men's bones. He called them snakes. He called them vipers. He called them murderers. And all of that in one speech in Matthew 23. So by comparison, brats is mild but it really does open up insight for us.

Now I just want to break this little narrative down into several simple parts. First, the introduction and the introduction comes in the opening verse, "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation and what are they like?" I just want to point out the fact the singular pronoun "I" is there indicating that this is Jesus speaking. In fact, He has been speaking since back in verse 22 with just a few other remarks by the writer Luke, the main thrust of all of this from verse 22 on is the very words of Jesus. So here you have Jesus describing His generation. Some manuscripts, I think even indicated in the New King James, have at the beginning of verse 31 "and the Lord said," which does appear in some manuscripts. And while that may not be the original...in the original text, it certainly does indicate exactly the reality that these are the words of Jesus. This is His own assessment. Boy, when I see that I want to know what He says. How am I to understand this generation? And this

generation means the people who were alive at that time. He was in Israel, so He's talking about the Jewish people in Israel who are exposed to His ministry.

But if I may just kind of expand your understanding of generation a little bit? It's not used in a generic sense in the gospel of Luke, or for that matter in some other places in the New Testament. This concept of "this generation," is another pejorative term. It's another condemning designation because as you follow the use of that word in the book of Luke, for example, chapter 9 verse 41, Jesus answered and said, "O unbelieving and perverted generation." And then over in chapter 11 and verse 29 Jesus says to them, "This generation is a wicked generation." And down in verse 50 He charges this generation with the blood of the prophets since the foundation of the world. And again repeats it in verse 51 and over in the sixteenth chapter again what we find at the very same almost technical use of the concept of generation referring to the unrighteous. They are the sons of this generation, verse 8 of chapter 16, sometimes translated age, the sons of this generation chapter 17, verse 25, it's the same thing, that Jesus is going to suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

So this generation then is, as I said, pejorative in the sense that it is a condemning designation. It refers to the perversity of faithless Israel. And for that matter, it can refer to any generation who is equally perverse, equally obstinate, equally faithless, not just the generation at that time but any generation who hearing the same gospel has the same response. In fact, in Philippians 2:15 it says, Paul, "We children of God live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," *genea*, people...people, or time, era. So the principle here is timeless. This is how Jesus views a perverse and faithless Israel. When it extends beyond that, we can view any faithless and perverse generation who rejects the gospel in the same manner.

So He says, "How shall I compare them? What are they like?" And He then takes us to His illustration, verse 32. "They're like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another and they say, 'We played the flute for you, you didn't dance. We sang a dirge, you didn't weep.'" That's a simple little picture, isn't it? Playing children in all the towns and all the villages and all the cities of the ancient world for that matter, the whole world throughout most of human history. Somewhere near the middle of town there is a large open area. It used to be used for public gatherings of all kinds, in particular the marketplace, the *agora*as the Greek word would identify it. The *agora*was a place where on some days of the week people came and sold their wares, other days of the week when the marketplace was shut down, it was the plaza, the meeting place and the playground for the kids.

And so Jesus pictures a day when the market isn't there, when the farmers and merchants haven't brought all of their goods into the middle of the town to sell them but rather the marketplace is empty

and it's the playground for the children...very, very familiar sight, an open space filled with children playing games. Now when children play games, historically, they imitate their parents, don't they? They imitate their parents. They see their parents do certain things and that's what they do in their mimicking childish way. Little girls like to get dressed up like their mothers do for special occasions. Little boys like to maybe play war like their daddies did or mimic their athletic endeavors, or even play business and store and whatever else it is in mimicking their parents.

Apparently at this particular story that Jesus tells they had two games that day they liked to play, one was wedding and the other was funeral. And if you understand anything about life in the world, most of the world for most of human history, weddings and funerals were the premier social events of life. They drew the biggest crowds with the most demonstrative attitudes. Nothing was a happier occasion than a wedding, and nothing was a sadder occasion than a funeral. So you have here the polarity of the extremes of human social emotion. And in ancient times a wedding was a very, very ornate and very complex operation that could take as long as a week including parades through town with everybody in their festive garb. Feasts that lasted as long as seven days, culminated finally in the friend of the bridegroom presenting the bridegroom to the bride, and the marriage then on its own being consummated when all the guests left. And that was a great highlight. In order for a father to provide a wedding for his daughter, it was a tremendous amount of cost, a tremendous amount of planning and activity and the Bible depicts some of this in other parables that Jesus told.

On the other hand, a wedding was equally a social event. We saw, didn't we...I mean, a funeral was equally a social event. We saw earlier, you remember, how Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead. Stopped the parade going through the middle of town to do that. It was a big event in the town when someone died. And that took up a huge part of the social life of the town.

So the children were used to seeing this and so that's the way they played. And, first of all, Jesus says, "There is a picture here of children in the marketplace calling to one another saying, 'We played the flute for you and you didn't dance.'" Now this could be indication of a game of wedding. This is some kind of celebration anyway, some kind of festival. And the highest kind of festival was a wedding. That's why even Jesus when He makes a parable of the Kingdom talks about the wedding feast and inviting all the people to come to the wedding feast and celebrate the wedding of His Son.

And so, here are the kids and it's time to play wedding. Somebody's got to be the bride, and somebody's got to be the groom and somebody's got to be the marrying guy and somebody's got to be the musician and somebody's got to be the entourage and everybody's got a role to play and we're going to play wedding. Somebody needs to get a little reed flute and play a little tune on it. Children can jump around and skip and hop and sing and play wedding. So some of the children call to the other children and started the music and it says, "You didn't dance...you didn't dance." When we

played the glad game you wouldn't play. You were obstinate. You were indifferent. You refused to be happy. You refused to be pleased. You wanted no part of the fun, no part of the celebration. Sulking kids...surly,. They want no part of happy things. You've seen yours like that on occasion. We tried th recalcitrant e wedding game and you wouldn't play.

So then we sang a dirge and you didn't weep. The other game that apparently kids played in the marketplace was funeral. Be interesting to see how they played it. Somebody got to be the dead guy. Some people got to be the pallbearers. Others were the mourners, like the wailing women who were hired for funeral processions mentioned in chapter 9 verse 23. And there were the musicians who played the melancholy kind of minor key things on the little flutes as they played funeral and mimic their parents weeping and wailing and parading through town with their little handcrafted bier to carry the dead. We tried to get you to join the sad game and you didn't weep. You wouldn't play, you wouldn't play the happy game so we said, "Okay, we'll do a sad game." You wouldn't play the sad game. Stubborn.

No matter how we design it, you won't play. Bad sport! Remember that one? Remember hearing kids say, "Spoiled sport! Take your ball and go home because we don't play the way you want to play." The attitude of kids who refuse to play. And it really isn't the game. I mean, there's a happy game and there's a sad game. And if you're too happy to play the sad game, then maybe you'd play the happy game. In other words, you can't...you can't blame the game because we offered you a game if you're happy and we offered you a game if you're sad. And in either case you wouldn't play. By the way, this is the only reference in the Bible to a game played by children. It's recorded also in Matthew 11.

So Jesus says these...this people in this generation are like these peevish children, unwilling to be satisfied. They're brats.

The people of this generation are spiritual brats. Now let's find out what He means by that. Let's look at the application in verse 33 and 34. It's very interesting. "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread, drinking no wine and you say, 'He has a demon.'" What does that mean? How does this connect?

Well, very simply. In precise and unmistakable language Jesus makes the application. At first He says John came playing the funeral game. John came blowing the minor key. John came with a dirge. John came with the wail. John came with the mourning song. The nature of John's ministry was judgment, fire, wrath, vengeance. John preached to make people sad. John preached to make them weep and wail over their sins. He told them about the fact that when the Messiah came He was going to shake them like chaff and then He was going to throw them into a fire to be burned. And when Messiah came He was going to take an axe and He was going to lay that axe at the very root of their tree and they were going to come down with a crash. And they were nothing but snakes

scrambling to avoid fire. This was john's tone, it was the sad song tone. It was fearful, frightening, hell-fire and damnation to be sure kind of preaching.

But more than that, Jesus says he came eating no bread and drinking no wine. Now I need to explain that to you. That really is simply a colloquialism for normal living. Eating and drinking was just a normal way to express the pattern of social life. You know, it tells us in Jesus' words later in the Olivet Discourse that in the days...it will be in the days when Jesus returns as it was in the days of Noah. People will be marrying and giving in marriage and eating and drinking. This means life, normal life. But John didn't engage in normal life. John has come eating no bread and drinking no wine. Well what that means in the general sense is that John was a total disconnect from society. It's even more extreme than that. Apparently he didn't eat bread so it's not just a metaphor for the fact that he was disconnected from social life, he...according to what the Bible tells us...ate locusts and wild honey, right? Bugs dipped in honey. And he drank no wine doesn't just mean that he didn't engage in normal social life, he took a Nazarite vow which was the severest most austere vow that Jew could take. And if you took that vow you couldn't cut your hair and your whole life you couldn't drink wine or strong drink.

So John by virtue of that made a severe disconnect from society. He couldn't eat what they ate. He couldn't drink what they drank. If his diet was bugs and honey and water, he would not be able to engage himself in the normal life of the people around him, or the people in Israel. He disdained normal common everyday provisions. He didn't eat bread, he didn't drink wine. He lived a severe austere life of self-denial in every way. He didn't look like everybody else. He didn't talk like everybody else. He didn't eat like everybody else. He didn't drink like everybody else. And he isolated himself, chapter 1 verse 8 he says, "Until the time he began his ministry." From his youth until he began his ministry, he lived alone out in the desert. He was a hermit, living his life in social isolation and utter separation. He didn't rub elbows with anybody. He certainly didn't rub elbows with the religious sinners, the hypocrites. He didn't rub elbows with the riff-raff, or with the thugs and thieves and prostitutes and the outcasts. He didn't rub elbows with anybody. He stayed in the wilderness isolated. In fact, he was a voice crying in the...in the wilderness. That was his place. And he stayed out there even until his ministry began. He lived his whole life out there. He didn't get involved with people. He didn't get involved with families. He didn't get involved in the culture. He didn't read the paper, or whatever substitute they had for it. He didn't go to the square to hear the town herald come in and give the news. He didn't go to the synagogue to hear the normal patter of conversation about what was up and what was down in society. He wasn't hip. He wasn't cool. He wasn't in the flow of his society. He was totally separated, isolated and disconnected from it all. In fact, at the very time Jesus is saying this, he is really isolated because he is in that prison that I told you about and it isn't long before he's going to have his head chopped off.

But here comes John and his is the sad game, his is the sad ministry featuring a somber, severe message of judgment. In fact, if you read everything that's recorded in the New Testament that John said, you're not going to find much that is light hearted, in fact you're not going to find anything. And you're not going to find a lot of mercy and grace, it's fiery judgment. Obviously he had to preach the forgiveness of God and the cleansing that God provided through that forgiveness depicted in the baptism, but the emphasis was on the judgment...wrath, vengeance, repent or burn would be John. Fearful judgment. This austere disconnected preacher was saying Messiah's coming and you can be a part of Messiah's Kingdom if you repent. God will forgive you, He'll wash you, and you can be in His Kingdom. The emphasis was judgment, sadness, weeping, mourning over sin.

And so, the description of John there at the beginning of verse 33 is come eating no bread and drinking no wine is a kind of shorthand for his austere self-denying separation and his message of judgment. He lived in absolute separation.

And what was the verdict? What did these brats say? Verse 33, "You say...present tense, some of you standing right here in that day in that place and many others...you say he has a demon." Well once the people said that he was the true prophet of God, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prophesied by Isaiah and by Malachi. Now the conclusion of the religious leaders is he has a demon.

Why did they say that? Because bizarre behavior, madness was associated with demons. And it should be. And what they saw in John was so anti-social, so bizarre, so different, so unique that they determined that it was a dementia that he had, that it was some kind of madness that could be rightly explained by the fact that he was possessed by demons. That's their analysis. His radical, his unique asceticism, his fanatical isolation, his extreme vow, his single-minded message, his emphasis was certainly the kind of demented conduct that demons produced. So Jesus says that was your conclusion, you say you're not going to play that game, we don't want to play with that man, he's demonic.

And so they blasphemed the Holy Spirit in John, just like they would do in Jesus a little later when they attributed the works of Jesus to Satan himself and Jesus says you've blasphemed the Holy Spirit. O they blasphemed the Holy Spirit in John who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. They also accused Jesus of this same madness and demon possession, John 7:20; John 8:48; John 10:20; Luke 11:19; Matthew 12:27; Mark 3:22. They said that Jesus also was demonic. But on this occasion it was John that received that blasphemous analysis.

Why? Why did they say it? Very simple, they hated his message...they hated his message. Please, folks, understand this...they hated his message. Their hearts were hard, impenetrable. They rejected

the divine diagnosis of their true condition. The Pharisees and the scribes would not accept the fact that they were snakes, that they were chaff, that they were sinful, that they needed to repent. They hated to be called sinners and they hated the fact that there was forgiveness for those who were wretched. They hated the message of sin and grace. They hated it. It was the message they hated, but they attacked the man and they attacked his style to justify their rejection of his message. They said he's a maniac. He's a madman. He's demented. He's demonic. They made his style the issue because they hated his substance. That's why I subtitled this message "Style or Substance." When people don't want to receive the truth, very often in order to justify their rejection of the truth they will attack the style of the preacher. So many preachers fall for that and they think that if they're going to be able to be received by people, they've got to change the style. They've got to be slick, suave and glib and acculturated somehow. And they've got to be up-to-date with the vernacular of thinking in their society.

Well here was a man who was utterly disconnected from the normal social discourse and he preached the absolute truth. And because they hated the truth in him, they attacked the style. It's a common foil, it really is. It happens all the time. For people who hate the truth, they will mock the style of its preacher. So they call the greatest man who ever lived up until his time, according to the words of Jesus back in verse 28, they called him demonic. Amazing...amazing. And they said it was the style that proved that.

So easy to attack the style. There are people who are happy to attack those who preach judgment, preach hell, preach a true and pure gospel message. And they say, "I'm offended by that." So many preachers buy that and say, "Boy, we've got to get the offense out, you know, we've got to be slick with this thing. We've got to ease these people in." And that is really a terrible compromise. It's really never the style. I don't care what the style is, if the truth is preached it has the power to save, right? It is the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation, not the style. Just get the gospel right. And there's a time and an place, believe me, for the hell-fire-damnation preaching of judgment and warning sinners of the wrath to come. But when they reject the message, believe me, they'll attack the style, but it's not the style, it's their hatred of the message.

And this becomes clear in the next verse, "The Son of Man has come..." Jesus referring to Himself by a title of the Messiah drawn out of Daniel 7:13 which was His most common way of referring to Himself. We've looked at it a couple of times already. Referring to Himself He says, " The Son of Man," emphasizing His true humanness, "has come eating and drinking." Just the opposite of John. Look, I came and I got into the flow of life. I was there at the births and I was there at the weddings and I'm in there at all the celebrations of life. I..I've been in your towns and your villages and I've been in your cities and I've been in your houses and I've eaten with you and I've fellowshipped with you and I've been in the synagogue with you, sat and dialogued with you over a meal and heard your conversations and understood what's going on in your little world and the big world around us.

Just the opposite of John. John was absolutely isolated from everything. Jesus was in the middle of all of it. In fact, Jesus had to supernaturally escape the crowds at night just to get some privacy, to have some prayer life because He was constantly surrounded with a mass of people. He knew what the buzz was from top to bottom, front to back. He knew what was going on in the public discourse. He knew everything about everything. John never associated with anybody. Jesus associated with everybody. He was surrounded by the Pharisees, surrounded by the scribes, surrounded by the Sadducees. Surrounded by the riff-raff, prostitutes, tax collectors and everybody else in between. He lived in the mainstream of social life. And Jesus' ministry was more like a wedding. In fact, He even refers to it as that. While John was banging one note, the note of judgment, Jesus preached judgment, warned people of judgment but the primary emphasis of His ministry was the Kingdom, wasn't it? In fact, in 9:15 of Matthew Jesus said, "The attendants of the bridegroom can't mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they?" I'm the Bridegroom. Why should the...remember the Pharisees said, "Why aren't Your disciples...why are they so happy? Why are You partying all the time? Why are you having such a good time? Why are You celebrating?" And back in Luke 5 it's the same thing. You can't make the attendants of the Bridegroom fast while the Bridegroom is with them, can you? The days will come when the Bridegroom is taken away then they can fast." Right now the Bridegroom is here and I'm bringing the Kingdom and it's a time of joy. The long wait of Messiah has arrived. And so the note of Jesus was the note of the Bridegroom, the wedding.

So Jesus, Son of Man, came, got in the middle of the flow of life and told them that there was a great celebration, invited them to the wedding. He was around everybody. In particular, He spent a lot of His time with the outcasts because they were the ones who knew their desperate condition and desired salvation. We saw that back, didn't we, in chapter 5 where Jesus was invited to a dinner that Matthew put on, Matthew who was a tax collector, the lowest of the low in society. And he got all the tax collectors and prostitutes and thieves and thugs and petty criminals and every other miscreant that was in the society and pulled them all together and they had a dinner and the Pharisees and scribes in verse 30 of Matthew...of Luke 5 said, "Why do You eat and drink with tax gatherers and sinners? And Jesus said, 'Because it's not those who are well...sarcasm, like you think you are...who need a physician, but those who are sick and I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

John associated with nobody. Jesus associated with everybody. Because John associated with nobody they said he's demonic. Because Jesus associated with the sinners, look what they said about Him. "Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax gatherers and sinners." My, what blasphemy. You see you couldn't win. If you wanted to play the funeral game, they wouldn't play. If you wanted to play the wedding game they wouldn't play. They're just obstinate, hard-hearted brats, spiritually speaking.

John never interacted with people at all. Jesus interacted with people all the time. John kept himself separate from everything. His Nazarite vow made it be that way, separate from everything. Jesus really was available to everybody. The sinners chose to hang around Him who wanted the message of grace and forgiveness. They said about Jesus, "He's a glutton," *anthropos phagos*, a glutton of a person, a term indicating contempt. They said He's a drunkard and they said He's the friend of the scum of society, tax gatherers, sinners. And they blasphemed Him with those epithets. Sinners, by the way, is a general term for all the reprobates, public outcasts, including the prostitutes and all the petty criminals and all the rest. But they were open to the gospel.

So how does Jesus characterize this generation? Well, here came John, sober, severe, stark, preaching judgment, repentance, weeping in view of God's wrath, separate from sinners in his style. He was the kind of funeral ministry and you call him demonic. Here came Jesus, tender, merciful, gracious, compassionate, mingling with everybody. Touching the lives of sinners with tenderness and forgiveness, talking about salvation, talking about joy, talking about blessing, talking about the Kingdom, preaching the positive side of the gospel message, and you called Him a reprobate. John called for a fast and you rejected him. Jesus called for a feast, and you rejected Him. John said the Kingdom was a fire and you rejected him. Jesus said the Kingdom is a festival and you rejected Him. John preached judgment and you rejected him. Jesus preached joy and you rejected Him.

And again I say to you, folks, in the end it's not the style. They rejected John, the bizarre kind of separated ministry and they rejected Jesus with a very normal day-to-day ministry in the lives of people. They hated them both. They rejected them both. Style had nothing to do with it, they hated the truth, never the style, it's always the substance. Like spoiled children who didn't want to play, these spiritual brats found a way to justify their rejection. The form of ministry is never the issue, it's the truth. I'll tell you, the pure true gospel in the mouth of the most bizarre person or the most beautiful person is still equally powerful. But there always are those brats who won't weep with John and they won't laugh with Jesus, they hate the message. Jesus said, "That's what this generation is like. You can't win. John's style doesn't get them. Mine, they will not play, they will not sing with us."

Then there's a conclusion in verse 35. Yet lest we fall into too much despair here over this, "Yet in spite of all this, wisdom is vindicated by all her children." The parallel passage in Matthew says, "Wisdom is vindicated by all her actions." "Yet on the other hand, remember this, spiritual wisdom," *he sophia*, referring to the gospel, the wisdom of salvation, the wisdom of revelation that leads to salvation, as noted in 2 Timothy 2:14. Salvation wisdom is vindicated by what it can produce. That's the idea. In spite of the rejection of the scribes and the Pharisees, in spite of the massive growing rejection of the people so that when you finally have Jesus crucified and after the crucifixion Jesus appears, there are only 500 disciples at one place. In the upper room at Pentecost there are only

120, so it's a small group. But there are some. Wisdom is vindicated by all her children. And this simply means that the gospel does produce results. There were some who believed. Some back in verse 23 who didn't stumble over Jesus. Some who in verse 28 are the least in the Kingdom of God and even greater than John the Baptist.

Wisdom's children are the believers whose lives, whose actions demonstrate the power of salvation wisdom. So I guess you could say there are two kinds of children here...brats and wisdom's children. It's fair to ask the question...which are you? Which are you? Brats are fools void of the true wisdom known by their hatred for the truth and criticism of the style of ministry. On the other hand, the children of wisdom are saved and are known by their deeds of righteousness. It was so then, it is still so.

Father, we come at the end of this message to the realization that the categories are clear and definitive. And they draw us to a very clear heart examination. O God, how we pray that You would reveal to us whether we're among the brats who hating the gospel condemn the messengers or whether we're among the children of salvation wisdom who are known by our actions. O Lord, may You...may You bring many to wisdom and may wisdom, the wisdom of salvation bear many children to Your glory. Amen.

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