



Series:	Reference:	Title:	Date:
Animate	Matthew 25:34-36 & 40	Clever Disguises	11.05 .17
<p>Website Writeup: We all have an internal mental image of God. But what we say we believe isn't really what drives us, this internal image does formed maybe partly from Scripture but largely our life experiences. In past weeks we've seen, our image of God dictates our response to Him & defines our own self-image. This week we answer the question, how does all this relate us with others? This sermon is entitled, <i>Clever Disguises</i>, because the Lord wears clever disguises in life.</p>			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

-SLIDE PERSON: PLEASE RECORD THE SERMON-

(Thanks to Greg Boyd & Woodland Hills Church, we've used many of his words, ideas, and the Animate booklet from their series by the same name - in all the Animate series there are just too many of Greg's words to footnote - thank you Greg! Imitation is flattery brother!)

We're talking about life animated by & with Jesus. Not just head knowledge, but experiencing truth concretely. Diane Langberg tweeted a great quote in this vein recently where she said, "The Word written, and the Word made Flesh are to be one. Do not ever divorce the two." We've discussed the use of our imagination in the area of Truth from 2 Cor. 3 ¹⁸ *"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory (to behold or reflect on an image in our mind), are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

To do this we find an Inner Sanctum where we meet with Jesus & are changed. We all have a mental image of God, and what we say we believe isn't really what drives us, our internal image of God does. In past weeks we've seen, our image of God dictates our response to Him & defines our self-image. A healthy image of God informed by the Scriptures, and enfleshed in our encounters with Jesus makes for a healthy view of self. This week we answer the question, how does all this relate us with others? This sermon is entitled, *Clever Disguises*, because the Lord wears clever disguises in life.

Let's look at Matthew 25:34-40. ³⁴ *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

³⁷ *"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*



Then let's take a look at Revelation 12:10 - these two passages don't seem to have much to do with each other, but we'll find they do. *¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.*

If we could see everything with Kingdom eyes, living Mt 25, how would life change? To view God for who he truly is, ourselves in light of that relationship, and others through the eyes of Jesus. How would we engage differently & where would we find Jesus today?

But there's one who stands in the way of our healthy interactions, and that is Satan, the Accuser. His chosen role to accuse, create guilt, separate & destroy. The Accuser creates all our problems. From the beginning, in the Garden of Eden he made the accusation to Eve, God was holding out on them, not giving them the whole truth & was threatened by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil. As soon as Eve believes this accusation about God, she believes one about herself - because our personal image of self is intimately tied to our image of God. The natural progression of things.

Satan's the cosmic legalist, "You didn't do this right, you're not good enough, that's not exactly true, is it?" Injecting doubt & suspicion into our thinking. Every lie about God involves a lie about us, and these lies finger out into relationships. Every issue, directly or indirectly, linked to the accusations of the Accuser. We judge God, ourselves & others; and every judgment blocks love from God to us, us to ourselves, and us to others. Which is the center of the kingdom, to love God & love others as yourself. That's why the tree they ate of was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil, because when we eat of it we think we're omniscient, that we can define what things or people are good & which are evil. Although we don't have that capability.

So we trust our own ideas about who God is, who we are & who others are, more than we trust how God defines all of these persons & relationships. All in bondage to the Accuser. One of the clearest signs of this is, when you begin to see God for who He is, you begin to feel guilty instead of loved. Intellectually you see His grace, but deep down you think 'When's the other shoe gonna drop?' Or, "Sure, it's nice now, but where's the harsh side of God?" Then you think the same about yourself, 'How could God truly accept & love a person like me?' Then the same about others, 'At least I'm not as bad as them!' When you hear that 'yeah right' you're directly confronting the Accuser in your heart & mind. And to the degree you give in to the accusations, it'll be impossible to experience the abundant life Jesus promised of loving God, self & others. Because to the degree we believe a lie about God, we believe it about ourselves, and also about others. Our ability to contemplate Jesus in Truth defines everything.

We don't dare believe what God says about himself, ourselves, or others because we're brain damaged. We can't be trusted to judge anyone, even our own hearts! We need a source of tangible credibility which is trustworthy because my 'damaged brain' can't make these calls - the only one who can is the one true & trustworthy God.



Listen to some of the things which are true about us...

I'm accepted

I am god's Child (John 1:12)

I am Christ's friend (John 15:5)

I have been justified (romans 5:1)

I am united with the lord & one with him in spirit (I Corinthians 6:17)

I have been bought with a price: I belong to god (I Corinthians 6:20)

I am a member of Christ's body (I Corinthians 12:27)

I am a saint (ephesians 1:1)

I have been adopted as god's child (ephesians 1:5)

I have direct access to god through the holy Spirit (ephesians 2:18)

I have been redeemed & forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1:14)

I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

I'm secure

I am free forever from condemnation (romans 8:1-2)

I am assured that all things work together for good (romans 8:28)

I am free from any condemning charges against me (romans 8:33-34)

I cannot be separated from the love of god (romans 8:35, 38-39)

I have been established, anointed, and sealed by god (II Corinthians 1:21-22)

I am confident the good work god has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 3:1:6)

I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)

I am hidden in Christ in god (Colossians 3:3)

I've not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind (2 timothy 1:7)

I can find grace & mercy to help me in time of need (hebrews 4:16)

I am born of god, and the evil one cannot touch me (I John 5:18)

I'm significant

I am the salt of the earth (matthew 5:13-14)

I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of his life (John 15:1, 5)

I have been chosen & appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I am a personal witness of Christ (acts 1:8)

I am god's temple (I Corinthians 3:16)

I am a minister of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

I am god's coworker (2 Corinthians 6:1)

I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (ephesians 2:6)

I am god's workmanship (ephesians 2:10)

I can approach god with freedom & confidence (ephesians 3:12)

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13)

Can we believe these things? The Accuser leads us to think it's wrong for me to believe them. It's why it's so vital to spend time with Jesus; to experience him in our minds eye. Not to just reflect on abstract truth, but meet with Him, beholding his glory.

Maybe we need to run videos in our minds about what we look like when we look most like Jesus. To do so will help to manifest the truth about who we are in Christ. If you



can't imagine that in your mind's eye, if you can't first meet with Jesus there in your prayerful imagination, it won't happen in life. Nothing happens in life outwardly before it happens inwardly in the imagination. Nothing happens without practice. And in the process of contemplating & putting flesh to Truth we confront the Accuser, and his lies are defeated.

The same is true with how we regard others. We need also to take our thoughts of others captive to Christ. Trouble is, we have the Accuser between our ears. If we've believed lies about God, we'll not get all the fullness God wants for us, which then won't overflow to others. Only in Jesus can I find life. If I'm not getting it from Him, then I'll try to get it from you - which doesn't work. We can't help it - we have to get life somewhere, it's built into us! If it's not from God, others are the natural go to, and the second we do we're eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil all over again. Choosing ourselves where to find life; what we think is life-giving & good for us. We evaluate everything in front of us as food which will feed us life or not. We call good that which we think will give us life, and evil that which we think won't. The problem is we're terrible judges.

Notice the chatter in your brain as you drive down the street, or sit at work, and you'll notice all the thoughts going through your brain about others. And every one of those thoughts which doesn't emanate from Christ-like-love, blocks Christ-like-love. Which is why we must take our thoughts captive to Jesus.

For example, for some of you it feels absolutely wrong to love a group of people, or a certain person unconditionally. Your heart says, "I'm not supposed to love them like this. I'm supposed to confront them." Part of idolatrous religion is to separate people in the black & white categories of 'in & out', and look down on those who are 'out'. It's how we gain a temporary false sense of life, judgment feels good for a moment. If we grew up in a legalistic church environment it's trained us to contrast ourselves to other groups or people, and we feel righteous because we're not like them. We even feel righteous for hating certain people. If we're honest, Christians have sometimes taken that to the extreme, our 'right beliefs' became justification for murder in the right circumstances. That's evidence of the Accuser's activity. Who we decide to love is arbitrary - it may depend on their political ideology, where they were born, the color of their skin, if they dress the same way as me, so on & so forth - arbitrary, not based on the Word of God.

Let's say a new neighbor moves in, a gay couple, and invite you to a party. What's the first concern for the Christian? If I go, isn't that condoning a sinful lifestyle? But why would that be our pet issue? Do we feel the same about our gossipy, greedy, gluttonous & self-righteousness neighbors? What is it about this particular issue that would make us not go & welcome new neighbors? But we'll go to our angry misogynistic neighbors party who drinks too much & subtly treats his wife like crap. In some illogical way that's okay because he's 'a guy who just needs Jesus'.

What if a Pakistani Muslim couple moved in next door after the events in NYC this past week. And the man was in full white robe, long beard, and a skull cap with his wife covered head to toe. Would you take them cookies & say, "Welcome to the

neighborhood?” Or would you gather with your neighbors to fertilize rumors? I don’t know if Jesus can bake, but he’d take them cookies.

The answer is, there’s no objective reason why we wouldn’t go to either neighbors party or visit a new Muslim couple. But we’ve been socially conditioned by a religious group of people to particularly look down on certain groups of people more than others. We’ve been trained by a religious group of people who’ve been under the influence of the Accuser who has conditioned them to think in a certain way about one thing, and not others. That’s pharisaism - the Pharisees, the religious ruling class, looked at Jesus who went to the parties with all the sinners, tax collectors & prostitutes & said, “Look at him, just by being there he’s condoning their sin!” But we know Jesus doesn’t condone sin, he was extravagant in love, while remaining unwavering in holiness.

We need to love like Jesus, to rebuke Pharisaical thought - to confront the Accuser who makes us feel guilty for loving others. Ephesians 5:2 says, *...live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* You can’t love too much. Paul says 1 Corinthians 16:14 ¹⁴ *Let all that you do be done in love.* Love others as you have been loved.

Matthew 5:44-47 says, Love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

The sun doesn’t decide who it’ll shine on. Rain doesn’t decide who it will fall on. We’re to love indiscriminately, never giving a seconds thought to whether we should love someone, or not. Are they worthy, or not, isn’t the question. They are worthy. God’s ascribed worth to them despite behavior. No one deserves God’s love & grace but we’re all worthy of it.

Let go of all evaluation & judgement. Love indiscriminately. But the Enemy comes along & says, “If you love like that, you’re condoning sin.” So we feel guilty about loving too much - but loving someone doesn’t mean you condone everything they do - I don’t condone everything my wife does, but I love her indiscriminately. I don’t condone everything I do for that matter! To love doesn’t mean you condone sin, or that everyone gets to do whatever they want. And that becomes really clear in abusive situations. Because not only do you ascribe worth to others, but also to yourself, sometimes loving an abusive person means to create distance & set boundaries. MLK was brilliant at this. He knew freeing whites from their sin of oppression was an act of love towards them - he brought godly dignity to both sides through pacifistic quiet protest. For him, the sin was always the issue, not the people controlled by it.

To live in love means we agree with God. Every person has worth & value because God said so; not because they do exactly what we want. It means we take the fruit of the Tree



of the Knowledge of Good & Evil, and put it aside - the very tool the Accuser uses to make us think we know it all, or have the right to judge - it's not our place. The Accuser says you fix the world by withholding love from certain people, and if you love certain people you're breaking the world - that you're feeding their credibility, giving them a voice, etc. In the extreme, the feeling develops to this... if we despise, hate, defeat & even kill certain kinds of people, the world will be a better place. We have to let go of this propensity to think we can fix the world by superior intellect, wisdom, or judgment of others. Let's allow God to be God.

Romans 12 says to love your enemy. Feed them when they're hungry. Give them something to drink, if they're thirsty. Leave all vengeance, retaliation & judgment to God. We're only called to love others. It means we live in service towards others. Do we dare to have love like 1 Cor 13, to believe & hope for the best for others? To regard everyone as Jesus did on the cross when he said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" Is that our attitude? Wouldn't it be freeing to let go of the burden of being God & judging everyone?

When you extend grace to others you'll begin to experience the grace God has for you. Paul said 'I'm the worst of sinners' - that's freeing, not self-deprecating. It says, 'I'm no better than anyone else!' And when you know that, then you can receive grace & practice Matthew 25 & find freedom. Remember, religion always sides with the accusers against the accused. Jesus always sides with the accused against the accusers - which side do you want to be on? He says, 'I'm particularly on the side of these crushed, hurting sinners, whose need is so evident. What you do to them, you do to me!'

And when you know this, the world becomes a stage of clever disguises - you see Jesus everywhere. Jesus said, if you love only those close to you, there's no reward. But if you love your enemies because you're like your Father in heaven who showers his grace on all, you begin to silence the Accuser!

The sound of judgement is a sucking sound - trying desperately to suck life out of others instead of Jesus. We need to commit ourselves to loving others. Sometimes we over-think it. CS Lewis once said, "Don't waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you're behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him." Feelings follow decisions.

Three things to remember today: Firstly, if you're running on empty you won't be able to help but sucking off others; judging them. Jesus is the only one who can satisfy & in him love overflows in us. Secondly, we commit to loving others as Christ loved us, no matter how it feels, without listening to the Accuser. Thirdly, ask God to change your representation of those you have trouble loving - to change your outlook on people. It's easy to love the victim & hate the abuser. But the Gospel says all are worthy of God's love. Is it possible Jesus can give us an image of the Abusers in life too, what formed their deviance, and imagine Christ could heal them as well?



Who are your enemies? Political enemies? National enemies? Social or cultural enemies? Personal enemies, past or present? Let's go to prayer about these people now. Think about your enemy; a person, or group of people. Allow your feelings to sweep over you. Don't pretend you don't have hurtful or angry feelings. Now ask God to give you an image of their pain, what formed them, what brought them to this point? Ask God to give you the capacity to see them as he sees them, the capacity to say, "I forgive them..."



Community Group Questions

Ice Breaker:

- Do you know two people, or groups of people who seem to be at odds with one another just due to a false view of each other? Explain. (as if you could listen to both sides & hear they are both misreading each other)
- Or, have you ever been mad at someone only to realize later you can't even remember why you're mad at them?

Discussion:

1. In past sermons we've explored the right (orthodox) image of ourselves as it relates to a right (orthodox) image of God. This week we explore how this all relates us to others.
2. Look at the list of verses/statements in the 3 categories at the end of p2 & continuing on p3.
 1. Which category do you struggle with the most?
 2. Which statement(s)/verse(s) are most difficult to accept about yourself?
 3. Which are particularly comforting & easy to accept?
 4. Why is this so in either case? And how is our not being confident of these things played out in our relationships with others?
 5. How does an insecure person, not finding their self-worth in Jesus, tend to destroy relationships by trying desperately to get 'life' from others?
3. Thinking back to the sermon which was titled, *Clever Disguises*, as if Jesus is reflected in the people around us who are in need or are suffering.
 1. Read again together Matthew 25:34-40.
 1. Have you ever been presented opportunity where you've practiced this?
 2. Can you recall 'missed opportunities' in loving others well?
4. Can you describe individuals or groups of individuals which stand in judgement of another & seem to stay at loggerheads with one another?
 1. What are the reasons? (Think of pride, fear, anger, control, etc)
5. What does our judgement of others do to our ability to move forward in relationship?
 1. Why do you think Paul said in Romans 2:1, *'You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.'*?
 2. Does this humble you?
 3. Can you recall a time when you've been judgmental only to realize you 'do the same'?
 4. How does knowing this about yourself bring about a deeper ability to love another?
 5. What does it look like to love your enemy indiscriminately without 'condoning' sin?
 1. How did MLK model this?
6. Discuss this paragraph reading it aloud slowly: *To live in love means we agree with God. Every person has worth & value because God said so; not because they do exactly what we want. It means we take the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil, and put it aside - the very tool the Accuser uses to make us think we know it all, or have the right to judge - it's not our place. The Accuser says you fix the world by withholding love from certain people, and if you love certain people you're breaking the world - that you're feeding their credibility, giving them a voice, etc. In the extreme, the feeling develops to this... if we despise, hate, defeat & even kill certain kinds of people, the world will be a better place. We have to let go of this propensity to think we can fix the world by superior intellect, wisdom, or judgment of others. Let's allow God to be God.*
7. Jesus said, *"Forgive them, they know not what they are doing"* while hanging on the cross (Lk 23:34). If He could love those who killed him that strongly, what does that say about our negative feelings towards difficult neighbors, Muslims, political rivals, and those we simply disagree with, to name a few?
8. Take some time to prayerfully imagine what kingdom life on earth could look like if Christians everywhere could glorify Christ by taking on his attitude towards others.