

Jesus the Troublemaker

"Thus the people were divided because of Jesus."

John 7:43 (NIV)

For those of us who were raised as children in an evangelical Sunday School, the portraits of Jesus were consistently those of a gentle and kindly preacher. One of the songs taught me in my tender years went something like:

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
look upon your little child;
Pity my simplicity, suffer me
to come to Thee.

Certainly Jesus taught that He was meek (Matthew 11:29), however there were times when He was anything but mild. You will never find any situation recorded in the Bible where Jesus was severe or aggressive with the humble seeker after righteousness. Our Lord handled people's concerns with the utmost kindness and love.

But, when people made it difficult for seekers to come to His Father in heaven, Jesus could be highly aggressive in His opposition to such stumbling blocks. Matthew 23 records words of Jesus spoken with anger. There He denounced those who put religious road blocks in the way of people who wished to relate to their Creator. The dreadful formula, "Woe unto you teachers of the

law and Pharisees, you hypocrites..." is repeated over and over by the gentle Jesus, Who was meek but not mild.

The incidents of Jesus cleansing the temple (John 2:13-22; Mark 11:15-18) show Him being physically aggressive as He overturns the tables of the money changers and drives out the sacrificial animals. Jesus' great concern was that the enterprising business men had turned God's house of prayer into a den of thieves. So, again, Jesus divided the people's opinion concerning Himself.

At times in His ministry Jesus spoke protectively of those who were weak in the faith and threatened anyone who offended people with a weak or child like faith. In Matthew 18:6 Jesus said that a violent death would be preferable to offending a little child who believed in Him. Yes, Jesus spoke with passion about how we should care for the children who have no way to protect their humble faith from assaults by spiritually proud people.

People today are also divided because of Jesus. Some, in pride, believe that only if you join their elite group will you really have the presence of Jesus with you. The Bible tells

us that those who truly are on Jesus' side are those who are humble and not boastful and proud (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

If you find yourself excluded by, or offended by professing Christians today, you are precisely the type of person Jesus desires to have in His company. Our Lord's proud disciples sought to exclude the children from Jesus' busy schedule one day. The Master rebuked them saying that the ones young in the faith were especially welcome by Him.

Jesus was indeed a troublemaker as we see in the Gospels. He did not wish anyone to be excluded from His gracious presence and blessing. Jesus made trouble for anyone who offended someone seeking His presence and blessing.

So, whoever you are, wherever you are in life, all Jesus asks of you is a humble spirit and you are welcome. You may even be rejected by some of Jesus' people, but you are sure of a welcome from Him. Come to Him and come now. He is waiting to bless you and heal your wounds.

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