Judging Beauty?

A man sat at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, it was calculated that thousands of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

Three minutes went by and a middle aged man noticed there was musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule.

A minute later, the violinist received his first dollar tip: a woman threw the money in the till and without stopping continued to walk.

A few minutes later, someone leaned against the wall to listen to him, but the man looked at his watch and started to walk again. Clearly he was late for work.

The one who paid the most attention was a 3 year old boy. His mother tagged him along, hurried but the kid stopped to look at the violinist. Finally the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk turning his head all the time. This action was repeated by several other children. All the parents, without exception, forced them to move on.

In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace. He collected $32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

Evidence

Luke 4:16-29

Systematized

The message of healing, liberty, and restored sight was unwelcome to those at Nazareth who couldn't get over the form of the Messenger. They had become systematized in the institution of Judaism. Their unexamined perception of themselves and their nation as the favored of God was more important to them than the plain truth. Their thinking on this was so conditioned that they could not endure any differing opinion to cross that perception.

Differing Opinion

Jesus' differing opinion was that they were uninterested, unwilling, and/or unready to receive the true favor of God. He, in fact, identified them with the idolatrous widows in the time of Elijah and the faithless lepers in the time of Elisha.

A Native Son

v16: "synagogue...as His custom was": From His childhood, Jesus had worshiped in this synagogue. This was His home church. All the people there knew Him, they had seen Him weekly. They had witnessed His character, His faithfulness in seeking God

Jesus was a native son of Nazareth. He was their boy, one of their own; raised and grown in their very midst and known by all. But He had become a threat to their system, their religion, ideologies and theologies. He would not minister to the advancement of their system. He was telling them that the system was broken and needed to be swept away; that their way of thinking and living had failed to gain for them the healing, liberty and wisdom that they needed. But they chose their system over truth. They would not allow their system to be challenged. And it didn't matter who Jesus was. Native son or not, they would defend their perception to the point of murder.

v21-22: What made the change? Why the sudden shift in their thoughts from listening to the glorious promises of the Messiah's coming, to belittling Jesus? It was the words declaring the present fulfillment of those Scriptures. They understood clearly. Jesus meant all those Scriptures. The Messiah had come

to Nazareth to preach good news to them (they must have been poor); to heal those sitting right there who were brokenhearted; to deliver captives sitting right there in the synagogue. They were unprepared to be so dismally represented.

> "They, Israelites, children of Abraham, had been represented as in bondage. They had been addressed as prisoners to be delivered from the power of evil; as in darkness, and needing the light of truth. Their pride was offended, and their fears were roused. The words of Jesus indicated that His work for them was to be altogether different from what they desired. Their deeds might be investigated too closely. Notwithstanding their exactness in outward ceremonies, they shrank from inspection by those clear, searching eyes." - Desire of Ages, 237.3

Notice The Peoples' Reaction

PRIDE OFFENDED:

- they were represented as far less free, wise and holy than they had been believing

FEARS AROUSED:

- that they really were wrong in their Messianic beliefs
- that the Messiah might not bring an earthly kingdom of national and individual greatness and material prosperity
- the investigation of their own hearts/motives
- that they will be held personally accountable for their own deeds

> "Those sects which offer you a system for the solution of suffering, economic, social or religious, are the worst; because then system becomes important and not man-whether it be a religious system, or a system of the [political] left or of the right. System becomes important, the philosophy, the idea, becomes important, and not man; and for the sake of the idea, of the ideology, you are willing to sacrifice all mankind, which is exactly what is happening in the world...Therefore, as the system has become important, men, you and I, lose significance; and the controllers of the system, whether religious or social, whether of the left or of the right, assume authority, assume power, and therefore sacrifice you, the individual. That is exactly what is happening."[1]

1 Philosopher J. Krishnamurti, *The First and Last Freedom*, 23

The World of Systematic Thinkers

Can be convicted of the truth
But under their determination to defend their system of religion and politics, will never admit the truth

On one hand – the Armageddon Plot

Claims of offering “salvation” - spiritual or political
Supposed identity as the “people of God”
Identifying “terrorists” against their religio-political system beyond investigation of their own heart - motives
And all manner of persuasion, coercion, mind-control and force
To the point that: if you do not agree with and support the system:

- verbally denounced
- ignored and marginalized
- slandered
- forcibly restrained
- murdered

Anyone who engages in this behavior is using the tools of the Devil to accomplish earthly goals.

On the other

You have the real truth
Integrity of your heart toward that truth; no stuffing of conviction
No stains of innocent blood on your hands from defending your system
Freedom of conscience

Conclusion

So what about violinists in the Washington subway?

Washington Post writer Gene Weingarten enlisted renowned violinist Joshua Bell in 2007, a winner of the Avery Fisher Prize for outstanding achievement in classical music who regularly undertakes over 200 international engagements a year, to spend part of a morning playing incognito at the entrance to a Washington Metro station during a morning rush hour. Weingarten set up the event "as an experiment in context, perception and priorities — as well as an unblinking assessment of public taste: In a banal setting at an inconvenient time, would beauty transcend?"

So, on 12 January 2007, morning commuters passing

through the L'Enfant Plaza Station of the subway line in Washington, D.C. were, without publicity, treated to a free mini-concert performed by violin virtuoso Joshua Bell, who played for approximately 45 minutes, performing six classical pieces during that span on his handcrafted 1713 Stradivarius violin (for which Bell reportedly paid $3.5 million). As Weingarten described the crux of the experiment:

> *Each passerby had a quick choice to make, one familiar to commuters in any urban area where the occasional street performer is part of the cityscape: Do you stop and listen? Do you hurry past with a blend of guilt and irritation, aware of your cupidity but annoyed by the unbidden demand on your time and your wallet? Do you throw in a buck, just to be polite? Does your decision change if he's really bad? What if he's really good? Do you have time for beauty? Shouldn't you? What's the moral mathematics of the moment?*

Three days earlier, Bell had played to a full house at Boston's Symphony Hall, where fairly good seats went for $100. But on this day he collected just $32.17 for his efforts, contributed by a mere 27 of 1,097 passing travelers. Only seven people stopped to listen, and just one of them recognized the performer.

Forsake the systems

As individuals

As a fellowship

PRAYER

- Ask Jesus to reveal the Armageddon Plot in our own lives
  - reveal the systemic thinking
  - reveal your motives for everything
- Repent of every example He brings to mind
  - wash yourself in the cleansing blood of Christ
- Welcome the absolutely pure life of Christ into your heart
  - with all His good news for your soul
  - with all His healing of brokenheartedness
  - all His freeing from captivity and bondage
- Pray the same for your friends and Fellowship