

YOU JUST CAN'T PLEASE SOME PEOPLE

Matthew 11:16-19

By Raymond White

Matthew 11:16 *But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets [Gr: agora, better translated “park” or “playground”] and calling unto their fellows. :17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented.*

What's this text about? What does piping and mourning have to do with anything?

In every age, children play. Back then, it was common for children to play wedding or funeral, the happy game or the sad game. When they played the happy game they pretended to play pipes and have a party. When they played the sad game, they pretended to mourn.

And then, as now, there were sometimes spoil sport children who did not want to play any game at all. They just sat on the sidelines and ridiculed the other children.

The playing children tried to entice the spoil sports, “Come on,” they'd say. “And play wedding with us. It's fun.”

“Naw,” the spoil sports would insist. “That's a dumb game.”

So the playing children would change their game. “How about a funeral game then. That's fun too. Now will you play?”

But the spoil sport children persisted, “Naw, that's even dumber than the other game.”

And so the spoil sport children never played any game, they just left in a huff.

John the Baptist brought a sad message, a mourning message. He was an ascetic who wore camel's hair. He spent his time in the deserts and the people had to come to him in dreary places. He wouldn't go to parties, he had no social life, and his message was repent or be cast into fire. His was a sad, frightening message and many Jews didn't like him much.

Here's what they said about John —

Matthew 11:18 *He hath a devil.*

John was crazy, they said. Only a crazy man would live like John.

Then Jesus came, and he was different. He went to the people instead of making them come to him. He went to their parties and their weddings and their feasts. Unlike John, Jesus was at the center of Jewish social life. His message was grace, the happy message. He healed people and he forgave people. And how did people feel about that? Here's what they said about Jesus —

Matthew 11:19 *Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.*

How very odd. The very things they claimed to not like about John, were not true of Jesus. But they didn't like him any better. They just had to make up a new list of things not to like. They didn't like John because he wouldn't mingle. They didn't like Jesus because he did mingle. You just can't please some people no matter what you do.

Do you want a God of judgment or a God of grace? Fact is he is both. Some people though don't want either. Like spoiled children they just want to take their ball and go home.