

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE AX?

(Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29)

(Mark 9:38-50)

Intro: What do you do with the ax?

-Axes are good for:

#Chopping trees.

#Splitting wood.

#Chopping off the heads of chickens.

*Which is how I remember my dad using this ax.

+Yes, chickens do fly around.

=After their heads have been cut off.

In light of today's Scripture readings.

-What do we do with the ax?

I. Do We Use It On Other People?

A. Joshua Wanted To Use The Ax On Eldad And Medad.

1. It happened in the wilderness.

a. Between:

-Egypt.

-Canaan.

b. On the way to the Promised Land.

2. Where do you get food in the wilderness?

a. God provided manna.

b. But the people wanted meat.

-Wishing they were back in Egypt.

#Where they had been slaves.

3. I can identify with that.

a. Not with being a slave in Egypt.

b. But with wanting to have meat.

-I once attended a social ministry conference in Chicago.

#Meals were included.

#Meals must have been planned by health food fanatics.

*Salads.

*Yogurt.

*Bran muffins.

*Fruit.

*Juice.

- By the last night.
 - #Several of us had a craving for meat.
 - #We:
 - *Piled into a couple of taxis.
 - *Took the taxis to the 'L.'
 - *Rode the train downtown.
 - +At least I think it was somewhere downtown.
 - *Had dinner at a steak house.
 - *Spent the rest of the evening at:
 - +Second City Comedy Club.
 - =An improv theater.
 - Gave birth to *Saturday Night Live* in 1975.
 - +Comedy club was fun.
 - +But I was more interested in the steak.

4. Israelites wanted meat.
 - a. They complained to Moses.
 - b. Moses complained to God:
 - “Why are you doing this to me?”
 - “Why do I have to listen to all of this griping and whining?”
 - #“We want meat.”
 - #“We want meat.”
 - #“We want meat.”
 - “Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people?”
 - “Where am I supposed to get meat in the wilderness?”
 - #“This isn’t Texas, you know!”
 - #“I haven’t seen a Golden Corral at any of the highway exits.”
 - “If this is the way I’m going to be treated,”
 - #“I’d rather be dead.”
 - c. God said to Moses:
 - “Whoa! Chill out, dude!”
 - “Just take it easy.”
 - “I can see you’re a little stressed out.”
 - “Why don’t you gather 70 of the elders of Israel?”
 - #“Get them together at the meeting tent.”
 - #“I’ll appoint them to be your assistants.”
5. Moses gathered the elders at the meeting tent.
 - a. God came in a cloud.
 - b. God did God’s thing.
 - God took some of the spirit from Moses.
 - #Put it on the 70.
 - *Spirit is not here called Holy Spirit.
 - *There seems to be a limited quantity of spirit.
 - +To give spirit to the 70.
 - +Moses has to give up some of his.

#The 70 prophesied.

*For a limited time.

*For a limited time only.

+They did not do so again.

=Numbers 11:25.

+Spirit was given for a specific time and purpose.

-Eldad and Medad were not at the meeting tent.

#It's unclear to me.

*Whether Eldad and Medad were part of the 70.

+Who for some reason missed the consecration service.

=At the tent.

-This is how I tend to read it.

*Whether Eldad and Medad were not part of the 70.

+But received the spirit anyway.

+So that there were actually 72 who received the spirit.

#In any event.

*Eldad and Medad started prophesying.

6. Joshua wanted to use the ax on them.

a. Joshua protested:

-“This is highly irregular.”

-“They haven’t taken all the classes.”

-“They haven’t passed their final exams.”

-“They shouldn’t be allowed to prophesy.”

b. Moses said:

-“Whoa! Chill out, dude!”

-“Are you jealous?”

-“I wish all of God’s people had the spirit.”

c. Joshua did not get to use the ax on Eldad and Medad.

B. Jesus’ Disciples Wanted To Use The Ax On An Uncertified Exorcist.

1. There was an unidentified man.

a. In our Gospel lesson.

b. Casting out demons.

-In the name of Jesus.

-Mark 9:38.

2. But this man was not a card-carrying disciple.

a. He was not one of the 12.

b. He had not been to disciple school.

c. He was not a follower of Jesus.

3. John and the other disciples wanted to use the ax on this man.

a. To cut him out of the picture.

b. To tell him to stop.

c. To shut him down.

4. Jesus said:
 - a. "Whoa! Chill out, dudes!"
 - b. "If he's not doing any harm."
- "He's doing some good."
 - c. "If he's using my name to do good."
- "He can't be all bad."
 - d. Jesus' disciples did not get to use the ax on the exorcist.
- C. Do We Want To Use The Ax On One Another?
1. James encourages us to do several things.
 - a. To pray for one another.
 - b. To pray for the sick.
 - c. To anoint the sick with oil.
- In the name of the Lord.
- So that they may be healed.
#James 5:14-16.
#So far, so good.
 2. James also encourages us to confess our sins one to another.
 - a. This is where things may get a little dicey.
 - b. Do we truly trust one another?
- To use the ax:
#On the sin.
#Not on the sinner.
 3. Last Wednesday.
 - a. I had a benign sebaceous cyst removed from my scalp.
- It was done in the doctor's office.
#On an outpatient basis.
- It took about 15-20 minutes.
 - b. If the surgeon had pulled out an ax.
- What do you think I would have done?
- I'd still have that benign sebaceous cyst on my scalp.
 - c. The ax is not meant to be used on other people.

II. Do We Use The Ax On Ourselves?

- A. Jesus Seems To Suggest As Much.
1. Last week's Gospel Lesson.
 - a. Ended with (Mark 9:37):
- "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."
 - b. "Whoever welcomes one of the most:"
- Needy.
- Vulnerable.
"Welcomes me."

2. Now it appears that the little ones:
 - a. Not only are not being welcomed.
 - b. But stumbling blocks are being placed in their path.
 - Jesus says to those who are responsible:
 - # "Put a millstone around your neck."
 - # "Go, jump in a lake!"
 - Mark 9:42.
3. If we cause ourselves to stumble, it's time to get out the ax.
 - a. If your hand causes you to do something you shouldn't.
 - Get out the ax.
 - b. If your feet cause you to go places you shouldn't go.
 - Get out the ax.
 - c. If your eye causes you to look at something you shouldn't see.
 - Get out the ax.
 - d. If your tongue causes you to say something you shouldn't say.
 - Get out the ax.
4. What is Jesus saying to us?
 - a. That we should literally:
 - Be cutting off:
 - # Hands.
 - # Feet.
 - # Tongues.
 - Be plucking out eyes.
 - # If so:
 - *We would all be blind and mute and maimed.
 - b. Rather he is suggesting.
 - If we recognize in:
 - # Thought.
 - # Desire.
 - *Seed of our sin.
 - That's where we need to deal with it.
 - # To nip it in the bud.
 - *Or there will be eternal consequences.
 - + Worms.
 - + Fire.

B. But Jesus Has Another Use For The Ax.

1. To chop down a tree.
 - a. To pound the tree into a cross.
 - b. To give up on that cross:
 - His hands.
 - His feet.
 - His eyes.
 - And more.

2. To give up his life.
 - a. So that there might be:
 - Forgiveness for all.
 - Holy Spirit for all.
 - Splash of water for all.
 - Bread and wine for all.
 - b. So that we might be at peace with one another.
 - Not cutting out one another.
 - #When they stumble.
 - Not cutting up ourselves.
 - #When we stumble.
 - But rather looking to the cross.
 - #Created with the help of an ax.
 - c. So that we might:
 - Welcome one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.
 - Pray for one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.
 - Listen to one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.
 - Correct one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.
 - Encourage one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.
 - Feed one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.
 - Forgive one another.
 - #In the name of Jesus.

Concl: What do you do with the ax?
-Give it up to God.
#In the name of Jesus.

