

## Actions Speak Louder

Matthew 7:15-23; 21:28-32; 24:21-28 also Luke 10:25-37

### “Spear Finger”

*Long ago, there lived a terrible monster. She was 40 feet tall, and her skin was like great stones hinged together all over her body. In fact, she was of a type we Cherokees call Stone-Coat Monsters. She had horrible, fiery red eyes and long, sharp teeth. She was covered with the blood and gore of her victims, and she stank to the highest heaven.*

*The people called this monster, Spear Finger, for on her right hand, she had this long finger, like a razor-sharp spear. She would sneak up on her victims, stab them in the side or in the back with this finger, pull out their liver and eat it raw, in one big gulp.*

*So, you may be thinking, “How could a 40-foot-tall monster sneak up on anyone?” Well, Spear Finger was vicious and bloodthirsty, but she was also sly and cunning. She was a shape-shifter, so when she came around she could look harmless, maybe even like one of the family. Your sister or your mother might go down to fetch water from the spring, but the one who returned might be the liver eater in disguise. She might spear and eat the livers of the whole family as they slept.*

*Or a kindly old grandmother might be sitting on a stump, watching the children at play. She might beckon to one of the children. “Come here, my darling,” she might say. “Let me fix your hair.” As the little girl comes close and trustingly turns for Granny to comb out the tangles, she stabs the little girl in the side so fast, that none of the other children even notice. And so, whole towns were ravished and lay waste by the monster.*

But then, one day, a young man was walking along a trail that led from his home town far up into the mountains. When he heard something coming, he slipped off the trail into the woods. Sure enough, it was Spear Finger. She was striding along, in the form of an old woman, but singing to herself, "Liver, I eat it. Soo Sah Sigh!" Horrified, the young man ran all the way back to town with the news that the terrible Stone Coat was coming. The men hurried to prepare. They dug a very deep pit in the main trail leading to the town, covering it over with sticks and leaves and moss until it looked like the ground had not been disturbed. Then they got their weapons ready and waited. Early the next morning, they heard something fall into the pit. They all ran to see, but when they got to the pit and looked over the edge, all they saw was a pitiful old woman, bruised and bleeding and asking would they be so good as to help her get out. They were just about to do it, when the young man who had seen her singing on the trail, screamed out, "No, that's the liver eater!"

With that, Spear Finger changed into her true form, a raging, snarling, screeching monster, clawing at the sides of the pit. It looked like she would soon climb out and kill them all.

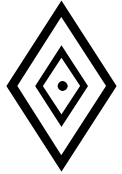
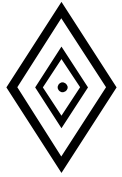
They all began shooting arrows at her, but the arrows just bounced off her stony hide. They didn't know what to do. The situation looked hopeless. Then a little tufted titmouse bird fluttered down and whispered in the ear of one of the men. He said, "Heart, heart.... shoot her in the heart." So the young man shot for her chest, where her heart would be. Just like all the rest, his arrow bounced off. The men were so angry with the titmouse for his lies that they caught him and cut off his tongue. All his kind have a short tongue to this very day.

Then a little chickalilee, a chickadee, lit on the shoulder of another young man and whispered, "Her heart is in her hand." That young man aimed for the hand from which the long spear finger grew. As the arrow went in, Spear Finger gave a loud shriek. She fell down, thrashing and foaming and finally lay dead. They left her there and filled the pit back in with earth. After that, the chickalilee has always been called "The Truth Teller." If you'll listen, he'll tell you when company is coming.

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"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on



*that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*

—Matthew 7:15-23

**A**ppearances may be deceiving. Those little blue berries that grow on **sawbriers** may look like grapes, but we know that grapes don't grow on sawbriers. The bud of a **bull-thistle** is exactly the same shape as a fig, but we know that figs don't grow on bull-thistles. We also know that chestnuts don't fall from **buckeye** trees and that you can't pick navel oranges from a **Bates County hedgerow**.

**A person, or a whole group, can look very pious and be very religious and say they follow Jesus.** They can shout it from the mountaintops, they can go around witnessing and preaching and doing all sorts of things in his name..... They can **cross seas** and **conquer lands** and **kill thousands**, even millions of people in the **name of Jesus**, they can **burn to death men women and children in the name of Jesus.....** but all their talk and all the talk of those who follow in their bloody footsteps will not usher them into the kingdom of heaven.

**Jesus once told a story about a father who had two sons.** In the morning the father asked the sons to go out and work in his grape vineyard. The first son said, "No! I won't." But later, he changed his mind and went out and worked. The second son said, "Yes! I will, sir." And then he sat on the couch and watched TV all day. So, which of the two did what the father wanted? (Matthew 21:28-32)

**Actions speak louder than words.**

*"... For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.*

*"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."*

—Matthew 24:21-28

Jesus was talking specifically to **Jewish people** about the fall of their nation and the destruction of Jerusalem that was to occur and did occur in **70 AD**.

**For our people, that time of greatest distress came with the European invasion of our world.** There is **still much distress and confusion** among Indian people. In spite of all that has happened, **most Indian people remain pretty level headed.....** not willing to swallow just anything and everything dished out to us. For generations, **many religious people have interpreted**

**this as Indians being resistant to the gospel.** They have gone so far as to put together statistics saying that 95% or 98% or 99% of Indian people are unsaved and going to hell, because we don't belong to this or that church or denomination or worship tradition.

**There are other Indian people, who from the beginning of the great trouble, have been running around, willing to believe anything or follow anyone. "Look, here is the Christ," or "There he is! Christ is here in this mission. Christ is over here in this praying town. Christ is over there, in that concentration camp!"**

**Some people have gotten confused** when I have said or written things like: "**William Bradford's Jesus is not the Jesus that I follow,**" or "**I believe in no Christ who had to hitch a ride** with pirates, thieves and murderers." So people will say, "I thought there was only one Jesus.... only one Christ." So there is.

**But, Jesus said there are many false Christs.** There are many **Christs of human invention and imagination.**

**False Christs have false prophets.**

They **may come preaching love and mercy and salvation and reconciliation, but watch what they do.** Watch where their actions lead. The **Christs of human invention are not of love but of hate.** They are **not of mercy but of judgment.** They are **not of salvation but of condemnation and fear.** They are **not of reconciliation but of conquest and genocide and death.** They come crying "**Peace, peace!**" and still there is no peace.

**There is one Creator and one Eternal Son.... one Great and Holy Spirit.** There is **one Master, one Father, one Teacher** (Matthew 23:8-10). **This one is eternal. You need no mediator** to get through to him, no one to lead you to him nor to introduce you to him. **He comes to you. He is as close as your own heart.**

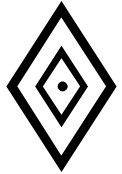
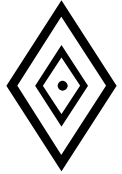
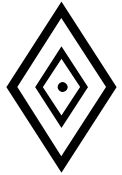
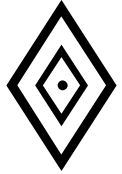
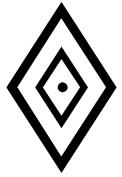
**This one came walking once as a human being in a far country. A man came to him, asking, "What must I do to have eternal life?"**

Now, it was Jesus this man came to. And I got to thinking about this, and it came to me that **if Jesus had been a modern Charismatic Christian, he may have said, "Go forward at the altar call, and 'pray through'."** If Jesus had been a **modern Evangelical Christian, he may have said, "Go to the pastor and have him lead you through the 'Roman Road'."** If Jesus had been of one of the **High Church Traditions, he may have said, "Study the catechism. Learn the liturgy of the church."**

**Think about it, none of these things are bad, but all these things have to do mainly with appearances and with words.**

But you see, **Jesus was not a modern Charismatic, Evangelical or High Churchman. Jesus was Jesus, and Jesus could not have been less concerned with outward appearances or easily spoken words.** So, Jesus didn't tell the man to go through any of the processes I just mentioned. **Jesus told the man a story, what we call the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).**

I'm thinking here, and to use a tired old cliché, I'm thinking, "**What would Jesus do?**"



Jesus told the story for shock value, and there is no shock value in the mention of Samaritans in 21st Century America. So, I'll change the story, and if you are offended by the time I come to the end of the story, that means I have done well. I have done what Jesus would do.

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### **“Story of the Good Gay Activist”**

*A man was traveling on Interstate 70 from St. Louis to Kansas City when he saw an old car broken down on the side of the road. An attractive young lady was looking under the hood of the car. When the man stopped to offer assistance, four men jumped out of the bushes. They beat the man up, stole his car, his wallet and all his clothes, leaving him bruised and bleeding and half dead just off the shoulder of the road.*

*The first person to notice the man was an Indian preacher who drove by about fifteen minutes later. He slowed down to get a good look, but didn't stop. He was already late for a denominational conference in Kansas City and didn't want to hear any more jokes about arriving on “Indian time.”*

*The second person to notice the man was a Traditional Indian Healer who came along about an hour later. He also slowed down but didn't stop. It's probably just bait for a car-jacking, he thought, and besides, the man never actually asked for my help.*

*Some time later, another driver happened to notice the man when he saw two crows picking at his seemingly lifeless form. This man was, I think, of completely Italian ancestry, although in some circles he claimed to be “Part Cherokee”. In fact, he was a direct descendant of Christopher Columbus. He was also a Wiccan, and he was on his way, that day, to the West Coast, where he planned to participate in a Gay Pride Rally.*

*But he stopped and got out of his car. He saw that the man was alive. His heart went out to the man. He used his cell phone to call 911, waited and followed the ambulance to the hospital where he signed as the one responsible for paying the bill.*

*And Jesus looked at the man who had questioned him, and he looked around at all the shocked people who had gathered to listen, and **Jesus said, “You want eternal life? You go and do likewise.”***

**Appearances may be deceiving. Words may be meaningless.**

**Spear Finger looked and spoke** as a kindly old lady, but I wouldn't want her for my child's baby sitter. Nor would I want her for my spiritual mentor.

**Actions speak louder.**

