

## **BLESSINGS ALWAYS**

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Association Minister Message

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*ENTRAP.* “Then the Pharisees went and plotted to *ENTRAP* Jesus in what he said.” (Matthew 22:15) One of my favorite TV shows was (and is) *Perry Mason*. Perry was a defense attorney and it was always assumed that he would successfully prove his client innocent. Watching the show was more about the twists and turns for 50 minutes and skills of Perry to prevail. There were only two shows that his clients were found guilty because it was about clients deceiving Perry. At about three minutes before the final commercial and epilogue, Perry would be questioning someone and get (*ENTRAP*) that person (or someone else would jump up) and declare, “*I did it, I did it*” or some other words of guilt.

*ENTRAP.* Those Pharisee were the perpetual antagonists of Jesus. Jesus was a threat to their position in the religious and social community. They were the authorities on religious law and looked down on others who they thought were not following the law. Jesus encountered their legalism and spoke of the intent of the law versus the letter of the law. The Pharisees could see the speck in other people’s eyes but failed to notice the log in their own eyes. Jesus seemed an easy target and they thought Jesus not worthy or not faithful or a sinner. They used words to try to *ENTRAP* Jesus.

Some news these days are about political jousting going on in political debate, congressional hearings, and pandemic understandings. In testimonies and announcements, many of the questions are aimed at discrediting “the opposition” by *TRAPPING* them to admit that they are wrong, incompetent or not qualified. Information asked for and information given have a mean tone to them. There is lack of respect for differing opinions and sometimes misinformation or no information is part of the “game” of conversation. Respectful dialogue has been replaced by wanting certain positions to be victorious. Truth, honesty and clarity are moving targets.

The art to *ENTRAP/TRAP* others is a way for some to think of themselves better in social settings or worthy before God. The Pharisees claimed for themselves authority that should only be God’s authority. Jesus’ authority always pointed to the God who was the source and giver of creation, our lives and all blessings. God calls us to be stewards and caretakers of the creation, our lives and the gifts and graces so that we can share them as blessings with one another. When we make gifts and graces only for ourselves, they *TRAP* us from celebrating life as holy and whole. If life’s goal focuses on “getting” rather than on abundance of generosity, relationship building with God and others is destructive and selfish. It is time to let go and not be *TRAPPED* by our vanity or selfishness or self-importance. Jesus said, “*Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God things that are God’s.*” **BLESSINGS ALWAYS.**