

Matthew 20-01-05a

Greetings in the new year. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're going to resume our study in the Gospel of Matthew this morning.

This is the fifth day of January 2020, and we start a new year, a new decade. Unlike the BCAD divide, we do have a year zero here, 2020. I don't know what they're going to call people born in this decade.

They were wrestling, you know, they had the people born in the 70s or the 80s or the 90s, but then when we got to the year 2000, what do you call those people? Well, when you're referring to the decade, you know, the old word for zero is naught, N-A-U-G-H-T. So they call them the naughts. So then you've got the, and I don't know what they call them since then, but this is anyway, January the 5th, 2020, and we'll be resuming our study this morning in Matthew chapter eight, Matthew chapter eight with the cleansing of the leper.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and then we'll begin. Father, we are grateful as always when we review the recent past and observe your mercy and your grace, your forgiveness, your blessing, your provision, protection, weaving together circumstances and experience in our lives to present us with opportunities for growth through challenge, through rest and reflection. We thank you for the many things that we've learned from your word over the past year, and we look forward to the things that will be revealed to us as we continue our study, our investigation into the treasure house of truth that we find here in your word.

We pray that as we look at this portion together this morning, that your Holy Spirit will guide us, teach us, be our instructor, and open the way to us and help us to identify the opportunities for application. We know that it is not enough to be a hearer of the word but to be a doer also, and this is our goal as a church, and I'm sure individually, to improve in the area of application so that the things that we've learned become cemented into our souls and will be useful both now and in the ages to come. We pray that the Lord Jesus will be glorified in all that we say and do this morning, that each one will be able to bless and be a blessing in whatever portion of the congregation they reside this morning.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We have now seen three chapters of Jesus' teaching, and I thought especially since we've had a bit of a break and a gap, it might be useful to quickly review.

I know there's people who will immediately wince when I say review, but review is good. This is a good review, and it's going to be quick, but let's just set the context as we go forward in the Gospel of Matthew, what we have seen beginning in chapter 5, extending through chapter 6 and chapter 7, and what you can do is just summarize, at least I'm

going to attempt to summarize the main or big idea in each of these sections. You'll recall that, first of all, in Matthew chapter 5, we have what is popularly known as the Beatitudes, attitudes that should be.

These are the declaration of blessing for people in certain categories, and that was verses 1 through 12, and if you were going to summarize that, we've done it in detail verse by verse, but the idea I will suggest, what I will offer to you as a summary of those of those verses is blessing comes from God, not from cause and effect. This is why there's such a counterintuitive aspect to these things. If you are humble, you will end up exalted.

If you sacrifice, you will end up rich. If you deny yourself, God is going to reward and provide opportunity. It's counter to all of our natural instinct and inclination.

We are built and conditioned to look out for ourselves, to make our own way, to get our own justice. It's the way the world works, and we begin as infants and toddlers learning about the world of cause and effect. If I poke the bear, the bear gets angry.

If I feed the bear, the bear is happy for the moment, but pretty soon he wants more. We learn cause and effect, and we begin to navigate the world based on this push and pull, the give and take, action reaction. But Jesus emphasizes at the opening of this sermon that blessing comes from God.

If you are humble, if you are poor in spirit, if you are meek, if you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, it is God who will fill. And to be diminished, to humble yourself as it were under the mighty hand of God is a whole different way to live. And it is the privilege of those who are believers, Old Testament or new, to submit to a new paradigm, to a new cause and effect that centers on God, not on ourselves, not on others, not on trying to navigate circumstance with our own wisdom.

So that's the first 12 verses summarized. Blessings come from God, not from cause and effect. This is a huge shift in our thinking that I don't have to butter people up.

I don't have to impress people. I don't have to appease people. It's God who counts.

It's God who will determine the outcome. You go down to verse 13 of chapter 5, and we have a section, verses 13 through 16, on salt and light. What's the big idea about being the salt of the earth, whether or not it has its savor, its saltiness, about being light, whether or not light is seen or is hidden? How would you summarize that? Well, my summary is, if you're present, it ought to be sensible.

It ought to be noticeable. If something is salty, you can taste it. Take a gulp of good old chilly Pacific seawater sometime.

You know that's ocean water. It's got salt in it. Somebody makes a stew.

If their ancestors are Northern European, that thing can be bland, bland, bland. There's no salt. You don't really, in my view, want to start a meal without ensuring that the salt and pepper is on the table because you can detect the presence of salt.

You can detect the presence of light. Work in photography sometime. If there's a leak in your darkroom and your film gets fogged, if there's a leak in your camera, light in darkness is easily detectable.

You can see the burnt end of a cigarette for something like 13 miles. They taught us when I was at the basic school in Quantico, when the smoking lamp is not lighted, there's a reason. Light is detectable when it's present.

Salt is detectable when it's present. So if we're present, it ought to make a difference. It ought to be noticeable.

Our camouflage should not be so good that we blend in with the world and no one knows we're believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and members of his body and partakers of the Holy Spirit, the good word of God. Having been given the revelation of things to come, how can we not be tasted? How can we not be sensed? So that's how I would summarize Matthew 5, verses 13 through 16, salt and light. Then in 17 through 20, he says, don't think that I've come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.

One yod, one tittle will not disappear until it's all fulfilled. He who breaks the least of the commandments teaches others to do so. It's going to be least in the kingdom.

What is the big idea there? We went through it verse by verse, but what's, what's the overarching idea, would you say? The word of God must be respected, respected in the large pieces, respected in its smallest details, respect for the word of God. I may be the only guy in the country that says this this morning, but I think one of the root problems in our culture in the generations that are coming up, believers or unbelievers, is that whether it's our American culture, whether it is our social interaction, whether it is our churches, one of the biggest cracks in the foundation is lack of respect for the word of God. The word of God reveals Christ.

And if you disrespect the word, you disrespect Christ. If you disrespect Christ, you are disrespecting the Holy Spirit. And what is the one unforgivable sin stated in the Bible? What is the sin Jesus said will not be forgiven? Disrespecting the Holy Spirit, the spirit, the word are inseparable.

He doesn't speak for himself. He takes the things of Christ and communicates them. So when Jesus says God's word, as it existed in his day, the law, the smallest corner of a letter is important.

Respect it and apply it. Respect what it is, what it communicates and act upon what it communicates. So that's, that's what I get from verses 17 through 20.

You have, do not think that I've come to destroy the law. I did not come to destroy it, but to fulfill it. Every detail, large and small, we should respect it and apply it.

Then in verses 21 through 26 of Matthew five, you've heard it was said to those of old. Remember the, you have heard it said, but I say section of Matthew five, when you get to 21 through 26, you've heard it said, don't murder. I say, don't be angry and don't sass one another.

Don't, don't mock one another. Raka, don't call your brother Raka. Don't say thou fool and so on.

This is, the idea of the day was, well, as long as I don't break the big 10, as long as I don't murder, as long as I don't do some big overt sin, I'm good to go. And if you murder someone, you're in danger of judgment. Jesus said, you've taken a couple of big signal, overt sins, and made that the measure of goodness, what we would call spiritual life.

And he says, what you're not considering is the other two areas of sin besides overt sin, which is mental attitude, sin. If you're angry with your brother, you're in danger of the judgment. Jesus says, anger, sins of the tongue.

If you say to your brother, you idiot, you fool, this will bring you into judgment. And Jesus turns their expectation and their measure on its head, because they're saying, well, I don't rob liquor stores. I don't, you know, drive drunk and kill people.

And he says, what you're thinking and what you're saying puts you in the same category of judgment as the biggest overt sins. It's a huge paradigm shift. And it hinges on that previous statement about the importance of the word of God, because the word of God talks about the heart, talks about love your neighbor as yourself, talks about love God and love one another as the fulfillment of that law.

So, 21 through 26, life is more than avoiding big overt sins. Sins of the tongue and mental attitude sins will be judged by the same measure. And so, we have to look to ourselves in that regard, confess them when they crop up as they will.

Then in verses 27 through 30, in my New King James, it's entitled adultery in the heart. It's got that subtitle, adultery in the heart. You've heard it said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you, whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. It's interesting because adultery is always implicated in the presence of a marriage, which is a covenant relationship. It is a vow that has been taken, vows that have been exchanged and adultery specifically.

He doesn't say you've committed fornication with her in your heart. He says adultery. There is a vow breaking involved in this sin of the heart, sin involving the eyes and so on.

So, in this 27 through 30, he says, if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into hell. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off, same thing.

So, how would you summarize that? We are thankfully persuaded that this doesn't mean literally pull your eye out by the roots, literally chop your hand off. People who say, I take the Bible literally, don't take it literally here. The King James is good enough for the Apostle Paul, good enough for me.

I take it literally. I don't read any pictures. Oh, come on.

I notice you've still got both your hands and both your eyes. So, you don't take everything wouldn't literally. And so, now we're just arguing about degree.

Well, how would you summarize this? Here's my suggestion. Take radical steps to break pattern sins. Take radical steps to break pattern sins.

If your eye keeps on offending you is the idea. You keep looking at things you shouldn't look at. You look too long.

You look too much. You look too eagerly. You're sluicing stuff into your soul through the eye gate that shouldn't be coming in.

And if you're having trouble with that, take radical steps. If your computer is a source of sin, sell it, get it out of the house. If the internet is causing you sins of the tongue, because you get on chat boards or you get on social media and you can't keep from offending, get out.

Get off. Block the thing. Get your email.

Give yourself 15 minutes to check Facebook and make sure your family's healthy. And then program it into your router. Block the internet.

At times, if you have trouble, there's a lot of salacious material. There's a lot of, listen, not just pornography type of stuff. There's a lot of incendiary material in terms of feeding bad attitudes, political hate, social hate.

It is a seething swamp of all kinds of evil. And there's people that have a TV in the house, watch an hour and a half of it in a day, turn it off, go do something else. That's great.

If you can't get away from the TV, you've got to put the thing on a timer, do something. If the internet is a problem, do something. If your route takes you past a liquor store, you can't help but go in and buy something and consume it.

And three days later, you're there again, change your route. Take radical steps. The

chopping of the hand, the plucking of the eye, these are radical steps.

And notice the eye and the hand are not in themselves evil. Nothing wrong with your eye, nothing wrong with your hand. It is what you end up doing with them.

In the same way, we've got many tools of entertainment, of information, of communication. But if offense starts coming in, it's not a mild step. He doesn't say, if your eye offends you, look the other way.

If your hand offends you, stick it inside your jacket. He says, pluck it out, cut it off. So my summary here, take radical steps to break pattern sins.

Pattern sin cannot be allowed to persist. If it's a pattern, go as radical as you have to, to break it. Don't let sin be a pattern.

Change the conditions and make it impossible. If your eye offends you and you pluck it out, you've still got another eye, right? If your hand offends you and you chop it off, you still have another hand. So you've not completely removed the possibility, but you have penalized yourself to such an extent that you don't want to do that again.

My understanding is it's painful to have your eye plucked out. Just breaking your hand is painful enough. If you chop the thing off, I can only imagine, but make it to where it is not going to happen.

Radical steps to break pattern sin. That's my take on verses 27 through 30. Then in 31 through 37, this is labeled in your New King James, marriage is sacred and binding.

It has been said, whoever divorces his wife, let her give her a, let him give her a certificate of divorce. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife for trivial reasons, big problems. And then again, you've said you shall not swear falsely, perform your oaths to the Lord.

Verse 33, 31 and 32 talking about marriage and 33 is a continuation of the idea that you have made a vow. You have made a commitment. So 31 through 37, if you make a commitment, keep it.

Your word should be as good as a contract. Your word is a bond. And when you begin adopting and practicing that policy, you learn not to commit.

If you're not sure you can keep it, only make a commitment you're sure you can keep. If you'd like to help somebody, but it's a little shaky, you need to be sure that it is a promise. I will try, or if I am not held up and I can get back in time, I will.

But if you make a simple declarative commitment, you must keep it. Think about Jephthah. He made a hasty commitment, ended up with his daughter being celibate for the rest of her life serving.

But if you make a commitment, you must keep it. God honors his commitments. Thankfully, we are a reflection of God on this earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ keeps his promises. If I go away, I will come again and receive you to myself. What if that, what if Jesus got detained or got distracted, or there was a little angel defugally up there and he said, well, you know, I know I was supposed to go back and get that bunch of Christians down there and raise the dead and collect the rest.

But you know, how was I to know that something would come up here in heaven that, sorry folks, couldn't make it. Don't keep listening for that voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, because sorry, can't, can't come. It's like in the Marine Corps, there are certainly, you know, illness, accident, unavoidable.

I'm stuck in, I'm stuck in Chicago O'Hare and the flights are all grounded. That's one thing, but we should be known for our commitment keeping. If you make a commitment, keep it.

Then in verses 38 through 48, which finishes the chapter, going the second mile. Anyone wishes you to give up, they sue you and want to take your coat, give them your, overcoat also. You've heard it said, love your neighbor, hate your enemy.

I say, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Remember that's our edit on that verse. That's all that's there.

Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father in heaven. I summarize verses 38 through 48. Do not worry about being treated fairly by others in this life.

Don't get hung up over unfairness, over injustice, over anything ranging from mild abuse to outright cruelty from others. Somebody who is upset at a Roman soldier asking him to carry his pack or someone who's upset because they've been sued for a frivolous reason and they're trying to get recompense in that way. Jesus says, give in, give up, give out.

Don't fight for personal fairness and justice. It's counter to all of our instincts, isn't it? Since I was little, somebody tries to take my toy, I take it back. Somebody tries to take my blankie, I get the other end and we have a tug of war until I get my stuff.

Jesus says, let that go. Why? That you may be sons of your father in heaven. You let go of being respected or being treated fairly or being honored or given your due here because you're worried about your heavenly family relationship.

I want to be a son of the father. I don't care if this guy takes my coat and my cloak. If I have to carry this pack three miles and the law says I only have to carry it one, it's okay.

I'm a son of the father and there is coming a time, this is where hope kicks in as fuel for

our faith and our application. I know that there is coming a day when the righteous judge of all the earth will set things straight. This is partaking of vengeance is mine, I will repay.

This is partaking of this world is not my home. I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.

The angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I don't even feel at home in this world anymore. That's the perspective that will give us peace as we don't fight small battles over insignificant things. So my summary, do not worry about being treated fairly.

Don't get hung up on justice. That's verses 38 through 48. Well, that brings us to chapter six.

So what have we seen so far? We've got seven points in chapter five. Blessings come from God, not from human cause and effect. You can't make yourself a blessing.

This is why the old song says to the Lord, make me a blessing. Oh Lord today, make me a blessing. I can't, I can't make me a blessing.

Like I could make me a milkshake or I can make me a sandwich. God has to make blessing comes from God, not cause and effect. That's number one.

Number two, salt and light. Its presence should be noticeable. Our presence should be noticeable.

If you don't stand out and stick out, something's wrong. You should be salty and you should be light shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Number three, the word of God must be respected and applied.

Respect it. Every tiny part. Number four, life is more than avoiding a few big overt sins.

Most of our time is taken up working on eliminating sins of the tongue and mental attitude sins. I would say the proportion of those sins to overt sins is probably a hundred to one, maybe a thousand to one because most overt sins start with attitude sins. You kill a guy because you get so angry at him.

You can't see straight or you want what he's got. So life is more than avoiding big overt sins. Sins of the tongue, mental attitude sins will be judged just as harshly.

That's number four. Number five, take radical steps to break pattern sins. Don't put up with pattern sin.

You've got to aggress. You've got to ratchet it up. This past week, Iran was trying to do smack talk and say in the US couldn't do anything about it.

So the president sent in a missile and blew up an airplane and the guy getting off and the guy that came out to greet him and the, you know, squeamish or flapping their hands and saying, oh, but there might retaliate. There is a time when you've got to break a pattern before it becomes a war and letting people backtalk at the national level like that is going to lead to war anyway. So nip it, nip it, nip it in the bud.

Barney Fife knows this. The president knows this. Most of the people in the don't seem to quite grasp the concept, but that is the way you keep from escalating.

Break a pattern sin with radical action. That's number five. Number six, be careful when you make your commitments.

If you make a commitment, keep it. Only death or dismemberment should keep you from keeping your commitments. And number seven, do not worry about fairness when it comes to being treated by others.

If it's not fair, don't worry about it. It's not fair to be forced to carry a Romans pack. It's not fair to be sued and have your garments taken away.

Jesus says, don't sweat it. If you want to be a son of your father in heaven, you've got to think differently. Well, this brings us to chapter six.

This is a good place for us to pause and take our break. Let's refresh ourselves and listen to some wonderful music from our blessed and gifted musicians. And we'll return and pick up at chapter six.