

Matthew 20-01-05b

I want to thank Dan and Anna and Lori for our special music this morning, apropos as always to the subject at hand, which is not being distracted by the allures of this world, the allure of feeling vindicated or justified, but the dedication to the heavenly point of view, the divine perspective. Blessings come from God, our justice comes from God, our provision comes from God, and we have guidance from God on how to navigate the rocks and shoals of this life and ensure that we will withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, and remember that out of Ephesians, from Paul with the power of God.

But let's pick up here in Matthew chapter 6, we're running ourselves back up to speed after a bit of a break in the study of the gospel of Matthew and remembering what it is that Jesus told those who climbed the hill. I want to read you something, and every once in a while I unhesitatingly and without qualification recommend a book, and I have recommended it before, and I will recommend it again, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah by Alfred Edersheim. There is no better book for the isogogics, the cultural background, the milieu, the traditions, the setting.

He had such a gift for description, and I want to read you his setting for these words that we're reviewing this morning. This is chapter 18 of The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah by Alfred Edersheim. It was probably on one of those mountain ranges which stretched to the north of Capernaum that Jesus had spent the night of lonely prayer which preceded the designation of the twelve to the apostolate.

As the soft spring morning broke, he called up those who had learned to follow him, and from among them chose the twelve who were to be his ambassadors and representatives. But already the early light had guided the eager multitude which from all parts had come to the broad level plateau beneath to bring him their need of soul or body. To them he now descended with words of comfort and power of healing, but better yet he had to say and to do for them and for us all.

As they pressed around him for that touch which brought virtue of healing to all, he retired again to the mountain height and through the clear air of the bright spring day spoke, what has ever since been known as the Sermon on the Mount. From the place where he sat, or as in that plain, Luke 6:17, from the place where he had first met the multitude and which so many must have continued to occupy while he taught. And I think Alfred is of the persuasion that Luke 6 and Matthew 5 are in the same setting.

They're demonstrably not, but I'll forgive him for that. And he goes on from there, but it is a reminder to us and a good one from time to time that the Lord Jesus was really here. He really taught.

He really spoke and people had really great memory to record the content as they heard

it. We've lost this capacity almost in its entirety. As I was just quoting Carl Sagan the other day, you know, human beings are the only animals who store their memories externally.

Well, we used to store them internally when we were not so distracted and not so rushed and not so improved. But now we use technology and what we look at this morning gets recorded and we can play it back later if we forget a point. If I forget a point next week, I typically go back and listen to at least the end of what I said the previous week because the lesson in my head doesn't always match the one that came out my mouth and I want to have some level of continuity.

So I go back and listen. What did I say? How far did I get? It was all loaded up in my head and I got maybe a third to the half of the way through. So it's good to be reminded that when Jesus spoke these words, he was a real human being sitting on a real hillside talking to real people about real life.

This is practical. Rubber meets the road. This is how you do it.

We have the advantage that they lacked in that when you say, well, it's great to say, go the extra mile. It's great to say, turn the other cheek. It's great to say, break a strong pattern sin.

But where is the power to do it? Where is the power to truly keep the law? Well, that comes from God, the Holy Spirit. And as we've said many, many times, how does the power of God come into the life of the believer? Spirit of God, Word of God, both of them. You get your resin, you get your hardener, you get the two parts of the epoxy, you mix them in equal measure, stir them together, strongest glue on earth.

Same thing. So as we come to Matthew chapter six, and Jesus is continuing, of course, there's no chapter break in the original. Jesus keeps right on going, but it's a good break.

So in verses one through four of chapter six of the gospel of Matthew, the red letter edition continues here, What did we see up in verse 45 in the section on not worrying about fairness and justice and getting your just desserts? You want to be sons of your father in heaven. Verse 45 down here, reward from your father in heaven. Being a son is sort of a status and an identity.

Reward is receiving tangible things from God, tangible in the sense of the future life, as well as this life. So where does the power come from? Objectively, conceptually, where does the power come from? Lift your eyes to the hills from whence comes your strength, then lift your eyes a little further to heaven. Verse 45, to be a son of your father in heaven.

Verse 48, be complete, be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect. Your father in heaven, never until the Lord Jesus Christ did any prophet or teacher in Israel so

emphasize the creator of the universe, God, the father on his unapproachable throne and glory as your father, your father. When you pray our father, this is approachability, it is relationship, and it is opportunity.

This is where the power comes from. Remember, you've got a father in heaven, you're not down here having to fight your own battles and achieve your own justice. Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men.

So up above, we said do not worry about being treated fairly by others, 38 through 48. Here, do not worry about being esteemed by others. Notice, I've chosen these words very carefully, do not worry about.

It is okay to note that things are not fair. It's okay to realize that this is an injustice. But at that realization and at that observation, we don't worry.

I'm not using that as a casual phrase, don't worry about being treated fairly by others. And here in verses one through four of chapter six, do not worry about being esteemed by others, about being well thought of, about maintaining others good opinion as though that is an end in itself. It's nice if people have a good opinion, but you don't make that an objective.

I'm going to do this so that so and so is going to think well of me. And Jesus says, be careful, take heed. I was watching one of these collections of short clips, you know, everything gets filmed on phones now.

So any little stumble or fall or accident, you know, eight, eight out of 10 chances somebody is going to catch it with their phone if there's something going on. So these people are climbing a very steep ascent, very steep, almost vertical, but not quite, I'd say it was maybe a 60 degree slope. And so they're, they're doing the switchback type of thing where you go up and then you turn around and go up and it's a zigzag up this ascent because it's far too steep to climb straight up.

You'd need rappelling gear and so on or climbing gear, pitot's and hammers and all that cleats. So they're, they're taking this and they're unsecured at all. There's no rail.

The path is about a foot and a half wide, maybe 18 inches. And they're going single file. And the guy ahead to me stupidly has his phone on filming the people behind him coming across this very narrow thing.

Well, the guy right behind him misses his footing with his right foot and slips and goes down his, his left knee bends greater than 90 degrees. And, you know, it's, you can see it's 60, 80, 90 feet down to more level ground. And the guy just powers back up on his left knee and he grabs ahold of some protruding piece of rock and gets himself back up.

But it's just so close. And when you see something like that, your natural human

preservation instinct says, man, be careful, be take precautions. That's what this means.

Look at verse one of chapter six. When Jesus says, take heed, you should have the concern and the alarm over this of a guy on the side of a cliff, making sure he's got good footing. I wouldn't have my phone, even if I had my phone out for any reason, I'd probably drop the thing and be out three or \$400.

If you're climbing, focus on the climbing, goofing around with cameras and phones and the other guy looking at you to see what you're filming and missing his step. Take heed. Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen.

We tend to focus on what is a charitable deed. Focus on to be seen by people. Don't worry about being well thought of.

Pharisees bringing big chunks of money down to the temple, not because they thought the temple needed money, but because they wanted to be well thought of. Charitable deeds to be seen. Otherwise you have no reward from your father in heaven.

Focus on your father in heaven. That will keep you straight. If you've got a question, should I do A or should I do B? How far should I go? How much should I do? How long should I suffer? You know, long suffering is suffering long.

Well, how long? How long is long? Well, it's usually solvable by raising our gaze. What does the father think? What would the father have me do? I have a switch on the what would Jesus do idea, which is what would I do if I was doing it for Jesus? If it was Jesus that asked me to pick them up or asked me to perform some task or accomplish some goal or fill in for some need, if that was the Lord Jesus asking. And then I say, well, you know, it basically is God is the one that orchestrated these circumstances.

Here's means motive and opportunity. This is from the Lord. So what's my attitude? Oh, dang, not again.

Or Lord Jesus, are you kidding me? I can't do enough. So not what would Jesus do, but what would I do for Jesus? If you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me. And if you have that attitude, because you're looking for the approval of the father, that solves a lot of attitude challenges.

So when you do a charitable deed, don't sound a trumpet like hypocrites do in the synagogues. So do not worry about the good opinion of others, because if you're doing things to be well thought of, you have your reward. You're done.

And there is no reward in heaven. God does not smile on that. He smiles on those who are looking at him.

You notice how many times somebody will have a serious face, then you look right at

them and they smile. You ever notice that? You look at them, they smile. If you look at God, he'll smile.

So let's look at him. That's one through four. Do not worry about being esteemed by others.

Look for God's smile. Then in verses five through eight, when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to pray standing on the synagogues, corners of the streets, to be seen by men.

And then you have the model prayer here. When you pray, go into your room. When you've shut your door, pray to your father who is in the secret place, your father who sees in secret, the father, the father, the father.

When you're praying, don't pray to people. Pray to God. Really tough to do sometimes when you're in an open setting and you know everybody is listening, you know, you're going to offer a public prayer.

And I have been really paranoid about doing this, but I've heard pastors do this in the past where if you didn't quite finish a point in your sermon, you finish it in the prayer. And, oh Lord, help us to remember that, you know, and then here's my four points out of the last part of my outline that I didn't get to. Well, don't pray to people.

Don't pray to be seen by them. Don't pray to be heard by them. Nobody should be party to your prayers.

Go into your room. When you shut your door, pray to your father who is in secret. Your father who is seasoned secret will reward you openly.

Go to the Lord, look to him, bring your concerns, your cares, your praises. And that that's that's verses five through eight. In short, pray to God, not people.

This is both looking to God for the things that you know people cannot be relied upon to provide. God is a sure source of provision. Your father knows you have need of these things.

So if you come to him, he's he's got it. He's going to take care of it. Five through eight, pray to God, not people.

Nine through 13, you have in this manner, therefore, pray. And you have what's popularly known as the Lord's Prayer. This is actually the disciples prayer.

Jesus didn't say this is how I pray. That would be the Lord's Prayer. I would love to have a copy of the real Lord's Prayer.

It would be very long. He would spend hours at night praying to his father. Wouldn't you

love to have crept over and heard the Lord praying out loud? What does the Son of God say to the Heavenly Father when he's praying for three hours? Oh Lord, Simon Peter.

Oh Lord, Andrew. Oh Lord, James, John, Bartolomeo, Philip. Does he pray for them individually? Does he he's looking around at his itinerary? He's looking at where does he heal? Where does he preach? I would love to hear those prayers.

Maybe there's going to be a third testament when we get to glory and we'll be able to catch up and learn from the Lord's Prayers. But this is the disciples prayer. And in a nutshell, it gives us a pattern for prayer.

Mindlessly reciting this prayer does nothing, but it's a pattern. So verses nine through 13, this is our third point out of chapter six. The pattern for prayer, praise, expectation, looking to God for provision, both physical and spiritual.

Four things, four parts of prayer. It begins with praise, recognition that God is sovereign, God's will, expectation. Won't it be a wonderful day when God's will is done on earth the way it is in heaven? Wouldn't it be great if God's will was done in my heart the way it is done in heaven? Praise, expectation, then request for provision.

Give us our daily bread. And for these disciples, lead us not into testing. Deliver us from evil.

This is the baby disciple prayer. Remember, these men are freshly minted disciples. They've not heard three years of teaching yet.

It's not time for them to face off with Satan. Later on, Jesus is going to send them forth. And when they come back successful and say, Lord, we did all these things.

And he says, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. They were ready after being taught and learning to apply to face Satan. But here at the opening moment, when you pray, you need to pray to the father that he doesn't lead you anywhere near the evil one.

Deliver us from the evil one because you're not ready. You don't take people that you just handed a uniform, boots and a rifle and send them straight into battle. They need training.

They need preparation. They need hardening. They need discipline.

They need understanding of chain of command and authority and structure and all the rest of it. You don't just take a brand new believer and stick them up in front of people and say, give your testimony. It'll help win people to Jesus, which is what a lot of Christianity does.

And it's just wrong, wrong, wrong. Jesus says to new disciples, ask the father to preserve you and build you up and give you strength before you face the evil one. So pattern

prayer, praise, expectation and request for provision, recognition of the source of provision, both physical, daily bread and spiritual.

What am I facing in wrestling against principalities and powers, right? So that's verses 9 through 13. Verses 14 and 15, for if you forgive men their trespasses, and this hinges on forgive us in the middle of the prayer. Acknowledgement of sin.

I left that out when I read my list here. Praise, expectation, confession, then request for provision. But you can include cleaning up of the sin corruption in our lives under spiritual provision.

But 14 and 15, if you do not forgive men their trespasses, your father won't forgive you. It's the father. It's look how many times the father just circle it as you go down.

Our father in heaven, verse 9. Heavenly father, verse 14. Your father, verse 15. And in those two verses, forgiving others is essential.

Let it go. It ties back to don't be looking for fairness. Don't be trying to achieve your own justice.

Don't worry about recognition. Don't worry about gratitude. Don't worry about esteem.

Don't worry about being treated fairly. Forgiving others is essential. What could be more essential than our forgiveness from the father? What would you rate above having your sins forgiven? When those disciples came back and said, Lord, in your name, we did all these wonderful things.

He said, don't rejoice over that, but rejoice over what? Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Rejoice that your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven and your name is written in heaven.

That's a source of joy. It's the father's record that counts. So forgiving others is essential.

We have got to let it go. This ties into don't hold a grudge. Do good to those who hate you.

Pray for those who spitefully use you. All of these things are disinvesting from any sense of personal wrongedness. I've been wronged.

Take it to the father and leave it there. Great old gospel song. Leave it there.

Leave it there. Leave it there. Take it to the cross and leave it there.

So forgiving others is essential. 14 and 15, verses 16 through 18. Do not worry about, I'm choosing my words carefully here.

Do not worry about esteem from others. Once again, when you're fasting, this is the

same thing we saw up above about prayer. Praying to be seen by people, don't fast.

One is wanting people to see how close you are to God. And the other is to see how invested you are in circumstances. Why do you fast? Some circumstance has come up.

You know, fasting and prayer, there's a crisis. There's an urgent matter circumstantially, inexperience. And you say, I'm taking this to God and I'm denying myself food in the process.

Same thing later on when you have vows. We talked about the Nazirite vow a little bit and Paul will take a vow from time to time because there is a matter that comes up. He's not just walking around on Tuesday saying, you know, it's been a while.

I think I'll just take a vow. Vow and the fasting and sacrifice and so on that goes along with it is addressing a circumstantial problem, some challenge. Fasting is the same thing.

Somebody's worried about somebody and so they are fasting and focusing on that in a spiritual sense. So you've got prayer on the one hand, you've got fasting on another. One is, here's how holy I am in my relationship with God.

Here's how invested I am in circumstances. I pray, I fast. Jesus says, don't do either one of those things to be seen by people.

Do not worry about esteem by others. If you're going to fast, fast to God. Other people don't even need to know it.

You can make some flimsy excuse. You don't have to tell anybody that you're fasting. You don't have to tell anybody that you're on a prayer vigil.

You do that in secret. You do it in private. Nobody knows.

You may be praying daily. You may be praying hourly. You may be pestering to throw in a grace over a thing, but you don't noise it abroad because you're not interested in people recognizing what a holy person you are.

You're interested in the Father in heaven smiling. So that's 16 through 18. Do not worry about esteem from others in your addressing circumstantial needs.

Look at what a faith warrior I am. Look at what a powerful applier of the word of God I am. And don't worry about it up in one through four in prayer.

Then in verses 19 through 21, this is a really interesting thing. I don't know if I remember to point it out before. Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, moth and eating, thieves break in and steal.

Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. And then verse 21, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. And as before, we tend to focus on the treasure.

What is the treasure? Where is the treasure? But Jesus says the concern here is like this wonderful old song from the 1940s. Where is your heart? There's a lady that sings it beautifully. I worry and wonder your lips may be near, but where is your heart? It's a sad thing to realize you've got a heart that doesn't melt.

And when you kiss, do you close your eyes pretending that I'm someone else? You're acting one way, but where is your heart? Is your heart really, are you expressing genuine love? Are you just trifling with me because you're really thinking about somebody else? Well, in the spiritual realm, where your treasure is, there your heart will be. Jesus says, you've got to pay attention to what you're investing in because you are establishing the location of your heart. It doesn't start with, well, my heart's in the right place and that's why my treasure is in heaven.

No, you are investing in heaven and that's relocating your heart. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be. Pay attention to what you invest in.

It will shift your heart. This is really important because sometimes we say, you know, well, Jeremiah 17, 9, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can understand it? Who can figure it out? Well, you make a policy of investing in eternal things.

Just make it a policy. Just doggedly say, I am not going to sit here and fret about, did I squeeze every last dollar out of that transaction? Did I shop every sale? Did I save a buck 50 by driving across town using \$6 worth of gas to get that thing? Because it's a savings. I clipped the coupons.

I shopped the bargain basement. I repaired instead of replaced. I did this, that, and the other.

I'm pinching every nickel and it's a wonderful thing to be financially responsible. But when you talk about mammon, which is money, which is the universal solvent for problems in the human mind. If I only had enough money, I could fix this.

It's the universal solvent. Name a problem that in some way, shape, or form, you couldn't either buy a thing or pay somebody and get it fixed. If I just had enough money, what does Jesus say? You cannot serve, verse 24, God and money, capital M. If you think the answer to problems is just enough cash, you can't serve God.

If you're overly concerned, wonderful to be responsible. Keep your commitments means pay your bills. Owe no man anything means you can take things out on time, but don't be late on your payments.

Bank's perfectly happy to take my mortgage payment every month when I have a mortgage. Perfectly happy to take my car payment. Perfectly happy.

Lowe's is happy to let me get my two by fours in sheetrock and pay it out over six months, no interest. Wonderful company, Lowe's, Home Depot, both honoring veterans, giving people a chance to build for themselves, give you the materials to build things for yourself. It's the Disneyland of do-it-yourselfers.

It's just the best thing. And it encourages and cultivates self-reliance, which is a wonderful biblical quality in the light of what God provides. Wonderful American quality used to be.

But when you choose what to prioritize, when you choose what to emphasize, you are relocating your heart. And if you get too worried about finances, you're moving your heart out of heaven. If you are more concerned about being pleasing in God's sight and trusting him for what you can't see and can't do, your heart moves toward heaven.

Your treasure moves your heart. So put your treasure where you want your heart to be. It's backwards from what we would expect, right? I'll get my heart right and I'll spend my money properly.

I'll put enough in the offering to get me by another week. No, you make a decision, adopt a policy, implement a policy of investment, time, opportunity, resources, finances, whatever it may be. You make that policy and stick doggedly to it.

It will move your heart one way or the other. So that's what Jesus says here in verse 22 and 23 and 24. Actually, that's 24.

22 and 23 is kind of like the salt and light idea, but this is the eye and light instead of salt and light. 22 and 23. So I'm giving you these out of order.

I already covered 24, 22 and 23, uh, lamp of the body is the eye. If your eyes good, your whole body would be full of light. If your eyes bad, your body's full of darkness.

And if the light in you is darkness, that's really dark. All right. So what does 22 and 23 summarize down to distill down to make sure you're looking at good things with good eyes, direct your attention.

Remember when, when we memorize the verse whatsoever, things are good, lovable, noble, lovely of good report, honest, true. Think on these things. And when you look at it in Greek, to the extent that it is good, to the extent that it is pure, to the extent that it is noble, to the extent that it is lovely, to the extent that it is find the element in any situation, circumstance, person, person, place, or thing.

Find the good, the pure, the true, the noble, the honest, the lovely, the things that are of

good report and think on that part and peace of God will keep your heart in mind, right? That's your eye. You choose what to look at and your eye itself has to be good. You've got to have objectivity.

You've got to have, you've got to base it, not on wishful thinking, not on an unrealistic expectation, but on practical biblical wisdom. So I summarize 22 and 23 this way. Make sure you're looking at good things with good eyes.

If you find yourself, you got some turmoil, you got some acid running around in the basin there in the heart, you've got some bile, you've got some bitterness, you've got some angst, you've got worry. One of two things is wrong. Either your eyes are not good or you're aiming your good eyes at bad things.

Good eyes aimed at good things. That's the goal. Otherwise, great darkness.

Darkness, in case you haven't gathered this from looking at the darkness, which is outside and the outer darkness and looking over the horizon at the dim glow of the throne of the lamb in the new heavens and new earth. And well, I'm sure Jerusalem new is that direction because that's the glow. We can see Tulsa at night because there's a glow in the in the Southwestern sky.

We're Northeast of Tulsa. So we look Southwest and there's, there's just a glow. There's so much light there.

It diffuses into the particles in the air and such. Well, darkness is not a good thing. Outer darkness spots in your love feasts, you know, darkness is bad.

So good things, good eyes, and you're not going to be in bad darkness. Well, that then brings us to chapter seven. So let me once again, summarize chapter six, I gave you the seven points of chapter five and I've got eight here for chapter six in verses one through four.

Don't worry about being esteemed by others. Verses five through eight, pray to God, not people. And this is not only formally, but conceptually don't be looking to people for your solutions.

Look to the Lord. The Lord will use people, but you've got to look to him to deploy them. Verses nine through 13, the pattern for prayer, praise, expectation, confession, provision, physical and spiritual.

We address these things in our prayers. Forgiving others is essential. That's the fourth point.

It's not a nice to do. It is a must do. If you have no forgiveness from God, you're off the table for grace.

You're off the table for blessing. You're off the table for provision. You're off the table for opportunity.

There is no more important status than having your sins forgiven. And they are not forgiven if we don't forgive each other. That's number four.

Number five, don't worry about being esteemed by others, being well thought of by others in your fasting, just as you don't do it in your praying. Your fast should be to God just as your prayer is to God. And this is your dealing with circumstances should be as under the Lord, not to model faithful behavior for others in how you deal with the circumstance.

The sixth point, invest where you want your heart to be. Invest your time, your resource, your opportunities, your money, whatever you've got, invest it where you want your heart to be because that's where it's going to end up. Number seven, make sure you're looking at good things with good eyes.

And you'll know this because your inner man will be flooded with light and peace. If you're not feeling light and peace, there's a simple fix. Check your eyes, make them good, and then aim them at good things.

Peace and light. That's the source. It's quite easy.

And then finally, make sure you are single-minded in your dedication to God. You cannot serve God and money. You can't serve two masters.

Pick your master and serve it. If you wonder which master you're serving, what are you doing? Easy enough. Then in verses 25 through 34 be a ninth point for this chapter.

Don't worry about your life, what you will eat. Look at the birds of the air, which of you by worrying can add anything to your height? Why do you worry about clothing? Look at the lilies. Don't worry, saying, what shall we eat? Verse 31, what shall we drink? What shall we wear? After all these things, the Gentiles seek, those with no relationship to God at the time that Jesus is speaking.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Verse 33, all these things will be added unto you. And if you wanted to pick a theme verse for that section, that's it.

Seek first the kingdom of God, which summarizes much of what we've already seen. But my personal summary of verses 25 through 34, these illustrations all drive back to one point. Don't stumble over the details of life.

Don't stumble over the details of life. We're not here to just simply be sure we've got clothes, to be sure the next meal is on the table. Those are details.

Seek first the kingdom of God. That's something beyond the material, beyond the

moment, beyond what we see. Don't stumble over the details of life.

Well, that brings us to chapter 7. Judge not that you be not judged. Judgment you use to judge, you're going to be judged with it. You bang somebody with a hammer, that hammer is going to be swung on you.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. So why do you look at the speck? Get the plank out of your eye. So verses one through six, in the same way, we shouldn't stumble over circumstantial details, food, clothing.

Don't stumble over people's failures and foibles. If you stumble, when we stumble, we judge. When we stumble, we start becoming speck inspectors.

We're nit pickers, almost literally. Don't stumble over people's failures and foibles. This connects to the previous section.

Don't stumble over the details of life. Those are circumstantial issues. These are people problems.

You can note them. You're going to have them. Don't stumble over them.

The words are chosen carefully. Don't worry about certain things. Don't stumble over certain things.

Don't stumble over people's failures and foibles because we all have them ourselves. And while we're busy noting the defects and the problems with others, others are looking right back and saying, well, guess what? So don't stumble over those. Then, and same thing in verse six, don't give what is holy to the dogs.

You're a dog. I need to sanctify you. I need to wash you.

We've got a dog that, new dog, that loves to find the mud and run through it. And it's got beautiful white feet, but half the time she comes up to the door wanting in and her feet are black, not white. Thankfully, this particular Macon model of dog has what they like to say is self-cleaning fur.

And if you let her run around long enough, most of that just seems to fall off. It's an, I've never seen it before. It's an amazing thing.

We've had dogs that would stay dirty for a week. Once they get dirty, this dog, once that stuff dries, it just kind of falls off. But of course she wants in sooner than that.

So there's a lot of washing the feet of the saints because it would be more fitting if she was a St. Bernard. But anyway, uh, don't give what is holy to the dogs or cast your pearls before swine. Once again, you're trying to fix obviously messed up people, dogs and swine.

These are people, right? They're going a different direction. They're interested in different things. Don't be preoccupied trying to fix people.

They've got a failure. They've got a direction. They've got a policy they've adopted.

They've decided I'm going to be a dog. I'm going to be a swine. I'm going to engage in swinish behavior.

I'm defiled. I'm corrupt and I don't care. I like my mud hole.

I'm going to return to the wallow. I'm a dog. I'm going to return to my vomit.

Let them go. Disinvest. Don't stumble over details of life.

Don't stumble over people and their choices and their problems. Then you have the very famous, uh, command from the Lord in following ask and it will be given you seek and you will find knock and the door will be open. This is really the central idea of this entire chunk of preaching from the Lord Jesus.

Asking, seeking and knocking is all upward looking. It's concerned with the father in heaven. It looks to him for blessing.

It looks to him for peace. It looks to him for light. It looks to him for provision.

It looks to him for protection. It looks to him for justice. All of the things that you see listed up above are summarized in whatever you need, ask God, whatever you're looking for, take it to him.

Whatever opportunities you hope to have, knock. God will answer the ask. God will reward the seeking.

God will open the door when you're knocking and you might have to knock on several doors and he'll open the right one. Then in verse 12, uh, and, and by the way, Jesus spends all of verses seven through 11, seven, eight, nine, 10 and 11 all emphasize that ask, seek and knock. It's a very emphatic point.

Verse 12, you have the golden rule. What you want men to do to you do also to them. This is the law and prophets.

Instead of worrying about esteem, worrying about people's swine ishness or dog ishness, worrying about the specks in their eyes, treat them the way you want to be treated. He doesn't say treat them based on how bad they smell as a pig or how barky they are as a dog or how corrupt and defiled they are. Don't treat them based on that people around you, treat them the way you would like to be treated.

That sums up the law and the prophets. And then, uh, verse 12, uh, is looking at others.

Verse 13 and 14 turns the gaze on ourselves enter by the narrow gate.

So ask, seek, knock, looks to God in verses seven through 11, verse 12. This is how you treat others. You have this thing, you know, God, others, and myself.

That's the priority. Look to God, look to others, then look to myself. And you have that same thing here.

Seven through 11, ask, seek, and knock to God. Verse 12, golden rule. This is how you treat others.

13 and 14. This is how I, myself should organize my goals, values, and priorities. Verse 13 and 14, narrow gate.

Don't base your behavior on what the crowd is doing. Pastor we listened to years ago used to say to teenagers, don't be herd bound. If the herd is all going in one direction and you're just comfortable in the herd and you figure, well, they can't be wrong.

I'm in the herd. I'm safe. I'm good.

It's everything is okay because I'm in the herd. Believers cannot be herd bound. There is no herd of believers.

There are groups of two or three gathered together. There are small groups of the faithful. We saw in the birth narratives of the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist, how few people were in on the greatest event of human history.

A couple of shepherds, a couple of people down at the temple, a couple of family members in the tribe of Levi and in the tribe of Judah. And that's it. A little bit later, you got a couple of guys coming all the way over from where Daniel used to hang out.

Very, very few. Narrow gate, narrow way that leads to life. Few find it.

If you're in the herd, it's just like if you find bile in your soul and you're not filled with light and peace, something's wrong. If you look around and there's a big crowd of people claiming to be Christians all around you, you look around and you're in a gigantic auditorium with 10,000 people all saying amen. Flee.

Flee. It's not right. You're not going to find thousands of people doing what's right spiritually.

Jesus says so right here. Few there be that find the way and the gate to life. Few.

You should be happy to be in a small church because big churches are missing it. They are, you can't believe the evil and the strife and the contention and the sins of the tongue and the mental attitude sins that go unaddressed in large churches. I've been in

them.

You've been in them. A lot of you know what I'm talking about. Know what the Lord Jesus is talking about.

So verses 13 and 14, this is myself, my goals, my values, my priorities. Then finally in the latter half of this chapter, don't be led astray. Verses 15 through 20, there's just three sections left in this chapter, this section 15 through 20, don't be led astray by purveyors of lies, by false teachers, false prophets.

Don't be fooled. You say, well, if I knew I was being fooled, I wouldn't let myself be fooled. But most of the time when I'm fooled, I don't know I'm being fooled.

When I'm deceived, how do I know I'm deceived? Could Eve have figured out that she was being deceived by the serpent? How could Eve have not partaken of the fruit? She gets something of a extenuating circumstance. It says, well, she was deceived. Adam did it with his eyes fully open.

She was deceived. So there's a bit of extra mercy there, but could she have avoided being deceived? Remember that thing about, do not think I have come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. One yod, one tittle will not pass away.

Respect the word of God. What did the word of God say? It doesn't matter how desirable it is. It doesn't matter how wise it might make you.

It doesn't matter how healthy and beneficial. It doesn't matter how wonderful, how satisfying, how much of a high you might get from it. It doesn't matter.

God's word says, no. God's word says, don't do that. Do this, respect it.

And you won't be deceived. Deception always distracts, deflects, and dissuades from the simple truth of God's word. Don't be deceived.

Jesus gives it as a command. He doesn't say, I sure hope you don't get deceived. It's easy.

You know, people are so clever and they can just paint a figment of imagination that is so, but you, there's no way you could know that No, he says you're responsible to not be deceived. You don't have to be deceived. So don't be.

Beware of false prophets. You will know them by their fruits. You're not going to get nourishment from a thorn bush.

You're not going to get healthy, beneficial, impetus, light, and peace, and growth, and positive production from a thistle bush. You'll know them by their fruits. If you come to Grace and Truth Bible Church, and you don't find strength, and health, and benefit, and

motivation, and encouragement, and correction, rebuke, and instruction in righteousness, go somewhere else.

Because if you're not getting fruit, you're not in the right place. The fruit of God's word will benefit. It will produce.

God is at work in you to will and to do for his good pleasure. If you're in the word of God, it is power in your soul. And if you're not getting it here, you need to get it somewhere.

Otherwise, you're trying to pick fruit off a thorn bush. Go where you get the word of God. You will know them by their fruits, not what their life looks like, but what your life looks like after you listen, after you partake, after you pay attention to the prophet.

If that prophet doesn't give you stuff that helps you grow, and be strong, and mature, invest, and do all of these things we've seen up above, you're not in the right place. Go somewhere where this happens. You will know them by their fruits.

It's the fruit that you pick, the fruit that you eat, the fruit that you get energy and strength from. Verse 21 through 23, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord shall enter that. You know, they had this name it and claim it thing.

Name it and claim it. It's what I say. I say it and it is so.

People say he's guilty. So therefore he is. People say he committed a crime.

Therefore he's a criminal. It's not what you say. Where is the truth? So my summary for verses 21 through 23, when Jesus, the most horrifying, scary thing in this whole section of Matthew's gospel is right here.

Verse 23 scares me. What would it be like to approach the Lord Jesus with hope and with expectation of fellowship and opportunity and dwelling and receiving overcomer blessings and have Jesus look at you and say, I don't recognize you. I don't know you.

I don't know where you're from. Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. That's a believer.

That's a resurrected, sanctified, redeemed, propitiation, atonement, reconciliation, all the rest of it. Positional truth is all attached, raised in a believer's resurrection, but it is a resurrection of shame and contempt. Go back to Daniel 12.

Some a resurrection of life, some a resurrection of shame and contempt. Do you really want to play petty games in this life, looking at others, looking at circumstances, judging, allowing bitterness, allowing patterned sins to persist with verse 23 on the line? If this doesn't scare us straight, nothing will. Hellfire doesn't scare me like this verse.

Because hellfire, you throw in, you're gone. This, it's eternity over the horizon, looking at

the faint glow. Depart from me, you worker of iniquity.

Scariest thing in the Bible, in my opinion. So what do you want to do instead? Build on the rock. And this is the final section.

I would summarize 21 through 23. It's not what you claim or what you think you did. It's who you know.

We're not going to get in to any future opportunity and realm of blessing based on what we did. We're going to get in based on who we know. It's an amazing thing.

Even in the world, people, Jesus brags on sons of this world who are smart enough to leverage who they know. And he says, if you're not going to be righteous, at least attach yourself to some righteous people. And maybe they'll invite you in for a visit in the kingdom.

It's who you know, not what you think you've done. It's not what we claim, not our fame. It's who we know, hear and do.

That's the final section, 24 through 29, actually through 27. And then the description of the ending there. Over here is these sayings of mine and does them house built on the rock.

Just a quick observation here. Do you notice the two houses probably looked identical, same materials, same size, same number of stories, same configuration, windows, drapes, dressings, rugs, furniture. The house is the same.

What distinguishes the houses is not what they are built of, but what they are founded on. We can look good. We can look solid.

We can have all the same appeal as a house that's built on the rock, but we've built it on sand. The foundation is beneath. It's hidden.

You can't see the foundation. You can see the edges. The inspector will come around there and see if you've got termite tubes or if the soil has come up so that it's going to give an avenue for WDIs.

WDIs are like WMDs, wood destroying insects instead of weapons of mass destruction, but they do ultimately the same thing. But it's the foundation that counts. So hear and do.

The house looks the same. It's made the same. It's the foundation.

There are two tests. Notice the rains come and the winds come. I don't know what that is, but the rains come and the winds come.

Two different things. I would suggest that our house and what foundation it's on is tested by challenging circumstances in this life and the judgment in the next. You've got wind and you've got flood.

Wind speaks of more heavenly things. Flood runs along the ground. So on earth, what do you have? Testing in this life will reveal what kind of foundation you've got.

Judgment in the next life can tear your house down. It might be the flood in this life. It might be the wind in the next life.

One or the other is going to reveal, and maybe both, what that foundation is. So we want to build on the rock. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.

It is important to build with your gold, silver, and precious stones, but foundation comes first. The bones, the structure, the basis, the stability on which it rests has to be Christ and the things of Christ. Well, that brings us back up now to chapter 8, and we've used up our time for this morning, so we'll begin looking at the man with the skin disease.

This is probably not actual leprosy, but a variety of skin ailments were identified under this term in the ancient world. But this is a fascinating little four-verse section here, and we'll look at it next Sunday. But we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ preserved for us as though we ourselves were seated on the hillside, able to understand the beautiful words in Aramaic coming from the lips of the Lord himself. And we pray that as we reflect on them, that your Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts, help us to not only hear them, but to do them.

And we pray that as we go forward into this year and into the opportunities and challenges that you have incorporated into your plan for our lives, that these words of the Lord will ring in our ears, God the Holy Spirit will bring them ever to our minds so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in his name. Amen.