

Matthew 20-01-12a

Good morning, this is Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is the 12th of January 2020, and we're continuing our study in the Gospel of Matthew. We'll be picking up this morning in chapter 8. Chapter 8, we'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and to cultivate the active ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts so that the things that we look at will be meaningful and helpful, and the comment I just made will resonate as we undertake our study this morning.

But let's ask God's blessing and we'll begin. Father, we are grateful as we begin a new year with its opportunities and its challenges to refresh our souls at the oasis of your word to be refreshed, renewed, restored, cleansed with the washing of water by the word. We're grateful for the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful accomplishment of so many valuable things on our behalf, our redemption, our reconciliation, our propitiation, enabling us to be cleansed and to have the ongoing presence of your Holy Spirit to lead and to guide and to bring to our minds the word of truth.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word this morning that it will be meaningful and a source of direction and application for each one of us in the days ahead. We pray that in all things this morning as we enjoy our fellowship and the exchange of the benefits of gifts that you've distributed among us that the Lord Jesus will be glorified and we pray these things in his name. Amen.

We spent last Sunday reviewing the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching on the hill as we've seen it, and I thought we'd do the same thing again. And then I thought, well, maybe not. Maybe that was a sufficient review.

But in that review, we saw many points. I tried to summarize section by section things like not worrying so much about fair treatment from others or justice in this earth, points that Jesus made about the direction in which appeal should be made and dependence should focus for provision and for request, the Lord's prayer being prominent in that regard or the disciples' prayer as it's more accurately known, not stumbling over others' failures and foibles, asking and seeking and knocking the golden rule, and so on. So we're coming now in chapter 8 to the end of this teaching section and the beginning of a narrative.

And so we've had chapter 5, chapter 6, and chapter 7 looking at these points. Prominent among them was entering by the narrow gate. Wide is the way.

Broad is the gate that leads to destruction. Narrow is the way. Narrow is the gate that leads to life.

Few there be that find it. So here is my pop quiz question number one for this morning. This is a very extensive section of teaching that we've just covered.

It's over a hundred verses. What did he not say? You can review your notes from last Sunday and see everything that Jesus did say, but what did he not say? It's helpful in this regard to think about the purpose of his communication. What exactly is he saying? We've seen the content of it, but what is its purpose? What is it for? What does it do? Is this the way of salvation? Is it the way of spirituality? Interestingly, in this entire three-chapter section, the Holy Spirit is never mentioned, is he? So what does he say and what does he not say? No less formidable an individual than Louis Sperry Chafer has noted this and talked about what is and isn't in this section.

And I like the summary that he made about this. What is the nature of the teaching? It is the righteousness of the law properly understood. Righteousness under the law had been misunderstood by the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the whatever-you-seize in the ancient day.

And they were tithing spices and missing the larger points of the law, declaring their possessions to be korban, dedicated to God as an offering. Therefore, I can't use them for any charitable purposes right now or honoring my father and mother or anything like that because I've dedicated it all to God, so I've got to keep it so it'll be intact when I depart this life. I can spend it on myself, I can use it for my own benefit and happiness, but I'm conserving it so that I can bequeath it after I'm gone.

This kind of righteousness misunderstood the law. So Jesus corrects what righteousness under the law actually is in terms of love for others, doing no wrong, doing no harm. Summarized under do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

But if you think about that golden rule, what is the standard by which your treatment of others is measured? Self-interest, right? It's not unlike love your neighbor as yourself. Well, the standard by which I'm going to measure how I treat others is how I would like to be treated or the love that I lavish on others is the love I lavish on myself. Myself is kind of the standard.

If I'm okay with it, if it's good enough for me, it's good enough for my neighbor, right? So this is righteousness under the law properly understood. Jesus delivers this with authority. You have heard it said, but I say, and that is our clue as to the purpose of this block of teaching.

You've heard it said, but I say, Jesus cites the law and cites the Old Testament understanding and then speaks authoritatively about it and over it. He has the authority to properly interpret it. Why? Which of Jesus' many types of authority is being invoked here? Is he speaking as the Lamb of God or is he speaking as the Lion of the tribe of Judah? It's the latter.

This is the king talking about the standards in his kingdom. We're in an election season. Seems like we're always either just recovering from one or getting ready for the next

one.

But I'm starting to see political ads for the presidential election that's still nearly a year away. And so Michael Bloomberg comes on and says, here's all of my accomplishments and here's what I want to do. It's his policy statement.

Jesus is not running for election. He is elected. He fulfills election.

If you want to talk about the doctrine of election, that's the Lord Jesus. If you're in Christ, you're elected. You're elect.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, because God knew that there would be people who would believe in the Lord Jesus. And because he is chosen, we are chosen. Because he's acceptable, we're acceptable.

Because he will reign, we have the opportunity to reign with him. But this is Jesus' kingdom righteousness platform. This is both the standard for entrance into the kingdom and the standard for function and remaining in the kingdom.

It's kingdom righteousness. It's Old Testament law righteousness. So that's what it's for.

So this kind of moral ethical righteousness is demanded in the kingdom. It's demanded for the kingdom. And you'd better be a believer in it and a practitioner of it if you have any aspirations of entering on that narrow way through that narrow gate into that life.

So it is the ground for admission and it is the manner of life to be lived. It is founded squarely on the righteousness that was defined in the law given at Sinai. This was to be God's people living for God, meeting God's standard.

So what is not there? If you step back just a little for looking at the end of this teaching discourse beginning, for example, in chapter 7, judge not that you be not judged. There's a very potent rebuke for trying to elbow the Lord Jesus as king and the law as God's righteous standard aside and saying, I'll be the standard and I'll be the judge. He in verses 7 through 11, that was the first six verses in chapter 11 is, who do you think you are to judge? You ought to be judging yourself or you're going to be judged.

You don't have any business elbowing the Lord out of the way. We take this same standard in looking at things like evangelism and trying to convict people of their sin and push them kicking and screaming, go into the highways and byways and compel them to come in. It seems to be the theme for a lot of Christian evangelism.

And it discounts, if not completely ignoring the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. You don't displace and supplant and think you can do a better job than God's Holy Spirit. Well, in this judging section, there's a system for this judging and it's not us.

We need to be tending to ourselves. In the next four or five verses here, Jesus returns to

talking about prayer and God is willing to give good gifts to those who are looking to him. Then that was followed by the section we just talked about, the morality of the golden rule.

And let me read you a little bit of what Lewis Barry Chafer, founder of Dallas Seminary, had to say. Israel is reminded that to enter the kingdom, a surpassing righteousness is required. The common ethics of moral men is proclaimed in the so-called golden rule.

But this life that you're entering into through the narrow gate is not presented as a present possession of the Jew. Life to enter into it, you're traveling this road and you're striving to enter through this gate. Life is on the other side.

How does that contrast with ourselves as church age believers? We have life now. We're going to enter into an enhanced version of it, but we've entered into our life. We have so many things that were going to be possessions for Israel in their kingdom.

So what is future for them is present for us in a lot of different ways. So when Jesus says, I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly. Well, they didn't enter into life and more abundant life unless and until he's the blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord King and the kingdom comes.

When the kingdom comes, they have life and have it more abundantly. But he came into his own and his own received him not. So that life and abundance has not yet come to Israel.

Who has life and has it abundantly? That's us. You think about John 3.36, he who believes in the son has everlasting life. He who does not believe the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

For us, the gift of God is eternal life. Romans 6.23, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 John 5.12, he that has the son has life.

He that hath not the son of God does not have life. So what is an inheritance or an expectation for the Old Testament folks is something that we enter into now. We're already in the, it's not exactly a preview, but it is the first phase of our eternal life.

So in pronouncing this for the kingdom policy, this is the Messiah saying, here's what we're going to do when this kingdom begins. That whole presentation, his platform, if you will, ends with this warning section in the last part of Matthew 7. There are two warnings. One of them is to beware of false prophets and how they can be identified.

How do you figure out who is a false prophet? So these are the communicators that are deceiving and leading astray. Then you have those who deceive and lead astray by their practice, who render, this is where we get lip service. They say, Lord, Lord, but they've gone their own way.

And the Lord looking out the door and saying, I do not know you, which we'll see later in Matthew chapter 25, many will come to me in that day. And so keeping the sayings of Christ is to build on a rock and to have a firm foundation. And when the storms and the winds come, it stands.

And of course, this speaks of both temporal circumstance and the judgment. So having declared with authority as King, what's supposed to happen, what has he not said? And this is what Lewis Perry Schaeffer says. The most vital elements of the believer's relation to the persons of the Godhead, relationship to the Father, the Son, and especially the Holy Spirit, who is never mentioned here, is lacking.

There is a recognition of God the Father. There is a recognition of God the Son. These are going to be the prominent figures in the coming kingdoms, the kingdom of the Son, followed by the kingdom of the Father.

No reference to the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling and limitless ministry is so great a factor in our age. There is no reference to the death of Christ. There is no reference in the Sermon on the Mount to redemption, to reconciliation, to propitiation.

And what are these three summary headings of the work of Christ on the cross? What do they solve? Romans chapter 7, chapter 8. You remember where Paul is talking about the law is holy, righteous, and good. I assent to the law with my mind, but I don't find in me the ability to do it. This policy statement, this kingdom practice and kingdom ethic and morality is all well and good.

Judge not that you be not judged. Oh, okay. But how do I keep myself from doing that? Don't worry about what you will eat, or what you will drink, or what you will wear.

Your Father knows you have needed these things. Well, I assent and agree that this is all good, but I don't find within me the power to do it. Paul says, who will deliver me from this body of death? I want to live this life.

I want to enter into this life, but I find in myself nothing but death. And Paul says, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ. We are partakers of Christ.

We are in Christ. Nowhere in this discourse do you find anything about being in Christ. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creation.

Old things are passed away. All things have become new. You don't find, I will send you a comforter.

He will give you the power to do these things. Here's the standard, but the whole purpose of the law was to demonstrate for us sin. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

And every time we measure ourselves by these standards, we come up short. And you're going to end up saying, Lord, I tried. And he's going to say, I never knew you.

So you don't have regeneration. You don't have renewal. You don't have the inception of that life that he is talking about entering into.

Where is it now? Can I invest in that life? Can I leverage that life? Can that life help me meet these standards now? It just isn't there. There is a sideways mention of faith. Do not worry about what you will eat.

Your father knows you have need. Trust him for your provision. But in terms of faith as deliverance, faith as your walk, does he ever say in the Sermon on the Mount, walk by faith? It's just not a feature.

It is a performance-based standard without the means. So we don't have any mention of positional truth, justification, all the things that define our Christianity. You don't find them here, do you? So why are we looking at them? Because we do have the means.

These people are going to strive to enter into this and largely fail. And they'll be forgiven for that failure because they're going to get a chance to succeed when? When the millennial kingdom comes, what is the Old Testament promise? I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Then your old men and your sons are going to have the wherewithal.

Now, we learn an awful lot by looking at the Old Testament and looking at the period of Old Testament history that's covered in the Gospels. What kind of Bible are the millennial people going to be reading? Wouldn't it be startling if there's yet another testament of the church age that millennial people can look back and say, oh, well, this life of walking in the Holy Spirit and accomplishing things by the power of God, where is my precedent? Where are my examples? Oh, well, there's been 2000 plus years of people doing that. And here are some examples that are set forth.

Here's how it is done. Nothing to say God can't add to his inspired word. Wouldn't it be a scary thing if our life got sampled? I've always had a measure of sympathy for people whose foibles and failures are recorded in the word of God for my benefit.

I think, well, I am blessed because their fallibility is exposed for public view. And it's an example not worthy of emulation that I can learn to not do and others that are positive examples. Well, it's a sobering thing to think, you know, there's not just a matter of there being records in heaven and a judgment coming, but what if God chooses to use either our successes or our failures as an example for people in the millennium, the way the Old Testament is used for us and even the early days of the church.

So we have this abundance of grace. And you think about, and I like the example that Chafer gives, he says, how great is the difference between those who hunger and thirst after righteousness in Matthew 5, 6, blessed are those who hunger and thirst and those

who have been made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Corinthians 5, 21. We're possessing these things that were future in that account.

We are so fortunate to be looking at this as an example that we are capable of fulfilling because we've been given the power where these folks, if they had accepted the kingdom, what would have happened? The spirit would have come and they could have fulfilled this. And those who were yearning and seeing this standard and saying, yes, that's the way it should be, wouldn't be able to fulfill it until the King gives them the means, entering into life, entering into the age of the Holy Spirit for them. Well, we are in that age now.

So it's a wonderful thing to remember. Well, we look at this and ask ourselves, where is our point of application? To look at God's righteousness is to see a consistent standard, Old Testament, New Testament, future kingdom of the son, future kingdom of the father. It's all the same righteousness.

There's no shadow of turning with God. So because we have the means, we're held to a much higher standard in the judgment than people who might have heard these words on that day and not lived past Pentecost to be able to perform it. So there's a wonderful recognition here that Jesus has pronounced this and is now finished and is ready to move.

He's ready to leave. And so as we pick up now this morning in chapter eight, after Jesus has ended these sayings in verse 28 of the last chapter, and people are astonished at his teaching, he taught them as one having authority and it's kingly authority, not as the scribes. So when he had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

Great multitudes follow him. They didn't climb the mountain, and a lot of them may not have heard the teaching, but they're ready to follow him to see what he's going to do. And so a leper came and worshiped him saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Jesus put out his hand and touched him saying, I am willing, be cleansed. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Jesus said to him, see that you tell no one, but go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them.

What do you notice about this story? It's no accident that it occurs here in the gospel. Having just seen what we've seen, we've reviewed all of the content of those three chapters. We've talked about its purpose.

We've talked about what it does and does not say. Jesus has come down from the mountain and now you have this healing episode recorded. In Matthew's gospel, this is juxtaposed.

This is not the case everywhere. If you remember our studies in the gospel of Mark and in the gospel of Luke, you don't have the same setting for this cleansing of the leper. So we're going to do two things.

First of all, we're going to talk about the setting. Why is it here in the gospel of Matthew? By noting where it occurs in the gospel of Mark and in the gospel of Luke. And that's going to tell us some things about the way Matthew's gospel is going to move forward and its principle of organization because it is not chronological here.

It is topical. And so if it's topical, why does God the Holy Spirit motivate Matthew to put this particular story, this particular episode of healing, right after our three-chapter teaching section? Why is it here? We've talked about why the Sermon on the Mount is there and what it meant to the people of the time and what it means to us, what it does and does not say. But they've been talking a lot.

We're in playoff season in the NFL and they're interviewing players and coaches about what does it mean to you to be in the playoffs and you win a game. Some of them have gone to overtime. There's been some really great football in the postseason and winning literally in the last second of the game, the last few seconds.

And there's such an emotional investment in the game and in the relief of having won. And so now you're moving forward. But well, what about the next week? What about the next game? You've gone from the, as it were, the quarterfinals to the semifinals.

And there is often a letdown of energy and of ability to invest in the next game because you spent all your fuel in that huge push to win the last game. And a week later, you just don't have the same charge on your batteries to push and do the utmost. They've been talking about this all week because there were several cliffhanger games last week.

So those teams have to come back and it's like, well, we're miraculously here. How can we be miraculously good again? And so there's, and Dr. Criswell had a sermon about this. He called it religion in the letdown.

You have a great mountaintop experience. Well, now what? We've literally had a mountaintop experience here in the teaching. So what's going to follow it? How do you pick up and carry on after this wonderful expression of divine truth and kingdom policy and kingly authority? It's a mountaintop teaching.

Now what? Well, it's no accident that this cleansing story comes in this context. You may not have remembered me ever saying this before, but context is really important in understanding the word of God. So remember our context.

I've spent a day and a half, this is our third session now, looking at the context because this narrative section is organized to reinforce and to compliment that teaching section we just finished. So see that you tell no one, but go your way, show yourself to the priest

and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them. What do you think about that? There is testimony that has been given on the mountain of a verbal kind.

What is it going to mean when this, how often has there been someone recover from a grotesque defiling disease in Israel? If you get blindness cured, there's no provision in the law to go do anything at the temple. If you were lame and now you can walk, if you were deaf and now you can hear, if you were mute and now you can speak, there's no requirement under the law to do anything. What is the one kind of recovery of health that demands going to the tabernacle or the temple, seeing the priest and performing some actions? Be careful here.

What is the occasion? What kind of occasion demands that? Defilement. Defilement. The principle feature is not that you are leprous and now you're not.

What does the leper request here? He doesn't say heal me, does he? He says, if you will, you can make me clean. You can make me clean. Key, key detail here.

You could have any healing miracle you want, but this one is one that requires performance under the law. Even being raised from the dead, you didn't have to go offer a sacrifice. You didn't have to go see the priest and be declared clean.

So in this context, Matthew puts this episode right after that because it reinforces the king says we're still operating under the law and your righteousness is in meeting that requirement, right? So that's why it is a cleansing request. And Jesus doesn't say, I am willing to be healed. He says, I am willing to be cleansed.

It summarizes the proper response to what Jesus has just said on the mountain. I look at myself and I realize that I am defiled. If you will, you can take my defilement away.

And Jesus says, I am willing. Be cleansed. And so it speaks volumes about a proper response to these three chapters we have just covered.

If someone is willing to enter into that life, if they are going to willingly aim for the narrow road and the narrow gate, Jesus is going to provide the means and the power to get it done. I am willing. He doesn't say, Lord, what can I do to cleanse myself? He says, cleanse me if you're willing.

And Jesus says, I am. So he's down from the mountain and we're in ordinary life. Sometimes I think Bible class is kind of like going up the mountain and it's cool spiritual spring water and it's refreshing and it's encouraging.

It's restorative. It provides peace. It provides power.

It provides perspective. A lot of words that start with P. There is great recourse for us as believers. It gives the Holy Spirit more to work with in our souls.

Every time we come to the truth of God's word and dip ourselves in that Jordan seven times, we can come up clean. And you can't help in this context, but remember the Old Testament example of Naaman in second Kings chapter five and needing to go to the water and repeated exposure in obedience to God's word provides that cleansing. So in verse two, where it says, behold, a leper came and worshiped him saying, uh, now this is a complete free, no charge, non-spiritual point, but look at that word worshiped.

There is a strange quirk of spelling in English to where worshiped only has one P and that's not an archaism. That is actually proper modern American English. Now, if I want to send something via UPS and I ship it and I say, what is the cost of the shipping? It's a double P, right? So if shipped and shipping take a double P, why doesn't worship worshiped and worshipping take a double P it's just shipping with WR on the front of it, right? So why is there only one P? Well, this throws many people and because I am an English major, you're just going to have to suffer this point.

It is because that syllable is not stressed. We don't say worship. We say worship.

And because the accent is on the first syllable, the second syllable doesn't get the P doubled. Shipping is a stressed syllable, ship, shipping, shipped, but worship is not. So don't spell worshipping, worshiped, worshipers with two P's.

It's one P. It's an unstressed syllable. Uh, think about, um, other words that, uh, if you, yeah, but, uh, it, it needs to end in a, not a, not a dual consonant. I had one in my mind earlier.

I should have written it down, but, uh, to, uh, you can think of other words that, that follow this, this pattern. Maybe I'll think of one over the break, but, uh, he came and worshiped him. And the worship there is a key.

He didn't come and make the demand straight out. He came and what is worship? What does it mean? He came and worshiped him. If you, what are the details of this? If, if Matthew and Peter and Andrew and James are standing around and they see this unclean man coming up, why would they say, Oh, look, he's, he's worshipping.

What is he doing? Is he, is he, is he praying? Is he giving him money? What is the act of worship? What does it look like? What is worship in this context? If not an overt, visible recognition of authority, probably bowing. Bowing is a recognition of authority. Putting your feet down on your knees, putting your face in the dirt, prostrating yourself, or at least genuflecting.

This is a visible mark of, I know who you are. I recognize your authority. So he has basically in this juxtaposition, because, uh, it's likely that this didn't actually happen right after the Sermon on the Mount, but in Matthew's telling of the story, he is using this as a metaphor for the proper response to the teaching.

Recognize the authority of the one who said it and look to him for the ability to do it. And that's a great application for us. When we think about the word of God and we think, I know what is good, but I don't find it within me to do it.

Just like the apostle Paul in Romans. I agree that the law is wholly righteous and good, but I am carnal soul under sin. I recognize the authority of the word of God, but I don't find within me the ability to do it.

This man recognizes the authority and he says, you have the ability. If you are willing, you can make me clean. So when we look at our lives and we have a patterned sin, we have a habitual problem, we have a besetting sin.

This is what we use besetting because, uh, you know, uh, laying aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us, let us run with patience. The race that is set can't run a race well, if you're carrying a lot of extra weight, have you seen the outfits they have now, the shoes weigh like two ounces and they got these skin tight leotard things they wear and they put little caps on because the wind resistance for people that run and swim and all that, uh, lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us. How do you do that? We have been given the power.

This man says, I recognize your authority. Now I need your power. That's the model for us.

If you want to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law that are fulfilled in Christ, we look to Christ and we use his power. It is the Holy Spirit and the truth of the word of God. That's how the power of God comes into the life of the believer.

If we're having power problems, a little power problem when we plugged everything in this morning is why I was still fumbling with wires when we started. If we've got a power problem, there's one place to look and it's where this man looks. If we're having a problem with defilement, we keep getting defiled and we can't seem to escape it.

Lord, if you will, you can make me clean, but the worship comes first. The acknowledgement, the direction, the focus, the dependence, all of the things that he talked about in these preceding chapters are reflected in this man who comes and worships and then makes the request. I know who you are and I know what you can do.

Please do it for me. If you will, you can do it for me. And Jesus says, I am willing.

Be clean. That's how the man gets cleansed. Now that he is cleansed, what does he need to do? We'll look at that when we come back from the break.