

Matthew 20-01-19a

Greetings, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're continuing our study in the Gospel of Matthew at chapter 8. We'll take a moment as we ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and cultivate and encourage the ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our corporate midst and in our individual midst. I was talking to someone, oh I know, it was a statement of faith that was requested to be subscribed to by someone I know and they were talking about salvation and saying, you know, have you accepted Christ as your Savior? Have you invited Him into your heart and made Him the Lord of your life? Which is a bit of a challenge if you believe all of those to be synonyms for salvation.

As we know, there is an indwelling of God in our hearts at the point of salvation, but it's not the Lord Jesus Christ and we're not saved by inviting Him into our hearts nor, John MacArthur notwithstanding, are we saved by making Him the Lord of our life. He's already the Lord of our life, whether or not we are compliant, obedient and have the humility to recognize that is a different question, but none of those things are synonymous with salvation. We are saved by grace through faith, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God, that He was crucified on our behalf, that He was buried and rose again the third day.

If you do not believe in the resurrection, you are not saved or if you've not believed in it at some point. But the indwelling presence of God that we experience universally, what seals us into the body of Christ, what seals us as belonging to Christ and assured of resurrection and entrance into eternal life at the Lord's coming is the presence of the Holy Spirit. And He's there for a reason.

And as His influence and scope grow in our souls, one of the many things that He does for us is to enable us to understand the divine truth of God's word. And it is so important that we ensure that there is nothing to inhibit His teaching ministry to not only seal us into Christ, but to seal Christ into us in the form of the word, capital W, that we study together this morning. So as we go before the Lord, it's a good time to ensure that we've made cognizance of those facts and that in the delivery and in the reception, the Holy Spirit is the true supernatural power that makes our time worthwhile.

Shall we pray? Father, it is such a wonderful blessing to realize that through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, on our behalf, we have the privilege of addressing ourselves directly to you. There is no intermediate priest other than the Lord himself. We have been granted this wonderful privilege as those who are in Christ.

We have the full Lord ministry of your spirit to encourage us, to bring your word to our minds, to help us see its pertinence, to understand its meaning, its interpretation. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word this morning, examining the words and

the works of the Lord Jesus in His coming to this earth, that the Holy Spirit will find us ready and apt pupils, that we will be instructed and corrected, rebuked, and encouraged by this portion of your word to live our lives in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that represents the Lord Jesus Christ as He has gone to glory and is seated at your right hand. We are now the physical presence of the Lord Jesus on earth, and we pray that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work in that regard through our fellowship, through the ministry of the spiritual gifts that you have distributed amongst us, and through the presence and power of your word.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's a great day.

It's a great day to open up the word of God and be refreshed at the spiritual oasis that we find therein. If you have found Matthew chapter 8, let's take a look again at the content before us. When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.

Every time I see that phrase, I may have mentioned this in the past week or two, but we often have wonderful experiences. They've been called mountaintop experiences. We are closer to God and closer to glory.

If you fly on airplanes and get up above the cloud cover, it doesn't matter what kind of stormage is down below. If you get high enough in daytime, here is the sun above the clouds shining on the tops of them, and there's just golden vistas of vaporous landscape there to be admired and wondered at. But then we come down from the mountain.

We come down through the cloud cover into the dismal, swampy, stormy realities of life sometimes, and it's not easy. We've seen three chapters of wonderful kingdom presentation, spiritual truth from the Lord Jesus that we have the privilege of living now, that the original audience and Israel entering into the kingdom will live by and live under in the millennial kingdom. And coming down from that mountain, we encounter the presence of sin, the presence of evil, the effects of corruption, of defilement, of our own shortcoming and failure, and the weaknesses and gaps in our nature.

And that's what you see here. So in chapter 8, when it says, when he had gone down from the mountain, when he'd come down from the mountain, just remember... Sorry for the noise here while I get my cheaters. This is true for us quite often.

It's, as I said, I think last time, Dr. Griswold's sermon title is very apt, religion in the letdown, religion in the come down. How does your spiritual life function when you're in the inevitable dip after a wonderful experience? So great multitudes followed him and here comes a leper. And so after the ideals and the goals and wonderful things that you find in the red ink here in chapter 6, 7, and 8, here is man in his glory, which is defiled and corrupt, prohibited from approach to God, a living death, this skin disease, whatever it was.

But the leper comes and worships him. And isn't it interesting that while this leper could never go and approach God in worship in Jerusalem, he would never be allowed anywhere near the environs of the temple, where can he come and worship? The Lord Jesus is the point of access. He is the point of approach.

He is approachable where the rigorous requirements of the law could never be met. And isn't that true for us that where we could never approach the throne of God except through the veil, which is the flesh of the Lord Jesus. And through that veil, as we pass through it, we are cleansed and made clean and made qualified.

And so we can come boldly to the throne of grace, as Hebrews says in chapter 10, and it is because of the Lord Jesus Christ. This man can approach and worship because it's the living temple of the Lord Jesus. He worships saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Jesus put forth his hand and touched him. Normally this would defile, corrupt, and disqualify anyone in Israel from holiness, from worship, from qualification for service, certainly in the tabernacle or the temple. But the Lord Jesus, righteousness flows in the outward direction.

Corruption doesn't flow in the inward direction. And at the touch of the Lord Jesus, there is no corruption or defilement to transfer because he is made clean. He is healed.

And Jesus says, I am willing. Another nail in the coffin of Calvinism. If you are willing, you can make me clean.

Jesus doesn't say, well, let me check the list of the elect. Let me consult the roster of the foreordained, and then I'll let you know if I'm willing or not. Jesus says, I am willing.

Anyone who comes, anyone who approaches via the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord is willing. And it's a wonderful reminder to us that no matter how badly we fail, no matter how grievously we err, the Lord Jesus is willing to cleanse us. If we acknowledge our sins, 1 John 1.9, he is what? Faithful and just.

He's faithful. He always does it. And he's just.

There is a sound basis, and it's the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us, cleanse us from all unrighteousness, known and unknown sins. I am willing. Be cleansed.

Immediately his skin disease was cleansed. Jesus said to him, see that you tell no one, but go your way, show yourself to the priest, offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them. See that you tell no one.

Why? We talked about this last time. Do you remember the answer? Why does Jesus say

tell no one? Can't he talk to somebody on the way? Is he yet qualified to talk? Jesus has cleansed him, but he's not clean under the law, which is still in effect, still fully functional, still the authoritative guidance from God. He's not clean until the priest declares him clean.

And Jesus says the place of testimony is where God says it is. The testimony will be at the temple. When is the last time someone was cleansed of a grievous skin disease, came down to the temple and offered the sacrifice that Moses commanded? They didn't have a cure.

The sons of the priests and the sons of the prophets and the scribes and the Pharisees didn't have the ability to clean or cleanse or heal any of these diseases. So when's the last time they're going to have to go to the books and look it up and figure out what are we supposed to do? We haven't read that portion in a long time. We haven't needed it.

It's a dusty, unused portion of the manual. There's no paper clip there. There's no convenient access tab on the page.

We've got to go back and find out what we're supposed to do. It hasn't been heard of. What is that sacrifice, by the way? Do you remember in your list of important chapters in Scripture, and I've referred to this one so many times, hopefully you remember it.

Where does the law talk about this sacrifice? It's not in Genesis. It's not in Exodus. It's not in Deuteronomy.

It's in Leviticus. Leviticus chapter 14. Turn back to Leviticus 14.

What is this gift that Moses commanded? Leviticus chapter 14. One of my favorite, favorite Old Testament chapters is this chapter. It is such a picture fraught with illustration of the work of the Lord Jesus on our behalf.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing. The day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest and the priest shall go out of the camp.

In this case, where would he go? Out of the city. Where was Jesus crucified? Outside the city. Outside the camp, as it were.

The camp is wherever the presence of God is located. So if you have the tabernacle, that's the camp. If you have the temple, that's the camp.

Outside the camp, and the priest shall examine him. And indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living, clean birds, cedarwood, scarlet, and hyssop. Now, can you imagine in Jerusalem when this man goes to the priest and the priest goes back and refers to the scroll and

says, Oh, well, to do this right, I've got to take this guy outside Jerusalem.

So here's this man that has formerly not ever been allowed to approach. He's got to send word in. He's still not allowed to approach.

He can't go into the temple precincts. So he's got to send a messenger in and say, there's a cleansed leper outside. We need the priest.

He needs to perform the ritual that Moses commands. And so here comes the priest and he's harumph, harumph. How can this be legitimate? And he's coming out there and here's a man that is manifestly and obviously clean.

And the priest has to ascertain now, is this man putting me on or I'm not familiar with him. And, Oh no, we listen. He's been this way for years.

It's a miraculous. Yeshua of Nazareth has healed him. And of course the priests have already begun to hear about the Lord Jesus, but he's duty bound.

The man is manifestly on the testimony of two or three witnesses clean, clean, cleansed, no longer. And he examines him. He looks him over.

And of course, probably without touching him and pull the, pull up the sleeve, you know, pull up your, your garment. Let me look at your shins. Let me look at your upper arms.

Let me see your back can find no spot. He's utterly and completely clean. So he's got no choice.

So what does he have to do? Fetch the servants, get me some cedar wood, get me some hyssop, get me some scarlet thread. And we've got, now he's got to make a procession out. Now what is the closest border of Jerusalem to the temple? Remember your geography there going East.

What's East of Jerusalem? You've got the Kidron Valley, got Gehenna down there, kind of to the South a little bit. And then you've got the Mount of Olives. So here is the priest going out toward the edge of the city with the supplies.

He commands to take for him who is to be cleansed. This is why I say he's going to have a servant do it. The priest would never condescend to carry these things himself.

He commands two living, clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest, verse five, shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. Where's your running water in this location? It's the water in the Kidron, right? There's living water there.

You're not far from the pool. You remember Hezekiah's tunnel and that area? There's running water. There's living water there.

Killed in an earthen vessel over living water, running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field." You think about the scarlet thread.

You think about the wood. You think about the blood. And as a picture of resurrection, when the soldier pierces Jesus' side, what comes forth? Blood and water.

This is Him who came not only by water, but by water and by blood. In practical terms, what does the water do? Why is the slain bird torn open over water? There's very little blood in a bird, and you need enough to be able to do this sevenfold sprinkling. So it is amplified.

It is expanded. It is made greater by the water. And this is a picture of the Word of God, which is living water.

And it expands and it spreads and makes communicable the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sprinkled seven times him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean. He who is to be cleansed, verse 8, shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water that he may be clean.

Wash himself in water. They've got a supply of water there. After that, he shall come into the camp and shall stay outside his tent, or outside his home in this case, seven days.

On the seventh day, he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows. All his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

Seven days, right? You think, well, it could be that there might be some microscopic remains of his skin disease, and this is a way for him to be completely clean. It's kind of like when they do an operation, even on your pet, you know, if they're going to do an incision or something, they shave all the hair away to be sure that they can disinfect and all that. But what is the actual picture here? Why does he shave off this hair at the beginning, and then seven days later, he shaves it off completely? Every hair on his body is shaved off.

There's no hair on his body whatsoever. No eyebrows, no beard. Why? Look at verse 10.

What is the eighth day famous for in Israel? This is when a newborn baby boy is circumcised. Remember Paul says, I'm a Hebrew, the Hebrews circumcised the eighth day according to the law. So what does this man look like with all the hair removed from his body? The beard that he grew as soon as his follicles started producing in his teenage years.

What does he look like? He is washed, he is cleansed, he is hairless, just like a newborn baby. This is a picture of rebirth and re-entrance into covenant relationship. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant.

It's performed on the eighth day. This man, who of course is already circumcised, he can't be circumcised again, but he is presented as a newborn, newly restored to covenant relationship with God, qualified to approach, qualified to worship, qualified to be a productive member of that society. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water and he shall be clean.

Verse 10, the eighth day, he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, one log of oil. The priest who makes him clean shall present the man who is to be made clean and those things before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. The priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, the log of oil, wave them as a wave offering before the Lord.

Then he shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering in a holy place, for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering, it is most holy. And for the significance of these details, I refer you to our Levitical offerings study where we covered all of this. But in short, when Jesus says, go show yourself to the priest and offer those things that Moses commanded as a testimony to them, this is an enduring eight day long testimony.

Everybody is going to be aware of this man dwelling outside his house. He's not going in. Remember when Uriah came back from the battle and David said, go take up with your wife and he slept outside.

This man is outside. People see him camped out. He's not in his house.

He's outside his house. It's going to be remarkable throughout the city. The priests are going to be talking.

It's a huge testimony and it lasts for over a week. Then he kills the lamb. The priest takes the blood in verse 14 of the trespass offering.

The priest puts it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. This is the same application of blood that was done for who else? The priests themselves. This cleansed leper, the idea here is that God has healed him and cleansed him and renewed him for service.

And so he gets the same sanctifying anointing of blood that you find for the priests themselves. The earlobe, the thumb, and the toe. What do those things speak of? Sanctifying what you take in, what you hear, what you listen to.

Sanctifying what you do with your hands, your activities, your service. Sanctifying your feet, where you walk and how you behave. What's the application for us? Are we cleansed lepers? Have we been renewed and given new life and new fellowship by the sacrifice of the lamb and by the cleansing work of God? What is our dedication? What is our sanctification? We should pay attention to what we allow in our ears and by extension in our eyes and what we take in, what we hear, what we heed, what we consider, what we deem important.

We should pay attention to how we exercise our stewardship in activity and in the use of time, in our efforts and our lifestyle, our walk before the Lord. And it's an easy three-fold gut check for our spiritual life in the same way that when you think about thought itself and our organizing system of philosophy, we think about goals, we think about values, we think about our consideration of what is good, what is true, what is righteous. So our priorities, our goals and our values, that's a three-fold way of examining our thinking.

The ear, the hand, the foot, same thing. Then the priest shall dip his right finger, in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the Lord. The rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of his right ear, of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering.

Because the blood is there as a sign of sanctification, now the oil can be there as a sign of anointing, as a symbol of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who is ultimately going to come. Can't have the oil without the blood. Can't have the blood without the water.

There is washing, there is dedication, there is sanctification, and then there is anointing power for service. It's such an incredible picture. So we have this quick note where Jesus says, offer that which Moses commanded as a testimony to them, but what a testimony it is to them and to us.

We are the cleansed leper. Your name here. I am willing.

Be cleansed. Here is what cleansed people do. And it is the inception, it is the beginning of a life defined by that cleansing and that sanctification and that enablement.

That's what it should be and it should be a testimony. We've often talked about the overemphasis on witnessing and evangelism that seems to characterize you know, evangelicalism, the modern church. It's too easy.

It's too easy to simply say, well, if I hand out a few tracts, share the gospel with a few people, I'm fulfilling the great commission. The great commission is not to tell. The great commission is to be a testimony, to function as a testimony, to let our light so shine before men that they see everything we do.

The priestly functions, all of them at the tabernacle and at the temple were a witness and a testimony, not just what the priest might say, not just what the scribe might read in the evangelism, but it's simply lifestyle spirituality. The evangelism will take care of itself. God will organize contact, visibility, who sees what, when, why, and when we have the opportunity to speak the truth in love.

But this is the testimony and you can read the rest of chapter 14 for additional details, but it is all the way through verse 32 for the one who has leprosy or a leprous sore. And there is a repetition here, repetition of the earlobe and the thumb and the toe. There's repetition of the seven fold sprinkling.

Why is it repeated? Because it's important and it witnesses to us just as it did to them. Well, back to chapter eight in Matthew. We talked last time about the manifold witness, the fourfold witness that we have in the gospels to the work of the Lord Jesus and particularly this context and how it differs from gospel to gospel.

I want to just review something that you may already know or be familiar with, and that is the different emphases in the four gospels. And we will see Matthew's emphasis in his organization and presentation of the material, just as we see it in Mark, Luke, and John. But the rationale for this is that there is a fourfold witness.

Why not just one comprehensive gospel? Why do we have four? And this goes to one, the multi-dimensional nature of the Lord Jesus himself. And one gospel just can't get it done. And there are different purposes of God.

And so you get not just a two-dimensional, not just a three-dimensional, but a four-dimensional picture. When you think of four dimensions, at least for me, I can't help but think of the four faces of the cherubim that surround the throne of God. Do you remember what those four faces are? A little pop trivia quiz here.

Actually, it's not trivia. It's very important. What are the four faces of the cherubim that surround the throne? One of them is a lion.

That's right. One of them is an eagle. One of them is a man.

One of them is an ox. Right? Let's review that. You've got a lion.

You've got an eagle. You've got the face of a man. And you have the face of an ox.

It's a four-fold. One face won't do. And they each face a different direction.

Right? So we've got four gospels. And as a memory aid, I'm not saying that this is an inspired connection, but it seems to me that it's close. Traditionally, and as a convenient memory aid, this by no means exhausts the emphasis of each gospel.

But this gospel of Matthew, as we said in the introduction a few months ago, presents

Jesus as what? What's the thematic emphasis of the gospel of Matthew? The clue is he quotes more Old Testament scripture than anybody else. That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying. So what emphasis does Matthew present of the Lord Jesus Christ? He is the king.

He is the king bringing the kingdom. We just had three chapters full of kingdom policy. Right? It's timeless policy.

It is the distillation of the righteousness of the law. But it's the law of God's sovereign rule over his people. And I worded that carefully.

God's sovereign rule over his people. This was the policy for the nation of Israel when it was a theocracy. The law of Moses.

And Jesus says, you've heard it said, but people have twisted it. I say, here's what the law means. And I'm not come to destroy it, but to fulfill it.

This is what you should have gotten from God's policy statement in the law. Jesus as king. So of the four faces, which one would that be? The lion of the tribe of Judah, right? That's the lion.

So Matthew is the lion. You go to the gospel according to St. Matthew and draw you a lion face right there on that page. This is the lion of the tribe of Judah.

Mark, and it's been a while since we covered the gospel of Mark, but Mark presents Jesus as the humble servant. He is the servant. Now Mark makes plenty of emphasis that he is the son of God, but it is this Philippians 2 connection that the son of God did not think equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of men.

He is the son of God, humbling himself to serve. The son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Mark is the servant of the four faces.

Which one is the strong subservient creature that gets things done? It is the ox. It is the ox. Now there's another picture of the angels where the fourth face is the face of the cherub, but are his spirits not ministers? What are the angels but the servants of God? So whether it's an angel face or an ox face, it's the picture of the fully obedient, fully compliant, fully self-contained and self-controlled servant of God.

That's Mark. So go to the gospel according to St. Mark, which of course is the gospel according to Peter. More about that after the break.

But it's the servant. Luke, quickly now. Luke presents Jesus as the son of man.

Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. It is Jesus in his humanity. It is Jesus in his compassion.

Luke, the physician, concerned about the humanity of the Lord Jesus. It is the longest gospel. In fact, it is the longest book in the New Testament.

Luke is the longest book in the New Testament. It is the fulsome record of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not that these things don't overlap, not that his divine authority isn't present, or that he's not the son of God, or that there aren't a lot of other things, but the emphasis, the theme, and this is the face of the man in the cherub.

So you can put a man's face on the gospel according to St. Luke page. Then finally you come to John. All you have to do is read the first verse.

What do you find out? The word is God, the son of God. And this is the eagle, the bird flying in the air, the symbol of divinity. Jesus, the conquering king.

Jesus, the suffering servant. Jesus, the son of man. Jesus, the son of God.

Those are your four gospel themes. Easily remembered in the faces of the cherubim. So as we go through the gospel of Matthew, we're going to see in this section, having declared the policy as king of the kingdom, Jesus is now going to demonstrate his authority as the king.

His authority. So think about that as we go to the break, and think about that in terms of application, because all four pictures are applicable for us. We say, oh well, he's the king, he's the messiah to Israel.

There's been a lot of misapplication and misapprehension about Jesus as king in terms of the church. He's never presented as the king of the church. What is he to the church? He's the head of the body.

It's more personal. In many ways, it is a higher and more intimate connection and authority. But it is the authority as husbands love their wives and are responsible to be the head.

That's the relationship between Christ and the church. And so we look to the Lord Jesus almost in an analogy way, as we see his authority in Israel, how much more so his authority for his own body, his own possession. The unique gift that God the Father has given him, which is us.

Those who come to faith in this time period, we're the unique possession of the Lord Jesus. And he has us firmly in his hand. But when you think about the Gospel of Matthew and its emphasis on kingship in Israel, this is when we go to the Old Testament and look at God's dealing with Israel in the wilderness and in the land and in the days of the monarchy.

We observe, we interpret, and we apply. We are not Israel in the land of Canaan, but we

do find those same principles to apply. Same thing in the Gospel of Matthew.

What we're going to see over and over again is the Lord Jesus' identity, his authority is the issue for us. So how does that apply? How do I apply the authority of the Lord Jesus this afternoon? Well, how seriously do I take the guidance of the New Testament for bearing the fruit of the Spirit, for loving one another, for presenting myself a living sacrifice a la Leviticus 14? How seriously do I take that? Well, how seriously do I take the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in my life? If I really think that I need to be busy doing something else and that that's sort of a thing I'll do when I get to it, what authority are you ignoring? What are the consequences of ignoring the work of the Lord Jesus, the claim that the Lord Jesus has on our life? It's no light thing. Do you really want to get there, come to the door expecting to be let in and the Lord Jesus says, depart from me, you worker of iniquity, I never knew you.

If we don't implement and apply the principle of the authority the Lord Jesus has, the claim that he has on our life, that's going to be the result and we'll have nobody to blame but ourselves because it's been made manifestly clear and will continue to be made clear throughout this gospel and we'll see more of it when we come back from the break.