

Matthew 20-01-19b

I want to thank Dan and Anna and Lori for that rendition of Dwelling in Beulah Land. Every time I hear that song, it brings to mind Burl Ives. My mother got us records when we were little and I learned the words to that hymn long before I was ever old enough to sit in big church from listening to Burl Ives and in some cases Burl and the Korean Orphan Choir.

If you can ever find a copy of those old recordings, that's good stuff. He was a talented guy, made his name as a folk singer, but he was a believer and he did a lot of really great recording of hymns and spiritual songs and I certainly was a beneficiary of that as a yonker. Let's continue our study now in the Gospel of Matthew and we're taking this opportunity because we're at a turning point.

There are five big sections of the Gospel of Matthew and we are at a pivot point here in the book. The first book, and I'll give you this by way of outline, I may have talked about it before, but we had the introduction or the prologue in the first two chapters. This is the birth narrative, this is the beginning with Zechariah and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph and all of that, and we got that done in time for Christmas.

But that's sort of the introduction or the prologue, those first two chapters. This launches the narrative, it establishes John the Baptist, it establishes the Lord Jesus, and the incursion or the eruption of God into human history after some centuries of seeming silence. Then we have really a five-fold presentation in the Gospel of Matthew.

The first section is chapters three through seven. And what we're going to see is that in this gospel, you're going to have these five sections. They're going to begin with narrative and they're going to transition into teaching.

We've seen this in the first section, if you will, in chapters three through seven. In chapter three and four, we had God identifying the Lord Jesus via John the Baptist and speaking from heaven at the baptism and so on. Then we had the account of the temptations in the wilderness, and then we had the gathering of disciples to follow him.

And so you had sort of a three-section narrative followed by the teaching on the hill, the Sermon on the Mount in chapters five through seven. So again, you've got three emphasized narrative pieces after the introduction, starting in chapter three, extending through chapter four. Then we have this extended section of teaching.

The Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, have been compared to three different kinds of river. Mark is thought to be the oldest gospel, and as a reflection of the teaching of Peter, it's been compared to a rushing, crashing stream that goes down rocky inclines and diverts to the left and diverts to the right, and immediately this happens, and euthus in Greek, immediately that happens, and it just turns and crashes. It doesn't dwell too

long on any one thing.

The temptations that take up half a chapter in Matthew are summarized in two verses in Mark. The teaching, this teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, just a few verses in Mark, and it rushes onward. And the impetuous and onrushing nature of the account kind of reminds us of the personality of Simon Peter himself.

He's a get-on-with-it kind of guy. Lord's on the shore, take off my cloak, dive in the lake, swim there. I'm not going to take my time, you know, getting the boat there.

If that's the Lord, I'm getting there. He's walking on the stormy sea. Lord, bid me come to you.

Come on. Out he goes. That's the nature of the gospel of Mark, and we'll talk a little bit more about John Mark as its author directly, but it's a crashing, onrushing stream.

It's a short, powerful, energetic gospel. Matthew has been compared to a river that has flowing sections followed by a widening, more placid pool. So the action moves forward, and then you kind of have a rest.

And if you've ever floated a river like the Buffalo or some of these others that we've done over in Arkansas or Missouri, you find this to be the case. There'll be narrow rapids and quickly flowing, and then it'll open out. And if you're on a tube or if you're in a kayak or something, and, well, you know, you've really got to expend more effort getting across the peaceful sections, then the thing will carry you along all by itself when you get to the rapidly flowing current.

Well, Matthew alternates all the way through, and the narrative will be these rapidly moving pieces of current, sections of fast-moving current, followed by a teaching section where you get to rest and reflect and dwell. And so coming up in the gospel of Matthew in this, we've just finished the first section, which was the identification and signaling of God that this is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased. That was narrative number one.

The temptations, narrative number two. And the people beginning to follow the Lord Jesus is number three, followed by chapters five through seven, which is this Sermon on the Mount. Now we're turning a corner to the second section, and we're going to have a threefold narrative section.

What we're looking at here at the beginning of chapter eight, we're going to see three miracles. We have the leper that we're looking at right now. We're going to have the centurion servant, and we're going to have Peter's mother-in-law.

So there's threefold miraculous healings here, followed by a call to discipleship. Then we're going to have three more miracles, followed by a call to discipleship. And then

we're going to have three more miracles.

So we're at the first of a triplicate three times three. Three miracles, three times. Nine total miracles coming up.

We're looking at the first. This is going to be followed by the sending out of the twelve. That's the second section.

Then we're going to come to the third section, which is going to be a threefold narrative. There's going to be some opposition to the Lord Jesus. There's going to be some confrontation.

Jesus is going to answer and refute the opposition. And then seeing that he has come into his own and his own received him not, he's going to withdraw. He is confronted.

He answers them. That answer does not satisfy. It doesn't produce a response.

So he's going to withdraw. It's a threefold movement that we're going to see in that section. And then he is going to launch into a section of parables, the kingdom parables.

So then we're going to see that same pattern two more times. And I'll give you the chapters and so on as we get there. I find that it's not usually too helpful to outline the whole thing because people can't go back and find that page.

So I'll tell you as we get to each section. But just be aware there's going to be five of these sections. We've already seen one.

You have a threefold narrative section followed by teaching content by the Lord Jesus. Then there'll be a threefold narrative followed by teaching. We're at the beginning of the second section here.

And we're going to see this threefold narrative, which is three miracles in each section. And then Jesus is going to talk to the disciples as he sends them forth. There's going to be some content, some mission-oriented material.

And that's going to take us through chapter 10. So we're here in chapter 8. And we're also noticing that where Matthew does this, these sort of rapid sections followed by a chance to reflect on what Jesus says and what Jesus does. Mark is just an onrushing stream.

What about Luke? Now the onrushing stream thing kind of makes sense because the servant doesn't really question what the master says. He just gets it done. It's an action gospel.

Jesus is serving and he is demonstrating the qualities of being about his father's business. And accomplishing the father's purpose as that suffering servant, as the ox or

the messenger. When you get to Luke, once again you have an introductory section in Luke 1 through 3. Where did Jesus come from? But as the son of man, you remember Matthew starts with Jesus and traces him back to Abraham through David, right? Son of Abraham, son of David.

Why? What's his purpose? This is the king. This is the anointed one. He's qualified.

He has kingly authority as the Messiah in Israel. How far back does Luke take him? All the way to Adam. Because he's the son of man.

He's the last Adam. And he traces him all the way back to the first Adam. Then Jesus' prophetic ministry, his connection to people, his healing and his communication in Luke 4 through the middle of chapter 9. But then, just as in Matthew, we're going to see that there is a pushback.

Jesus presents himself and then there is conflict. And there's opposition. There is challenge.

There is friction. And especially amongst the religious leadership. And this is going to take up the next 10 chapters in Luke.

Then, of course, you have the arrest and trial and crucifixion in Luke 19 through 23. And then the resurrection in Luke chapter 24. So it's sort of a five-fold outline there.

But Luke gives us the chronology. What is his purpose? He states it at the beginning. He says, I have endeavored to put forth an orderly account.

And orderly means chronological. And so what we see is that in this case, in Matthew, the account of the leper has been moved forward. It doesn't happen chronologically until much later.

So, where and why? Why is that? You can look this up and it's parallel. If you look at your notes in your New King James, you'll see that the cleansing of the leper in Luke chapter 5 comes in a different order and in a different context. We saw that last time.

So why does Matthew move it up to immediately after the teaching on the hill? What is the theme of the book? The authority of Jesus. What is the application of that for us? It's not enough just to observe these things. We have to ask ourselves, well, so what? So there are four accounts.

So they present the king, the servant, the Son of Man, the Son of God. So what? Why does God do that? What am I supposed to do with that? Well, if the issue here is Jesus' authority presented here for our benefit as His kingly authority in Israel, reminiscent of, foreshadowing, and echoing His authority in the church for us, what do I do with that? If you think back over this last week, all the way back to last Sunday, at any time last

Sunday afternoon or Monday, we had some NFL playoff games last weekend. We had stuff we did on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, places to go, people to see, things to do, jobs to perform, chores to fulfill.

At any time, did I stop and think, the Lord Jesus Christ has authority in my life? How am I recognizing that, functioning under it, and implementing it? I will tell you honestly, I am the guy preparing, presenting. I promise you, there is no time in this past week, not until I started preparing on this section, did I start thinking about the implications of the authority of the Lord Jesus for me personally. And I think this is something we all need to do.

That's why this is here. It's the first gospel. And it says, you know, the Lord Jesus has authority.

What does it say in Matthew 28, 19 and 20? What does it say in Matthew, you know, 19 and 20 is famously the Great Commission. Go ye, you know, as you're going, make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things. 19 and 20 Great Commission, every church confession in the evangelical world, if you say Great Commission, they will say, oh, Matthew 28, 19 and 20.

What does Matthew 28, 18 say? Flip over to it. Matthew 28, 18. Generally, something that has a theme.

They're going to tell you what they're going to tell you. They're going to tell you. And then they're going to tell you what they told you, right? What does Matthew 28, 18 say? Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

All authority in heaven and on earth. This is the theme of the book. Jesus has the right to this authority by birth, by divine commission.

We saw this in the narrative section where John the Baptist identifies him and then baptizes him. And the voice from heaven speaks. This is my beloved son, right? Authority.

So we ask ourselves the question. What is the question we ask ourselves? It's a two word question. Let me hear you.

So what? So what? Did I answer that question for myself this past week? And I will tell you honestly in confession that until I was working on this section and asking myself that question, I had not asked myself that question. We need to ask ourselves this question. God the Father has given the Lord Jesus Christ all authority.

The specific authority that he has for me and for you is he is the head of all things to the church. Read Ephesians chapter one, especially the latter part of that chapter. He is the

head of all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of all in all.

Right? So what? What do we do with that? Well, that is a question that is going to be answered personally for each one of us. But my suggestion is we had better answer that question. It is clearly stated.

It is clearly presented. It is emphasized over and over and over. I would submit that one of the quickest ways to cut to the chase is to go to Romans chapter 12, verses one and two.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. Offer the gift that Moses commanded. Isn't that what he says to the leper? I've been cleansed.

What should I do? Offer what the Word of God commands. What does the Word of God command us to offer? Ourselves. Not spotted and diseased.

Not full of unaddressed patterned sins. Not full of unconfessed, episodic sins. Cleansed.

And then we go to our priest. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship.

I beseech you by that mercy. He is faithful and just to forgive us. Present yourself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

This is your service. That's what Paul says. This is your service.

What is my service? What should I do? Present myself holy and acceptable. How do I do that? I've got to be cleansed. I've got to figure out where the leprosy is.

Go to the Lord Jesus. Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean. He says, I'm willing.

Are you willing to do what the Word says? Go show yourself to the priest. Offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony. You want to be a testimony? You want a witness? You want to be effective as a representative of the Lord Jesus on this earth? Be the leper.

Be the cleansed leper. Be the obedient, presenting of himself in the presence of God, cleansed person. Be not conformed to this world.

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. There's been countless scientific demonstrations that what we expose ourselves to conditions our mind. I've given you illustrations of that before, how they can use subliminal suggestion.

But what we expose ourselves to, if you spend too much time looking at the national news, you're going to start to imbibe bitterness, conflict, acrimony, hate, ungodly,

unholy, unrighteous, ambition, seeking a power. You can't help it. This is why there is the washing of feet.

I think the spiritual gift, you know, that talks about washing the feet of the saints. I think there are people in the body of Christ who are gifted with helping us all keep perspective on the road dirt we pick up just living in society. Well, look, here's a parade of people who have crazy values.

Here's yet another cannabis house. Here's yet another erosion of the foundations, biblical foundations of our nation. Here's another destructive development.

Here's another departure. Here's another vicious manifestation of evil. And there are people who, when they wash the feet of the saints, this is not literally taking your shoes and socks and doing something to your toes.

This is speaking a word like apples of gold and pictures of silver that says, you know, God's in his heaven. There's people, I'm not sure I have that gift, but there are people who do. And when you start to get frustrated and wound up and wrapped around the axle about different things you see and hear and that you can't help being exposed to, there are people who have the gift of just reminding us of who we are and why we're here and giving us the truth that the Holy Spirit can use in our souls to disinvest, to pull back and say, you know, let that go.

It's not within my power to do anything about it. Why should I let it have power over me to rob me of my peace, to take away my hope and my perspective and my joy at forgetting the things that are behind and looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher, the alpha and the omega of my faith. Why would I let my mind go spinning down this rat hole of evil when I can be thinking about things? There are people in our midst that have that gift.

You mentioned something, oh, did you see what was on the news the other day? And they said, yeah, you know, I saw that, but I was thinking. And then they mentioned something that came to their soul or came to their mind. Just a little bit of biblical perspective, washing the feet of the saints.

Present yourselves, living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. This is your reasonable service. And there are those who help us with that cleansing process.

Whether it's Bible class, whether it's a word fitly spoken, speaking the truth in love, we all need to encourage each other, not to political action, but to what? Encourage one another to love and good works. Forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let this stuff go.

Can't fix the world. The only one that can fix the world is the king in his kingdom. And he's going to purge out of it all things that offend.

And until he does, there are going to be things that offend. So why get obsessive compulsive about those things? All of this stuff that's going on in the news, and there's a lot. I am keeping just enough track that I'm not completely ignorant if somebody says, oh, well, did you know we have a different president today or some such thing? I need to have a minimal level of awareness.

But I am not going into detail. I am not looking into people's strategy or timing or who did what, who shot John, who did this, who did that, when did they do it, what will happen if they do? I'm telling you that is the road to loss of perspective, to loss of opportunity, to loss of stewardship. So this is my suggestion.

This is one small example of answering the question, so what, about the authority of the Lord Jesus. The news media doesn't have authority over my thinking. Social media doesn't have authority over my thinking.

The ebb and flow of politics and social movements and people clamoring for this, not the other, that doesn't have authority over me. What has authority over my thought life? The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory, the head of all things to the church. I am submitted to him.

I present myself through him to God the Father. He is the way, the truth, and the life. So I offer you this by way of suggestion.

You can find your own personal application, but find it, find it. This entire gospel of 28 chapters is dedicated to reminding us that the Lord Jesus Christ has all authority and certainly has authority over us. And to the extent that we forget it, to that extent we are wasting our time, wasting our breath.

This is talents that have been handed to us that we have not invested, have not brokered into more, have not been faithful as stewards, faithful as servants. Who is that man that the Lord will find as a faithful servant? When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth? That's us. So, application, application, application.

Look at this section of Matthew chapter 8. I'm not going to give you verse by verse here on these three miracles. Just read it. We've already seen the leper.

See that you tell no one. Go your way. Show yourself to the priest.

This is Jesus giving this man authoritative instructions. And he's got the law of Moses backing him up, but it's Jesus telling him to do it. And if you go to some of the other gospels, what does it say? He didn't remain quiet.

He noised it abroad. And he interfered with the active ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus could no longer enter openly into towns. This man, by his failure to recognize the authority of the Lord Jesus, slows him down.

But Matthew doesn't deal with that. He goes on in verse 5. Jesus entered Capernaum. A centurion came to him pleading with him, saying, Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.

Jesus said, I will come and heal him. Centurion answered and said, Lord, I'm not worthy that you should come under my roof. Only speak a word and my servant will be healed.

For I also am a man under what? Having soldiers under me, I say to this one, go when he goes. And to another, come when he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it.

When Jesus heard it, he marveled and said to those who followed, assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel. What is the expression of this centurion's faith? Absolute recognition and application of Jesus' authority. Isn't that what we're hoping for here? Centurion says, and look, the Lord Jesus said, I will come to your house.

Wouldn't that be a great thing? How would you like to get a little note this afternoon in your text box or your email or however it is you get your communications? And the Lord Jesus says, hello there, Zacchaeus, or fill in your name here. I'm coming to your house today. Jesus says, I will come.

This centurion knows who the Lord Jesus is. And you think, wow, Jesus will come to my house. And as great an honor as that would be, what a thrill it would be, what a memorable, life-changing, I will tell the grandkids about this, Jesus came to my house.

What does he apply instead? You have authority. All you have to do is speak the word. Now, this is amazing.

This is fairly early in Jesus' ministry. And he says, all you have to do is say the word. I know how authority works.

And all you have to do is invoke your authority, and it will happen. It's not magic. It doesn't require hocus pocus or some sort of special technique.

It's not hypnosis or something with your presence. It's your authority that gets these things done. The centurion has an amazing grasp.

So, I say to you in verse 11, many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom, whose it is by birth, will be cast into outer darkness, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. Why? Have you ever had a really rebellious child? Someone who is wayward? Someone who just pokes their finger in the eye of authority? You can observe it.

You can see it. There are people who just chafe under authority. And it doesn't matter

what your birth is.

It doesn't matter what claim or title you have. If you don't honor the system and the authority that God put into that system, it is not going to honor you. And the sons of the kingdom, it's no accident that he uses that phrase.

It is yours by birth, but you have disqualified yourself. Should have had it, but you moved yourself away from it. You did this.

You're a son, but you're not an heir. Right? Weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus said to the centurion, go your way, and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.

It will be done to you in accordance with your faith. That's what's going to happen for us. To the extent that we honor the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, to that extent, it is going to be done for us, both now and in the ages to come.

This is no light thing we're talking about here. Do you want to enter into the glorious realms of the new Jerusalem? Do you want to own a dwelling place there? Do you want to have an access card through any one of the gates on any one of the sides of the new Jerusalem? Do you want free access to the river of life and to the tree of life that grows on its banks? Or do you want to be in the darkness which is outside, crying and grinding your teeth at the stupidity of getting distracted and deflected and co-opted by something that is not the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ? His servant was healed that same hour. The authority of the Lord Jesus is real.

It is effective and it is dominant. It is the great factor for us. What is more important in our life than the authority of the Lord Jesus? Name something that sets that aside, elbows it out of the way, makes it less important.

What's more important than Jesus as our great high priest, as the head of all things to the church, as our Lord and Savior, as the one in whom we have that menorah of blessings in Ephesians chapter 1 that we looked at a few years ago? You got something more important than that? I don't think so. So, authority. So, in the first four verses, this is the authority of the Lord Jesus over that which defiles, that which corrupts, that which creates in us a living death.

Leprosy is a picture of walking death. Jesus has authority over it. He says, I'm willing, be clean.

He speaks the word and corruption and defilement are gone. He speaks another word and says, the law pertains, obey it. The word of God pertains, obey it.

That's the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, it is not only for those under the law, but it is for Gentiles, anyone who has faith. It foreshadows the coming of the gospel at large to the Gentiles.

Jesus says, I haven't found this kind of faith in Israel. And this is why, by the way, the gospel is going to expand and extend to a new people of God who will bear the fruits of the kingdom. Gospel is going to be taken from you and given to those who bear its fruit.

And here's one of the first. Now you have the third miracle here in this first of three sections of three miracles. Now, when Jesus had come into Peter's house, and I want you to notice the marker on these miracles.

What was the marker in chapter eight, verse one? When he had come down from the mountain, right? That's the context. He had been on the mountain teaching and he came down. What's the marker in verse five? Now, when Jesus had entered Capernaum, right? He's gone into a town, a civilized area, a lot of milling throngs, a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.

Now, what do you have in verse 14? Now, when Jesus had come into Peter's house, each of these is set in a different context. Jesus authority doesn't get limited to just the foot of the mountain or just the town. He's in the house or he's in the town or he has traveled down from the mountain.

It always pertains. He saw Peter's wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So he touched her hand and the fever left her and she arose and served him.

See where it says them? Cross that out and write him. She arose and served him. That's what it should be.

So you have three different aspects. The implementation of the Lord Jesus authority for the leper meant obedience to the word of God. The implementation of the Lord Jesus authority for the centurion meant personal blessing.

A loved one, his servant or son is healed from that very hour. Personal blessing, the granting of personal requests, something close to the heart. The implementation of Jesus authority in Peter's house creates a response of service.

Do you see it? It's not just how should I then live? What should I now do in the light of Jesus authority? But it's fleshed out. These are the consequences. This is what ought to happen.

And it's in different areas. And it has different implications and different effects depending on the area of life we're looking at. Are we coming down from the mountain? Are we entering the town? Are we going into the house? In the household, that's where service begins.

In the town, that's where witness, the witness of a blessed, happy life pertains. Coming down from the mountain, you hear the teaching, time to obey. Time to heed the word.

This first section is just fraught with useful, powerful, Holy Spirit anointed truth for us. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can go over this and over this. And the more you look at it, the more you see.

And, of course, there's nothing better than looking at the Lord Jesus firsthand, listening to what He said, looking at what He did, and asking ourselves the question, how should I then live? So what? Well, this is the second section now. We've got the first set of three miracles. We're going to see two more sets of three miracles, each of which is going to have a similar traction in our observation and in our interpretation and in our application.

And I look forward to looking at it together with you next time. But we'll close this morning in a word of prayer. Father, we thank You for the wonderful gift of Your Word.

What a miracle it is that it has been preserved across the ages. It is translated into language that we can understand. We can instantly have access to any portion of it and to virtually everything that has ever been said or written about it.

There's never been such a time where God the Holy Spirit can minister Your truth to our hearts in such a manifold and in-depth way. We pray that as we reflect on this portion, that Your Holy Spirit will help us to see clearly where we should continue what we have been doing, where we can improve and do things that we've not been doing and reach that place of service and function to where when the day of judgment arrives, we will hear those blessed words, Well done, Thou good and faithful servant. Servants who recognize the authority of Your Son, the Lord Jesus, and who can reflect His glory in Your presence.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.