

Matthew 20-03-08a

Good morning, this is the 8th of March, 2020. If you're not here yet, it's because you forgot to change your clock, and I'll see you in an hour. Otherwise, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church.

We continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew, resuming at chapter 9. Chapter 9, we'll be talking about taxes today. Taxes, tax collectors, everybody's excited about that topic, I know, but we have some interesting things to see from the Word of God regarding those who work in that industry in Jesus' day. Let's take a moment as we approach the time of investigation into God's Word to go to the Lord in prayer and ask God's blessing, cultivate the ministry of God's Spirit, and enjoy the presence of the Lord Jesus that comes when two or three or more are gathered in His name.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for your many expressions of grace and faithfulness toward us. We recognize the mighty gulf that you have spanned in sending the Lord Jesus Christ to save us, to lift us up, and to renew us and regenerate us, to bring us into relationship with you. We thank you for the confidence and the assurance that we have that when we pray, our prayers are heard and you are on our side.

Because of the Lord Jesus, we enjoy so many wonderful privileges and blessings, and we thank you for those, and we thank you for the privilege we have this morning of looking at your Word and having the Holy Spirit bring from the narrative those truths that enable and energize our souls and make it possible for us to redeem the time and to live our lives in a way that lays hold of righteousness and prepares us for the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this part of your Word that we will understand it properly, that the things that we see this morning will resonate in our souls and encourage us to greater faith and greater obedience as we think about the example of the Lord Jesus and the words that He spoke that are so meaningful and pertinent for us. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. You'll remember that we finished last time looking at the swine and the episode with the Gerasene Demoniac. The immediate follow-on to that when Jesus recrosses the lake was to be back in Capernaum and you have the hole in the roof and the letting down of the man by his four friends and Jesus' declaration and demonstration of His authority on earth to forgive sins.

The miracles that we have been seeing in Matthew's account have emphasized different aspects, different facets of the unique person of the Lord Jesus, His power over disease, His power over demons, and now His power over sin. So with that in mind, the account is going to move forward now and sin is still in the picture here. It is still something that is going to be prominent in the narrative, but we're going to see the perspective shift a bit.

But just remember that in verse eight, Matthew emphasized that the multitudes

marveled and glorified God who had given such authority, the authority to forgive sins to men. Jesus emphasizes in the healing of the paralyzed man that it is a sign, it is a demonstration and a proof that He has authority on earth to forgive sins, forgiveness of sins. What a wonderful thing.

We would be mired in consequences. We would be mired in guilt. We would have a very dismal future if this central feature of our salvation were not available.

Forgiveness of sin. We all sin. We all come short of the glory of God and God has found a way through Christ to mitigate the effects in time and to erase the stain and the guilt and the metastasizing corruption of sin for those of us who are in Christ.

It is only in Christ that those things are available. It is only through Christ that those things are possible. It's the biggest thing ever.

What knocked the angels out of heaven? Sin. What drove the man and woman from the Edenic paradise? Sin. What complicates, confuses, erodes and destroys our lives? Sin.

What can you and I do about sin? Nothing. We are not even always able to identify it in ourselves, but even having identified it, we have no power to escape it. We cannot overcome its consequences.

You think about our pericope before last, the man or the two men who lived in the tombs and their violence and their expressions in terms of the consequences of sin, the destruction, the waylaying of people on the road and beating themselves and others up. People tried to control that with shackles and with bonds, but the power is too great. It can't be contained.

It can't be controlled. It can't be legislated out. It can't be counseled out.

It can't be fellowshipped or disciplined or accountability out. We have no ability to escape our own sin, nor to control sin in others. It is a virulent problem.

When Jesus announces that he has authority on earth to forgive sin, to remove its effects, it is awe-inspiring. No man has ever had that power. No system, no philosophy, no religion, nothing has ever been able to remove the power of sin, break the power.

Remember the great line where it says, he breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoners free. Uh, that's what we're talking about here.

Well, this theme is going to move forward now. And so as you pick up in Matthew chapter nine, verse nine, you will see in your New King James, if yours has headings like mine, it says, Matthew, the tax collector, as Jesus passed on from there from where his own city, which we know is Capernaum. So he's passing on from there.

And he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, follow

me. So he arose and followed him.

Now it happened as Jesus sat at the table in the house that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? When Jesus heard, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, but go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Now for some additional details, you can turn to Luke chapter five. We have a couple of helpful insights for our purposes, if not for Matthews.

You'll see that in Luke chapter five, you have the healing of the paralytic beginning in verse 17 and extending through verse 26. Luke's purpose is different. So you don't have the mention of the authority to forgive sins.

Instead, they were all amazed and glorified God were filled with fear saying, we've seen strange things today. Verse 27 of Luke five, after these things, he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, follow me.

So he left all rose up and followed him. Then Levi gave him a great feast in his own house. So where Matthew just says they're eating at the house, we know that this is Levi slash Matthew's house.

There's a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with him, the scribes and the Pharisees or the Pharisees and their scribes is probably a better translation complained against his disciples saying, why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? Jesus answered and said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. You'll notice that we have three sayings of Jesus in Matthew.

Uh, the center one in the Matthew account is not present in Luke go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice, but, uh, returning now to Matthew, we just, uh, are going to camp here in Matthew chapter nine, verses nine through 13, Jesus passed on from there and saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. This is the gospel of Matthew.

We know that Matthew is Levi. And so we can ask ourselves the question why in Mark, it says he is Levi, the son of Alphaeus in Luke. It just says Levi, the tax collector here.

We don't have Alphaeus or Levi. It's Matthew. Matthew, uh, in its original derivation is a shortened form of a Hebrew name that means gift of God.

It's a loose parallel to Netanyahu, uh, which is gift of the Lord. But this is, uh, uh, from a different set of words. And so it is, uh, it means a gift of the Lord.

Why does the Matthew account use Matthew where the other two accounts use Levi? Well, as is the case with, uh, Paul and Peter and, uh, Barnabas and others in the new Testament, uh, they have multiple names. Usually the second name comes at the point of a life change. Remember, uh, Barnabas means son of encouragement and that was his nickname.

He, it's not his original name. Uh, Saul becomes Paul, uh, Shimon becomes Peter, uh, or Kephas. And so it's not unusual.

Why do you think Matthew would keep in this account, uh, the name Matthew instead of Levi? Well, he's in, it's the same reason that Paul begins his letters, Paul and apostle of Jesus Christ. He's identifying with his new status, his new calling, his new identity, and not the old. Um, Matthew is probably a name.

It could have been given to him by the Lord himself. Could have been one that he took on, uh, after having joined the, the band of disciples. So a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office.

Uh, this literally in Greek says he was sitting at the tax collection and these were, uh, businesses. Sometimes they were themselves the collector of taxes. Other times they sold licenses for others to collect taxes.

And this is sort of a Amway distributor kind of thing where the further up the chain you are, the more money you can potentially make. Um, and, uh, you became a broker or a, a chooser of who is going to collect the taxes. They would pay for that privilege because they're going to be able to, to, uh, make something on the, on the taxes that they collect.

And often this was abused. And the reason that tax collectors and sinners are lumped together is there was, it was sort of famously true that this office and power, uh, which was granted by the Romans, uh, the, these taxes go to the Roman empire. This could be abused.

You could overcharge, you could skim. There's all kinds of ways you could really, uh, take advantage of your own people. And so tax collectors were generally despised.

Well, Jesus says to him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. What do we know about this kind of, uh, call and response, uh, with, uh, Peter and James and John.

We've seen this several times in the past when Jesus came and is passing by the sea and he sees the fishermen mending their nets. And he says, follow me. And they dropped their nets and follow him.

If you don't know any better, you think, well, this is just sort of a mesmerized kind of, uh, effectual calling. When Jesus calls, you just drop what you're doing and begin to follow

him down the beach. And we know, especially by looking at, at John's gospel, John's account, that the disciples that Jesus calls on the seashore had been following him and accompanying him for months before he calls them to full-time followership.

So you say, well, that's, we have perfectly good evidence, uh, for, for this in, in the case of Peter and Andrew and James and John, uh, Philip and, and so on. But what about Matthew? This certainly seems to be a new thing. He's walking by and he sees Matthew and says, follow me.

And the guy just leaves the office and follows him. So wouldn't this be an example? Here's the thing. He arose and followed him.

Why would Jesus call Matthew? Does he just need a tax collector? And by the way, if you do have a money man in your group of disciples, why wouldn't he have the money box? If I had a CPA, you know, in my group, he'd be the logical guy to be the treasurer, you know, keeping books, keeping tabs, uh, balance sheets, uh, accounts payable, accounts receivable, that kind of thing. This, this guy would know, why is Matthew not the guy with the money box? Don't have an answer. I just asked the question.

Judas has the money box and that ends up, you know, being a problem later on. But he said to him, follow me. Now it happened as Jesus sat at the table in the house that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Here's what I want to suggest to you. And I'm going to go to another place in scripture to affirm this, but think about every other time in the gospel account that someone has been called to play a role in God's redemptive purpose. Zachariah and Elizabeth, what kind of people? They're already faithful.

They're already trusting God and praying to God. Mary and Joseph, the same. Simeon, Anna, uh, Peter and Andrew and, and, uh, James and John are already down at the Jordan, listening to John the Baptist.

They've traveled all the way from the Capernaum area on the North of the sea of Galilee to listen to John the Baptist. And when they see the Lord Jesus and John says, that's the one I've been talking about. They ask him where he's staying and they they're interested.

They are already people of faith. They are proactively cultivating their spiritual life. If you want to put it in those terms, right? There is no example, except possibly by the omission of details that you can point to where someone is a rascal and Jesus effectually calls them and they suddenly become a transformed person due to the call Jesus calls to and associates with people who are already asking and seeking and knocking.

Doesn't he? That's what this, that's what this story is going to emphasize. We've already seen that it's introduced by the authority on earth to forgive sins. Who can be forgiven?

What do we know about the forgiveness of sins? What do we know about the old Testament? What's our signature passage in the old Testament about the forgiveness of sins? It's not in Leviticus.

It's not in Exodus. Where do we have the central ideas about the forgiveness of sin distilled and condensed in the old Testament? This is one of your Bible chapters. I should know Psalm 51, Psalm 51.

Keep your finger here in Matthew and turn back to Psalm 51. Have mercy upon me. Oh God, according to your loving kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

What motivates God to wash me from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin? It's according to what? The multitude of your chesed, your tender mercies, according to your loving kindness, loving kindness and mercy. This is God's compassion. It's God's grace.

It's God's loyal love. Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. What qualifies David for this privilege, this opportunity? What qualifies him? Look at verse three.

I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done evil in your sight that you may be found just when you speak and blameless when you judge. I was brought forth in iniquity and sin my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear joy and gladness that the bones you have broken may rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from me and so on. This is the Old Testament witness to the forgiveness of sins, the blotting out of transgressions, the washing from iniquity. What is our signature New Testament passage for this? First John chapter 1 verse 7 verse 9. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, us with him, he with us, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin.

If we walk in the light, if we walk in the light, if we acknowledge our transgressions, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So what is the condition that is met so that transgression, sin, and iniquity can be purged, can be cleansed? It is the positive disposition toward God, faith in

God, acknowledgement of need, acknowledgement that not only does the Son of Man have authority on earth to forgive sins, but I need that. It would not really matter if he had the authority if I was not interested.

Someone can have authority to grant a hunting license, but if I am not a hunter, I really do not care. An office may have the authority to grant a fishing license, but if I do not fish, I do not really care. But if someone has a license to forgive sin and I have a sin problem, as all of us do, then that makes a difference.

And I want the benefit of that authority for myself. But it requires a heart that is repentant. It requires that seeking attitude, that acknowledgement of helplessness and need that only the Lord Jesus can meet.

We sometimes get distracted from this. We think, but there is so much in life that does not really have to do with sin. If I am unwell, I want to go see a doctor.

If I have financial problems, I want to go see an advisor, a financial analyst, or go do some research on stocks and bonds and retirement and investments and securities and insurance and various things. There are so many areas where I need advice and I can go to someone who can fill in my needs. And it is easy to forget that the biggest problem, you have heard of people who are polishing the brass on a sinking ship.

Well, I have got a problem here. I have got corrosion on the rail. Let me polish this and sinking is taking place.

It is fine to look to people with expertise or people who can provide a service. They can do something we cannot do. If you need your septic tank cleaned, this is not a do-it-yourself job.

This is time for the professionals. There are certain things where you just want to call somebody who knows how to do it. I have seen a couple of people who tried to tune their own piano.

And trust me when I tell you, piano tuning is something that you want a tuner to come do. You cannot get an app on your iPhone and tune your own piano. It will be a glorious failure.

It just takes a lot of knowledge and experience to do it and do it right. I have learned that the hard way. In the same way, we cannot fix our sin problem.

But recognizing the need, there is no DIY answer for this. I need the authority and the power that only God can provide. So with that in mind, when Jesus looks over at Matthew as he is walking by and sees him sitting at the tax collection office and he says, follow me, what do we know immediately? As soon as Jesus turns to him and you see the red ink words, follow me, what do you know about Matthew? He is not an unrepentant man.

He is not an uninterested man. He is not a faithless man. He is not a reprobate man.

He is not a genuinely mustache twisting evil man. He is not like the scribes and Pharisees and teachers of the law who are outright opponents of Jesus. Who does Jesus call? To whom does God call when he wants service performed? You can go back to the calling of, uh, of what? You can go back to the calling of Paul.

Paul was, uh, when he was Saul, uh, he was zealous for the law. He was misguided, but he wasn't a disbeliever. He had a, as he says later about his own people, he had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

And when he encounters the Lord Jesus, he is blinded. And then the scales fall from his eyes and he becomes perhaps the greatest servant of God of the whole church age. So we know this about Matthew and what is the application of that knowledge before we even get into the rest of the story? What does it take for the Lord Jesus to look at you or look at me and issue the call, ask for service, ask for followership.

What kind of person do we need to be? Zealous for God and the things of God. We don't have to be right about everything. We don't have to be doctrinally pure.

We don't have to be, you know, already hitting on eight spiritual cylinders, but it's the attitude. It's the Psalm 51, first John one attitude, creating me a clean heart. Oh God, why would you say that? Except that you recognize your heart is not clean, that you are sullied and besmirched by sin and iniquity and fallenness.

And you know, in sin, my mother conceived me. I'm bad out of the box, but looking to God for that transformative power, but it requires humility. God resists the proud.

God gives grace to the humble. Is it a privilege or not to be one of the 12 disciples of the Lord Jesus? Good thing or bad thing? These men, a lot of them end up getting martyred. They are hounded and opposed by the authorities, but in the great grand scheme of things, looking at it from divine viewpoint, is this a good thing or not to be a disciple? It's an incredible privilege.

You're going to walk around with the Lord Jesus and get Bible class from the lips of the son of God every day for three or four years, right? Who wouldn't want that? Now, to whom is God going to grant that privilege? Who is Jesus going to call to be a charter member of that Bible class? Not a random individual. My case here, my point here is that Matthew is already a good guy, just like Peter, Andrew, James, John, Phillip, and the others were already good guys when they were called. You could talk separately about Judas if you like, but you can certainly look at the foremost of the disciples, and they were already seekers.

They were already tuned to God's plan and purpose when they were called, and Matthew is no different. Now, in that light, when Jesus calls, he arose and followed him, not

because it's an involuntary response to an effectual call, but because it makes sense to him. He is a responsive, faithful man.

He already knows who Jesus is. Remember when the blind man gets healed and he says, you know, who is the guy? I'm all in favor of him. I just need to know who he is.

Matthew already knows. He doesn't say, who are thou Lord? He doesn't say, well, follow you to what? What are you up to? When Jesus says, follow me and he gets up and follows, there's a lot that we can understand in that short transaction. Matthew knows who Jesus is.

Matthew is willing to abandon his business and follow him full time, just like Peter and Andrew and James and John for the same reasons, for the same reasons. So now as it happens in verse 10, as Jesus sat at table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. What does this tell you? It's Matthew's house.

We know this from Luke. So think about a Thanksgiving dinner or some other wedding reception or something that you've hosted or been a part of putting on. If you're going to have an event that includes a meal in your house, who comes? Especially those of you that live in the city.

Do you just open the front door and holler out in the lawn and say, Hey, we're having food in here. I mean, there are times when people have a block party or a neighborhood thing, but people who come to a meal in a house, what do you know about them? They are invited. They know the host.

The host knows them. The host says, Hey, Abinadab, I'm having a do tonight at the house. I'd like you to come.

Hey, Nathaniel, I'm having a banquet. Jesus of Nazareth is going to be there. You want to come? When it says many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him, these aren't just people who wandered by and said, I smell food.

I think I'll go in. Oh, look, there's a banquet going on. Let's all just crash the party.

These people are invited guests. They are known by name. Matthew knows them.

They know Matthew or perhaps Levi at this time, right? They are known to him. They are his friends and acquaintances. Jesus is the guest of honor at this banquet.

So who does he invite? We've already established, at least to my own satisfaction, what kind of man Matthew is, that he will drop everything and follow Jesus. When Jesus says, follow me, Matthew says, I'm there, let's go. And he feels honored and he is celebrating his transition from tax collector to full-time disciple.

He says, I want everybody to know that the Lord Jesus has invited me to be on the team and I am happy. I'm excited. I recognize and appreciate the honor and the potential of this association.

This is just one of the greatest things that's ever happened to me. I'm throwing a feast. Who's he going to invite? Rascals, ne'er-do-wells, enemies, opponents, those tax collectors who abuse their authority and rob the poor and oppress the needy.

Who is a guy like Matthew going to invite? The same kind of people that he himself is, right? When Anna told the other people in Jerusalem that the Savior had been born and she had seen him, who is she talking to? People like herself, people that she knows will share her joy and appreciation. There is a circle of people who share that enthusiasm and that attitude and that positive proclivity toward God and the things of God and are people of faith and people who are looking forward to the deliverance of Israel and the coming kingdom of God. They're not just any old random people.

And we sometimes forget that in reading these stories. So when it says here, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him. I can tell you something about those people.

They were invited by Matthew and they are his friends and acquaintances. And the reason they are his friends and acquaintances and the reason they're at this banquet is they are similarly appreciative and excited about the Lord Jesus. That's why they're there.

They're not rascallions. They're not evil people. They're not negative, carping types.

They're like Matthew himself. When the Pharisees see this, now are the Pharisees inside or outside? They're outside. They see this stream of people all going to Matthew's house.

And do they judge Matthew by his heart or by his attitude or by his words and by his actions, or do they judge him by his vocation? Well, he's a tax collector. He's got to be evil. In the same way, they'd say, well, man born blind, somebody in his family sinned.

Their assumption is these people are sinners, else they would be rich and pompous like us. So the Pharisees see it and they say, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? What's the answer to that question? Why is Jesus eating with these tax collectors and these sinners? Because like Matthew, they came at the invitation. Matthew could have invited people.

People say, Jesus, not rabble rousing. He's got no credentials. He's got no authority.

Hasn't been to seminary. He's not a Pharisee. He's not an elder.

He's not a scribe. He's just a random guy. Why would I want to listen to him? He's got all

these platitudes and saying I ought to be generous and selfless and self-sacrificial and deny myself.

I don't want to hear that kind of stuff. I can get food anywhere. Who are these people? Why is Jesus eating with these tax collectors and these sinners? Because they have a Psalm 51 attitude.

They know that they're sinners and they know that they have a need for their sin to be addressed, for their sin to be forgiven. And they've heard the story a few days earlier. Jesus says, I've got authority on earth to forgive sins.

And in Luke and in Matthew and in Mark, this sequence is the same. Right after that, the calling of Matthew and the gathering of self-acknowledged sinners and tax collectors to this banquet. This is the attitude we need to have.

If we want the power of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, the cleansing effectual release from that which drags us down, the sin which so easily besets us. If we want to run with patience the race that is set before us, don't forget about sin. On Thursday nights we're talking about our demonic adversaries, but we have an adversary within.

There's sin in the camp and we can't be victorious. You remember what happened to Israel when there was sin in the camp? The sin of Achan who took spoil from Jericho and went to Ai. The whole enterprise nearly came to a stop.

Second city going into the land, they were defeated. Why? Sin in the camp. We have to look for and ask God to purge out the sin in our camp.

Life is not going to be successful. We're not going to have peace. We're not going to have joy.

We're not going to have the fruit of the spirit. Not going to have long suffering and gentleness and goodness and faith and humility and self-control so long as there is unaddressed sin in our lives. This is a basic skill.

Most of you listening to me have been believers for years if not decades, but don't forget your basics. I don't care if you're Sam Snead or Arnold Palmer or Tiger Woods. When those guys walk up to a golf ball on a tee and are getting ready to hit it with a club, every single one of them goes back to the absolute fundamental basics.

Where are my feet? How bent are my knees? What am I doing with my elbow? How am I gripping the club? What is the nature of a good golf swing? And those guys can shank one just as bad as the rankest amateur like me if they don't concentrate on the basics. One of your basics, one of my basics, is find and fix, let God fix, sin in our lives. Sin is the problem.

Sin is why Jesus came to the cross. Sin is what he has authority to fix. But if you're not going to the authority to get that problem resolved, it's on us to try to fix it.

And we can't. We are hopelessly drowning in a quagmire of sin without the power and the presence of the Lord Jesus and the cleansing ministry that involves the Holy Spirit and involves the Word of God. It's a serious thing.

We are neutralized. We are ineffectual. We are hopeless, helpless, and useless.

As believers, all of the potentials, all of the privileges have gone by the wayside. You can end up watching your inheritance disappear in the flames of the lake of fire, which is the second death, if we don't remember to avail ourselves of God's grace in getting rid of sin. Don't fail to address sin.

Don't give it short shrift. Don't concentrate all your time looking at the sin of other people. That's a fun occupation.

It's so much easier to diagnose somebody else and see the mote in their eye. It's the beam in our eye. It's the neutralizing, metastasizing, cancerous presence in our own lives.

And it's so easy to escape it. All we have to do is turn to the Lord, acknowledge it. Psalm 51, 1 John 1. But this is why Matthew is going to be one of the disciples.

He's going to write one of the four Gospels. What a privilege. How would you like to be the one that wrote the book that introduced Jesus to millions and millions and millions of people? He's going to get to do that because he's got this attitude.

Well, we're going to see more of it when we come back from the break. But our first point of application this morning is when you wake up in the morning, when you stop in the middle of the day, in the evening, in any other time, at the point that we recognize that failure has reared its head, sin has gotten a hold of our thoughts, we've got to stop and avail ourselves of God's grace or all of this is going to go by the wayside for us and we're just going to be another casualty in the conflict. We will not be a light shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

We will be part of the crooked and perverse generation. The Lord Jesus didn't come and save us for that. Let's pause here and take a break.