

Matthew 20-06-14a

Greetings, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. Crowded this morning and it looks like we've got a late arrival at the door wanting to come in. But it's great to see everyone that's here and to imagine all the rest of you in the environs beyond.

We're going to continue this morning our study in Matthew chapter 11. It's a fascinating dialogue which consists of a question from John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus' answer. Last week we saw the very fascinating arrival of these two disciples of John and took time to note their presence and appreciate their faithfulness and their place in God's plan and purpose.

Without them we wouldn't have this chapter. And so this morning, which is June the 14th of 2020, we're going to pick up with Jesus in verse 4 saying, Go and tell John. Go and tell.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, the activation of all of our spiritual gifts that function best when we are together and able to receive and give in the power, presence, and unction, as they used to say, of the Holy Spirit. Let's pray and then we'll get started. Father, it is such a wonderful blessing as we look in the direction of your throne, your heaven, your holiness, your perfect plan and purpose, your incredible power.

And we look at ourselves by way of contrast and realize our frailty, our weakness, our fallenness and sinfulness, but we are enveloped by your grace. We are restored and renewed. We are forgiven.

We are cleansed and entered into relationship with you through our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for him. We thank you for his faithfulness and his example as the perfect man who in the power of your spirit and in the guidance of your word accomplished all that you set before him.

We know that we too have the opportunity to serve and to grow and to be prepared for future service. And we pray that as we look at this passage this morning that gives us such a wonderful insight into the thinking and the words of the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit will minister these things to our hearts, help us to understand them and see what they should mean to us and how we should think and act as a result. We pray that our fellowship will be a blessing to each one who is a part of it, that we will be energized, comforted, strengthened and made to enjoy that great peace that the Lord Jesus has granted to us even in the midst of a turbulent and unpredictable world.

That we can continue to shine as lights to reflect that glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as a beacon to those who are seeking and who are susceptible to entering into a relationship with you through the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

Let's start from the beginning and pick up some speed as we go through this chapter. It came to pass when Jesus finished commanding his twelve disciples that he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. When John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, this is the works of the Messiah.

Matthew has not used this word Messiah too much, not since back in around the second chapter maybe have we seen this appellation used. But it's particularly pertinent here, John has heard of the works of the Mashiach we would say in Hebrew or the Aramaic equivalent. The anointed one, that's what Christ means.

He sent two of his disciples and said to him, notice this is John who says, this is another of those many examples we've seen where John is speaking and is said to speak and is said to talk to the Lord Jesus, yet the means of conveyance of the words are his two disciples. But the said is singular here, this is John saying to Jesus via the disciples, are you the coming one or do we look for another? This is not the plural of majesty, this is not the we of I'm too great to be contained by a singular pronoun. This is John and those who have listened to John, who have accepted John's message and who share his expectancy for the coming kingdom.

He is the prophet announcing the imminency of that kingdom. And so when he says, do we look for another? You get the suggestion that he's asking on behalf of those who continue to fellowship and circulate in his presence and are looking to him for additional guidance. You recall that John back in chapter four has already identified Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and then was put in prison.

He got in trouble and in I believe it's 412 of our gospel, the note is made that he is put in prison. And you know the backstory on that Herod Antipas is the king of this region and has engaged in some miracle infidelity and John pointed it out. And Herod didn't like him giving him bad press and so has locked him up in the fortress of Machairus where he is in prison.

He has not tried. He is not sentenced or executed, nor is he released. He is just kept and this is a frustration.

What is John's gift? What is his mission and what is his purpose? He is the one to proclaim the coming Christ. He has done so. He has identified him.

Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip transferred from listening to John to following Jesus and having accomplished that John is now locked up. Well, what is he supposed to do now? It's difficult to be a proclaimer and a forth teller from imprisonment. It puts me in mind of a number of people that I have known, especially in my family and I am in the process of becoming one.

As you age and your abilities and your opportunities diminish, your horizons begin to

become a circle with an ever smaller radius and yet we are still here. And you think, well, I don't have the memory I used to have. I don't have the energy I used to have.

I don't have the physical abilities or the mental abilities that I used to have. I can't do what I did in my prime. I can do things but maybe not as well.

Why is God leaving me here? Well, if that question should ever come to you and nearly all of you are too young for that to be pertinent, but at some point, I remember my grandmother in particular, my grandmother Betty, my dad's mother, wonderful Christian lady and her gift was helps. She just seemed to know and show up with the right thing at the right time and she helped a lot of people over a lot of years. Well, then she reached the point where due to infirmity, she couldn't do that anymore.

Couldn't drive herself around. Couldn't, you know, could barely walk around. And she and I had some conversations and she would say, I'm not sure why God has left me here.

This is kind of John's question. And it's implied in that plural pronoun. Do we look for another? Should I be getting into some sort of proclamation mode and preparing to announce the coming of a different one? Because in the theological expectations based on Isaiah, they could see the prophecies about the coming King who would come in conquest and triumph and dominate and subjugate Israel's enemies and bring this kingdom in by power and authority.

But then you also had the suffering servant passages where he's wounded and bruised and endure stripes for the purpose of healing. And so half the theologians thought that this was the same person. Others thought there's got to be two.

You can't be both. If he makes his grave with the wicked, then he's going to die. Well, if he's going to die, he can't be the conquering king.

And, you know, this is kind of trending toward the Sadducee view that if you die, you're not coming back. Where the other side said, well, you can be both, especially if God raises you from the dead. But there was not a lot of precedent for being raised from the dead in the Old Testament.

So hence this debate. So John distills this into a single question. Are you the coming one? Capital C, capital O, the conquering king.

Why doesn't he say, are you the suffering servant? Or do we look for another? John knows this already. He has announced him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He knows his Bible.

He knows Isaiah. And that being bruised and wounded for iniquities and transgressions and by his stripes we are healed. John knows without a doubt in his prophetic military mind that Jesus is that person.

Is he also the coming one? Or is this going to be a separate guy? John's had some time to think there in the confines of the Mekiru's prison. Jesus answered and said to them, go and tell John the things which you hear and see. This is Akuo and Bleppo.

And the only reason I point that out is in verse five, the blind see that's also Bleppo. So it's really beautiful in Greek. I want to read you this and forgive me, but it's just too good to pass up.

These are present active indicatives. So what that means is it's present tense. It's active voice and indicative is just a declaration, right? But you can translate the present tense as are doing something.

So sometimes you can use a participle for this. The blind are seeing ones. They are those who see, but this focuses on what they are doing.

So I'm going to read you just the first part of this. So you get the flavor. The whole verse is this way and it's just a really beautiful thing.

I may just print this out and stick it where I can look at it because it's a beautiful thing in Greek. It was probably even better in Aramaic. But the first two words are Tufloi anablepousen.

You heard the blep in the middle of that. That's your Bleppo for seeing. And go tell John what you Akuo, acoustics, what you hear and what you Bleppo, what you see.

Tufloi, this is the word for the blind. Anablepousen. And the usen there, that's the second person plural.

But this is present active indicative. And ana means up or again. So they're literally upseeing.

That seeing has come up from where there was a lack. It's like a bare patch of ground and then the grass comes up. It can also mean again.

Some of these people were blinded in accidents or in from disease or whatever. And so, but Tufloi anablepousen kaikoloi peripetusen. Isn't that great? I'm going to read it again.

Tufloi anablepousen kaikoloi peripetusen. The koloi, these are the lame. So you've got Tufloi and koloi.

Then the Tufloi anablepousen koloi peripetusen. Peri, around. Pateo, to walk.

To walk around. This is what Paul is going to use in Ephesians. When he says walk, Paul talks about walking worthy of the Lord and so on.

It's peripetusen, walk around. This can mean your lifestyle in the figurative sense. So

Tufloi anablepousen kaikoloi peripetusen.

That's a set. Notice they're joined by Kai. Now the third one is leproi.

I don't have to explain what that is. And then we change. We don't have another usen word.

This is katharizontai. You know what a katharsis is? It's a transformative purging or cleansing of some personal demons, whether literal or figurative. But this is cleansing.

Katharizontai. But the reason that it's ontai instead of usen, if you're a Greek-interested person, is because it's passive. It's middle or passive.

And they receive cleansing. They're not walking around cleaning. They have been cleansed.

So the lepers are cleansed. They receive that from the outside. So we have two.

The blind are seeing. The lame are walking. The lepers are being cleansed.

There's an ongoing aspect to this cleansing. They've been cleansed from their leprosy, and they receive it from the outside. And the deaf are hearing.

Now we're back to that first pattern. We had tufloi for the blind, koloi for the lame. Now we have kofoi.

K-O-P-H-O-I. These are the deaf. Akusen.

You hear that usen again, and that's akuo. So he's already told the disciples, tell John what you see and hear. And in this first section, he says, the blind are seeing, the deaf are hearing.

And there's a symmetry here in these first two sections. We've had four now, and the outside bracket of that is, the blind receiving their sight, and the deaf are hearing. Those who don't see now do see.

Those who don't hear now are hearing. And in the same way, John is to be told that these things are happening. Chasing chickens.

Thought you were going to put them on the cable. So that outside bracket of these first four things, those two verbs are contained in the previous verse. Then you have the nekroi.

So toothloi, koloi, leproi, kofoi, now nekroi. Nekros, necrosis, this is when something dies or you have dying flesh. So these are the dead.

The dead, egairontai. And this aligns with katharizontai up above. The lepers are being

cleansed.

The dead are being raised. And the patokoi, the poor, are uangalizontai. You hear angalos in the middle of that, the message, you is the good.

So the patokoi, and for you Star Trek fans, if you listen to the Klingons and one of their pejoratives is you're a patak, comes from this word. And it's the poor, P-T-O-C-H-O-I, patokoi. The poor are being gospelized.

It's the easiest way to translate it. The poor are being gospelized. Now that last phrase summarizes all of the preceding ones.

It builds up to this. These are the means by which those who are needy are getting good news. The miracles are the means of drawing attention to and spreading the good news of the gospel of the kingdom.

So I'm just going to read this to you one more time because it's just one of the beauties that we lose when we come to English. It's got kind of a poetic, almost iambic pentameter thing going on there. So this is the message that Jesus sends back.

Now, why these particular things? We know that Jesus has done some other things in these last couple of chapters. He stanch'd an issue of blood for a woman. He cast out demons.

Those things are not mentioned. Why? Interestingly, every other thing that Jesus has mentioned here is also included in our past couple of chapters. But the works of the Christos that are detailed here go back to Isaiah.

So the blind received their sight. It's almost the exact language you have in Isaiah chapter 29, verse 18. In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Isaiah 29, 18. You can also put with that Isaiah 42, 18. Hear you deaf and look you blind that you may see.

Remember, we've got a hymn that says, Hear you deaf and look you blind and the dumb. You know, your loosened tongues employ. Ye blind behold your Savior come and leap ye lame for joy.

It's tied in with this same idea. So, Isaiah 29, 18. Isaiah 42, 18.

Isaiah 35, 5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. And, of course, you can go back to the immediate antecedent in Matthew chapter 9. We saw this in verses 27 through 31 where two blind men are following him saying, Son of David, have mercy on us. Son of David, Messianic title, the blind see.

Then you have the koloi peripatousen, the lame walking. And this, of course, you can find in Isaiah as well. Isaiah 35, 6. The lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

For water shall birth forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Remember, is it Oswald Chambers that has the Streams in the Desert devotional book? A lot of people have. It comes from that Isaiah 35, 6. The lame shall leap like a deer.

And we saw this in Matthew chapter 9 verses 1 through 8 where the paralytic lying on his bed is so that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. This, once again, wounded and bruised for iniquities and transgressions, part of the Messianic package. The leperoi catharizontai, lepers are cleansed.

And you don't have specific mention of leprosy in Isaiah, but you have allusions to griefs and sorrows. You find this in Isaiah 53, 4. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. We esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

And leprosy was looked at as that very thing. And we had this in Matthew chapter 8 verses 1 through 4 where the leper came and worshiped and said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. And Jesus says, I am willing.

Be cleansed. Be cleansed. Catharizontai.

Same verb. Then the kofoi akuosin. Kofoi, the deaf.

They akuo, they hear. We saw this already in Isaiah 29.18 and Isaiah 35.5 and 42.18 coupled with the blind in those passages. And in Matthew 9, 32 through 34 we saw Jesus, the man who was deaf-mute, demon-possessed, and He hears and speaks.

Muteness and deafness generally were a combination affliction. It doesn't specifically say that He was deaf, but the deaf-mute, that inability to communicate is closely associated. Then the nekroi egeirontai.

Egeiro means to raise up, to rise. And so the nekroi egeirontai, the dead are raised. You have 26.19 of Isaiah.

Isaiah 26.19, your dead shall live together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust, for your dew is like the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead. Isaiah 26.19 And of course the Matthew 9.18 through 26, the Jairus' daughter episode, raising the dead.

Then you have patokoi. You're going to remember now what a patok is, if you've ever heard that used in entertainment. Patokoi, the poor, are gospelized.

They hear the good news. This is Isaiah 61.1. Jesus is going to quote this when He's in the synagogue. Read it out of the scroll.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. Preach good tidings. *Eu angalizontai*, to the poor.

Heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. And this of course, Matthew 9.35, we just saw this. Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

We saw it again at the beginning of this chapter. Jesus departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. So, why this? Go and tell John what you see and hear.

And this go, by the way, just to keep your Greek fresh. You remember your rule about the aorist participle? Go is an aorist participle. What do you know about the aorist participle? What's our phrase? The action of the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb.

It's like first year Greek. The action of the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb. So, having gone or after you go, tell John.

It's not an imperative. You go and you tell. It's after you go, the imperative is tell.

And this is kind of important because they're not going to leave as soon as he gives these indicators of what they have seen and heard. Jesus is going to keep talking, and these two disciples are still there. And it's important to understand this to figure out exactly what Jesus is saying.

So, just trust me on this. Your aorist participle is going to do us some good service here. After you go, tell John what you have seen and heard.

But they've got some more things to hear beyond these works that are evangelizing the poor. Look at verse 6. And *Makarios*, happy, well-off, favored. It's not necessarily blessed.

We always say blessed. It's *Makarios*, the Beatitudes. *Makarios*, the poor.

Makarios, the poor in spirit. *Makarios*, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. But when we say blessed, this seems like direct divine attention, favor, and a purposeful dispensation of grace on you.

Makarios is really more general. It was, this is going to be a happy, favored, well-off person. Good fortune is a loose way of saying it.

So, this is happy. Blessed is fine because we do know that for us, these things come from God and through his agency. But it talks about the condition where blessed really implies to us the source.

Blessed, we say favored by God. Makarios just means, any old person could be Makarios in the ancient Greek speaking world. So, favored, happy, well-off, on a good path, in a good place.

Is he who? This is singular, not plural. Happy is he, singular, the one who is not skandalizo, in me. It says because of, scratch it out.

This is in, it's the preposition in, E-N. It means in, by, or with. Not because of, it's in.

Skandalizo, we have it as scandal. There was a scandal in Hollywood. There was a scandal in Bohemia or whatever.

But skandalizo means to get your foot caught in a trap. Hence, to trip or to stumble. A stumbling block is a thing that causes skandalizo.

Caused to stumble. So, happy is he, singular, who is not caused to stumble. This is skandalizonti.

Remember the ontis we saw up above for cleansing. The lepers are katharizonti. They receive that action.

The dead, the necroi are egyptont, caused to rise, raised from an outside agency. Now we have another onti. Happy is he who is not caused to stumble in me.

Happy is he who is not caused to stumble in me. This is somebody who is in Christ in the sense of association, part of the same plan and purpose, aligned, walking with. This precedes the, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation type of body of Christ.

John is obviously an Old Testament saint, but he is in the coterie. He's in the group. He's in that circle of acquaintance that is defined by the Lord Jesus, by the Messiah.

So, he's been talking about all of these plurals. These who are healed and raised and cleansed. But then he switches to the singular as his final remark in this section.

Blessed is he. He's talking to John. Blessed is the one who is not caused to stumble.

Now, who is he who is in me right now in this context? Not talking theologically, but in practical terms, this is John himself. Happy are you, John, basically, if you are not caused to stumble in me. Why would John be in danger of stumbling? Would have been so easy for Jesus to say, blessed are they who? And it's usually taken that way in interpretation.

They say, well, the gospel is being preached, but there's the potential to be tripped by it. And that's why they translate it because of me. Happy are the ones who are blessed, is he who is not offended.

And they say, well, you preach the gospel out here and do these things that people are

going to take offense. Doesn't mean to be offended. It means to stumble.

And it's not because, but you can see the interpretive influence on translation here. If you just take the simple words and listen to what Jesus is saying, it actually makes a better kind of sense. Because John has sent this question, are you the coming one? Or do we look for another? Jesus says, tell John what you've seen and heard.

John knows his old Testament. He knows his Isaiah. And he knows that these miracles that Jesus specifically mentions, these works that he specifically mentions are associated with both the coming one and the suffering servant.

This cleansing and healing are associated with both. So it answers John's question, not with a simple, yes, I'm the coming one. Jesus could have simplified it, just said, yes, I am the coming one.

Okay, you're the lamb of God and the coming one. Thanks a lot. What does Jesus do here with this answer? Sends John back to the scriptures he already knows.

Highly unlikely he's got an Isaiah scroll in the Mekiris prison, but he's got this in his heart and in his mind. He's memorized this scripture. He's been preaching from memory out in the wilderness for a significant period of time.

And he knows these passages. And Jesus says, the answers to your questions are in the word of God. Compare what you see and hear around you in your life, in your circumstance, in your observation, what you see and hear.

Go to the scriptures, go to the word of God. You will find answers to your questions when you reflect, when you compare, when you align what you see and hear with scripture. And we know this to be true.

We've all had a lot of experience in this, both personally and globally and nationally and culturally and socially. We get the answers to our questions looking at the word of God. Jesus tells John, John, keep doing what you've always done.

The things that are seen and heard, look at what scripture says about those. That's your answer. And after having encouraged that, he says, you'll be happy if you don't trip in me.

You're in me now, you're with me now, in, by, or with. Not caused to trip as you go along with me, as you're walking with me, as you're aligned with the plan and purpose of God related to Jesus Christ, you'll be happy if you don't trip. Now, what could make John in particular trip? If we figure this out, we'll know what the application is for ourselves.

Remember in the outset this morning, I mentioned that if you've got a gift and you've got an assignment and you've had a wonderful opportunity to bear fruit and serve and

fulfill a function in the plan and purpose of God, there are many different functions. There are many different areas of service and opportunity. Some of them are visible.

Some of them are invisible. Some of them are memorable. Some of them are not memorable.

It's our assignment, great or small. You see the president give a great speech, but somewhere in the bowels of the White House office section is a speech writer that put pen to paper, as it were, and crafted the phrases and put together the thoughts and strung them together into something that reflects the president's thoughts and actions and policies and wishes and desires. But somebody did that.

But you typically, unless you dig, you don't know the name of the speech writer. You just hear a president deliver phrases and memorable statements. You know, did John Kennedy personally write? Ask not.

Or was there a speech writer? I don't actually know. I didn't bother to research that. But it's the president that we remember for that, right? But there are many people who make those moments possible, and without them, those moments don't happen, right? It's the same in the body of Christ.

Some things are very visible, very memorable, very personal. And in my mind, it's when you think of the body of Christ, even Paul will talk about how there are some parts of the body that are visible and others that we, out of modesty, conceal. But those modest parts are very important.

Without them, a lot of things don't happen. So John has suddenly been limited in his function. He is no longer able to stand at the Jordan, and with his powerful demeanor, his powerful presence, his thundering voice, proclaim.

He is Elijah, Jesus is going to say. That's the summation of Old Testament prophetic power, is Elijah right there. And he's not doing any of that.

He's sitting in a dank dungeon, waiting for word to be brought from outside. So is it over for me? Am I no longer able to serve? God is preserving John for one final, great, defining, symbolic circumstance. And this is Herodias and Salome and the dancing and the head on the platter thing, right? John has to wait for events to coalesce.

He is in a waiting mode. But in the meantime, he still has these disciples who can encourage him, and he can encourage them. And he can explain.

When they get back and they say, well, you know, Jesus said the deaf and the blind and the dead and the lepers and so on. And John can say, okay, let me give a little Bible class on Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 21 and Isaiah 64 and Isaiah 29 and 42 and so on. Okay, I've gotten my clue, and he can share it with his circle of disciples who are going to share it

with their acquaintances and are going to share it with theirs and share it with theirs.

And you don't know the ripple effect that comes when John gets this insight directly from the Lord Jesus in obscurity, out of sight, seemingly out of mind, he's going to continue to do his prophetic job. And ultimately his demise is going to be recorded in scripture in a memorable and effective symbolic communication to the people of that day and to everybody since. He's not out.

He's not been wheeled into the locker room for tests. He's still on the sideline. He's not actively in the game, but he hasn't been taken to the hospital either.

God is reserving him for a last great thing and for some quietly effective intermediate ministry of a different kind. That is true of everyone. Sometimes we have the opportunity to engage in formal ministry when the church is meeting and we can get together and our musicians can provide music and we can sing and we can look to supporting people overseas.

There's a lot of things that we can do. And then there's other times when even our church has been in sort of a defilade and we're scattered or we're separated. And there are things that those who ministered to us when we're in a physical group aren't able to do.

Those who provided refreshments and essentially washing the feet of the saints and in humility day after day, week after week, doing these things and then we're separated. We can't do it. We say, well, what do I do now? Keep looking to scripture.

Number one, to interpret the signs of the times both around us and among us and in us. The answers are in the word of God. If one opportunity has been taken away, be watchful for another.

Don't stumble because your circumstances have changed. This is what Jesus ends up telling John. You're with me.

You're in me. You are by me and in, by, and with me. You're here.

You'll be happy if you don't trip. Don't lose your gait. Don't fail to keep putting one foot in front of another.

Don't let your foot get caught in a trap of why am I now, has Jesus forgotten about me? Have I been cast aside? You know, you used to hear, well, that organization will suck you dry and then throw away the empty shell like a lobster claw or something. And John could feel irrelevant, could feel like a has-been. His day has come and gone and God's sort of forgotten him.

Jesus says, look, you did your job. People are seeing and hearing and matching up with

what you preached. Your influence is ongoing and you are still here because God is not finished with you yet.

So don't stumble. Now is not the time to stop walking. Peripateo.

It's no accident that one of these miracles and one of these summary prophetic fulfillments is the lame walk. John could feel like he's been crippled. Jesus says, no, you're with me.

You're in me. You're by me. Keep walking.

Don't trip. It's a wonderful exhortation and reminder for us. And we're going to see the outcome with John the Baptist because he doesn't trip, because he doesn't fail, and the great ways God is going to use him one more time.

And it's a great way. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. And when we come to verse 7, as they departed, Jesus is going to say some things.

And what is a reed shaken by the wind? We'll find out when we come back from the break. It may not be what you think.