

Matthew 20-08-02a

Greetings, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to see all of your smiling faces, either literally or in my imagination. We continue this morning our study in the Gospel of Matthew.

It is surprisingly pertinent, as the Word of God always is, to our present circumstances and our Thursday night study as well. So we'll be doing sort of a combination, particularly when it comes to our potential for application. But we will be resuming in chapter 12, Matthew chapter 12.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we will begin. Father, it is a wonderful privilege to spend time together as believers who treasure your wisdom and truth as it is expressed to us in the pages of Scripture. We so appreciate the presence and the ministry of your Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us each day by recalling to our minds and helping us see the pertinence of those truths in our daily walk.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we represent, who gave his life to provide for us salvation and relationship with you, who is even now seated at your right hand, awaiting the command to come and receive us to himself. We know that this intervening time is granted to us for growth, for the bearing of fruit, for learning, and being even more thoroughly equipped for every good work. And we pray that our fellowship this morning and our study of your word and our conversation afterward will accomplish that goal, will move us closer to conformity with the example of the Lord Jesus, whose words and works we are observing in this wonderful account in the gospel of Matthew.

We pray that each one who joins us today and in future will be blessed and edified by what we see in your word. And we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Again, we're in Matthew chapter 12. Let's read our passage. And my encouragement, by the way, if you're ever having a discussion on things biblical, which should be frequent, if there is resort made or reference or allusion to scripture, get your Bible and read it.

Many sour notes have been hit in the orchestra of symphonic debate by people misquoting scripture. You want to get the scripture in front of you. Keep a Bible handy, pull it up on your phone.

This is the most usual way now is to have a have a shortcut or something to your blue letter Bible or whatever you have so that if someone quotes a scripture or you want to resort to scripture, there is nothing more powerful than the word of God to a receptive mind. To a receptive mind. There is nothing more powerful than the word of God.

So use it, but use it accurately. Sometimes to make a particular point, the new American

standard is going to be a more literal and therefore more helpful translation. If you're referring to a block, sometimes the NIV, where you get the narrative and you're not so much worried about the individual words and phrases.

Sometimes the King James or New King James because of its familiarity. But whatever you have by way of a Bible, usually on your phone will give you typically a selection of the top translations. But my encouragement is get the scripture in front of your eyes and the eyes of those with whom you are speaking.

You can save a lot of time and the word speaking from itself under the influence of the Holy Spirit to a receptive mind. There is nothing more heart changing, mind changing or life changing than scripture itself. There's a lot of debate going on these days about issues, social, political, economic, national and international.

That's fine. But we should base our worldview on the word of God. And that's the foundation.

So good to have in front of us. So we look at chapter 12. We've already seen Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath.

And you remember the, I encouraged you to take a look at the way the law was viewed by the rabbis, by the people who sought to establish their righteousness by the works of the law. Do you, does that trigger in your mind a verse from Paul by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Keep this in mind, both individually and societally.

Good works do not justify. They do not vindicate. They do not cleanse.

They do not redeem. They do not atone. They do not propitiate good works.

However, well-intentioned, however, noble, however, altruistic, however, marvelous in the eyes of some by the works of the law, the law was not a codification of bad things. Was it look out for the poor, take care of the widows. Don't do your neighbor harm.

Do not covet what belongs to your neighbor. Don't covet his wife. Don't covet his belongings.

Don't murder. Honor your father and mother in the 10 commandments and the rest of the law. These things are, as Paul says, the law is holy, righteous, and good.

Yes. But by keeping those works, you are not justified. You say, well, but doesn't it make a better world? What does Peter say about the world? Knowing that everything you see around you is going to be burned up.

The earth and its works will be burned with fire and the elements will melt with a fervent heat. What is going to survive and go into the eternal future? It is not the works, the structures, the deeds, and the accomplishments of this world. It is justification.

It is redemption. It is propitiation. It is what God builds in our souls, what God creates in our hearts.

It's not Solomon's temple. It's not the second temple. It's not even Ezekiel's temple.

It is the temple of God, which is you. You are it. Know ye not that you are the temple for the Holy Spirit? It's the creation.

It is the deeds. It is the righteousness by faith that will move forward into the eternal future. Now, expressing that kind of righteousness will often result in wonderful acts of kindness, of love to one another.

And it will look like social justice. It will look like sympathy. It will look like empathy.

It will look like pitching in with the poor and the widow and the orphan. And that's great. That will be its expression.

But it has to be an expression of something that starts with the work of God in the heart. The expression by itself doesn't count. The act itself doesn't count.

The act is only meaningful as it reflects what God has done in our hearts. This is why legislating morality and legislating righteousness doesn't work. Because the source of that morality and righteousness is a law, not a human heart.

You don't need the law. The law is written in your heart if you're transformed. You know these things.

I'm just reviewing because it's pertinent in our current time and it's pertinent to our passage. So Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. You remember this? There's nitpicking about what you can and can't do on the Sabbath according to God's law.

But the law was being used as a tool of manipulation to maintain power over the people, to try to draw a contrast between righteous Pharisees and this rabble-rousing Jesus and his disciples. So the law is holy, righteous, and good. But when you try to use it as a baseball bat to club others over the head to maintain or increase your power in society, that's not right.

So Jesus departed from there and went into their synagogue. And he makes another point about what is lawful on the Sabbath. What takes place in the heart? Genuine empathy, genuine sympathy, and ability to deliver someone from restriction, from oppression.

We saw that word that means bowing when we looked at Mordecai and Haman on Thursday night. Boy, what a fascinating study that was. I'm still percolating on that.

But the freedom that is in Christ starts in the heart, not in the government, not in legislation. But the Pharisees, verse 14, went out and plotted against him how they might destroy him. Have you ever seen in scripture where it says Jesus and the disciples went out and plotted how they might destroy the Pharisees? You tend to forget that that could have been in the Bible.

These oppressive, legalistic, poor-squashing, parent-ignoring Pharisees. Oh, my possessions are Corban, mom and dad. I can't really help you.

I'm a servant of God, so I can't be bothered to divide my resources and take care of you in your old age. I'm saving it all to bequeath it to the synagogue or to the temple when I die. And so Jesus and the disciples went forth and plotted how they might destroy them.

Have you ever thought that that's remarkably absent in scripture? Who is it that goes out and plots to destroy others, those who are far from God, who want to try to achieve change by human means, by forcible effort? How did Jesus achieve change in people? How does God achieve change in people? How does he cure drug addiction? How does he cure sexual addiction? How does he cure problems of the heart? In the heart, that's how. So when the Pharisees went out, verse 14 of Matthew 12, Pharisees went out and plotted against him how they might destroy him. What is Jesus' response? Therefore Jesus and the disciples went forth and painted signs and began to picket the temple.

They stood outside and made cat calls at the homes of the Pharisees, calling them out for their inhuman and bigoted behavior. Verse 15, when Jesus knew it, knew that they were plotting against him, he withdrew from there. There is conversation, there is opportunity to hear the word of the Lord firsthand, first person.

There is rejection of that word. There is hostility in the place of faith. So Jesus left off.

He didn't go return and try to argue them further. He didn't have a long day of classes on the Old Testament law. He presents the truth, the truth is rejected, he withdrew.

This is the Lord Jesus. He's our example. We represent him now on the earth.

If you present the truth and the truth is rejected, what should you do? Withdraw. Do not cast your pearls before swine. They will turn and tear you to pieces.

He withdrew from there and great multitudes followed him and he healed them all. Notice when Jesus withdrew, those who followed him were healed. They left the precincts of the and the Pharisees and followed Jesus.

Now, what was going on in their hearts? Were they simply looking for healing? Simply looking for miracles is not told to us because the principle, the model is following Christ is the path to healing. You see it? Withdraw from religious hollow forms, withdraw from false interpretations of scripture, follow the Lord Jesus. That is the path to healing.

That it might be fulfilled. Now, this is where it gets interesting this morning. We're going to spend a little time looking at this.

He warned them not to make him known. Wait a minute, does this not throw all of evangelical Christianity on its head? What is the definition of evangelical Christian? I'm going to tell you about Jesus. I'm going to evangelize you.

I'm going to give you the good message, the good word. For over a century, conservative Christians have called themselves and have made themselves evangelical. And it's a core value for mainstream Protestant churches is we preach the gospel to every creature.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Does that sound familiar? Is that a verse in your King James Bible? Yes and no. It's from Mark chapter 16 and it is in the addendum that is not written by Mark and is not inspired.

Your inspired scripture, your genuine gospel does not say, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It doesn't say that. Jesus didn't do that.

His disciples did not do that. To whom is the message given? He that has an ear to hear, let him hear. Be ready to give an answer to everybody on the earth.

Is not what the Bible says. Give an answer to everyone who is asking you a reason for why you have hope. He warned them not to make him known.

This is not the only time over and over again, Jesus will heal someone and say, tell no one. Principle. It's not always the time to testify.

It is not always the time to push the gospel or to explain the Bible. There is a time, many times, but not all the time. Why does Jesus warn them not to make him known? What's your context? What's the contextual clue here? The Pharisees went out and plotted against him how they might destroy him.

Jesus is going underground. Jesus is going off the grid. Jesus is avoiding confrontation.

If he is viewed as inciting the crowds against the government, that's a bad thing. Jesus wants to continue his ministry to those who are willing to listen. He does not want to confront, oppose, or aggravate the authorities.

I say again, Jesus to accomplish his mission, which is to represent God, the father before the people, Jews, and ultimately Gentiles understands his mission. And his mission is not to confront, to upset, to aggravate, or to undermine the civil authority. Now he's undermining the spiritual side, right? By teaching the gospel, you can't help but expose legalism, hypocrisy.

He's going to pronounce woes on the Pharisees, but he is not doing this in the public

square. He is not rabble rousing. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, following the Lord's example, following the disciples' example, following the apostles' example, do not openly confront, challenge, and disrespect government.

Jesus goes elsewhere. The crowds follow him. And why does he say, do not make him known? Do not make him known to whom? They can freely talk with each other.

They're all there in front of the Lord Jesus. It's not a question of making him known when you have come to Jesus, when you have followed Jesus, he's already known to those people. To whom are they not to make him known? Don't go to the Pharisees.

Don't go to the Roman authorities. Don't go and say, this Jesus is causing a problem for you. He is challenging you.

He is questioning you. He's questioning your legitimacy. He's questioning your policies.

He's questioning your teaching. Jesus said, look, this is for you personally. If you've followed me, listen to me.

I will teach you. Take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy.

My burden is light. I am meek and lowly in heart. I'm not arrogant.

I'm not shaking my fist at the existing authorities. Even when they're Pharisees, he pronounces woes on the Pharisees. But does he try to start a popular movement to overthrow them, to oust them, to darn feather them and run them out of town? Does he throw Molotov cocktails at the synagogues or the temple? No.

People who do this are wrong. I don't care what your cause is. You're not following the example of the Lord Jesus.

That's what makes it wrong. People who aren't believers, people who are faithless, former ex-believers, being a believer and falling away is kind of like being a Marine. You can be a Marine no longer on active duty, but once you've worn that uniform, you're always a Marine.

You can't not be a Marine once you've gone through boot camp or OCS or an academy or Quantico, whatever. You're always a Marine, whether you're looking like one and serving as one or not. You can't change that identity.

This is once a Marine, always a Marine, right? Once a believer, always a believer. But look at me. Do I look like a Marine? No.

Am I wearing a uniform? No. Am I serving? Am I assigned to a duty station? No. But the core is always in your blood.

You just can't escape it. Christ is always in your blood if you're a believer, whether you look like it, whether you act like it, whether you're on active duty or not. But there are many people who might have professed faith in Christ at some earlier point and are now with the world, in the world, of the world, indistinguishable from those who are not saved.

It doesn't mean they're not saved. It means they are not on active duty and they should be. This is a strife.

It is a wrestling. It is a warfare. And we are called to put on the uniform, put on the armor, the full armor.

You ought to be distinguishable by your helmet and by your breastplate and by your shield and by your sword and by your footwear. What is girded around your waist? You should be distinguishable. If you're not, shame on you.

You're AWOL. And there will be a reckoning for that. But active, healthy, faithful believers do not openly challenge God's constituted authority.

This is throughout scripture. You can't help but see it. So he withdrew.

Multitudes followed. Those are the ones who get healed. He doesn't stay in the precinct of the Pharisees and aggravate them by, well, you saw me heal this one guy.

Stretch out your hand. I'm going to heal a whole crowd. I'll just really push this in your face.

Jesus goes away and then heals everyone. He heals dozens and dozens and dozens more than the one guy the Pharisees saw. They don't like it.

They're plotting to destroy him. He goes away to heal. He warned them not to make him known, verse 16, because in verse 17 of Matthew 12, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the word of God.

Jesus is guided by, motivated by the word of God. And this fulfills Old Testament prophecy directly. Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased.

Why is God well pleased with Jesus? He knows his mission. He accomplishes his mission. He knows how to accomplish his mission.

He knows in what power that mission is to be performed. And he does it according to the will of the father. This is the gut check for every single one of us.

Can God say this about me? Look at my servant whom I have chosen. You have been chosen right where you sit in your circumstance, in your family, in your workplace, in

your friends and associations, the generation before you, the generation after you, those around you, people with whom you speak and interact, you are chosen. God positioned you there just as surely as he positioned the Lord Jesus in this generation, in this locale, with this purpose.

My servant whom I have chosen, that's you. My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased. Pray God, he can say this about us, that he is well pleased with how we think, what motivates us, and the actions that emanate from those thoughts and intents and motivations of the heart.

I will put my spirit upon him. God has done this for us. We are this servant.

You know, we are the body of Christ. I have been emphasizing this week after week after week. You are Christ on this earth.

The church is the body of Christ. When God, the father says, I will put my spirit upon him. You are him here.

And he has put his spirit upon you and me. Right? He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will declare what is right, what is just, what is fair, what is proper to the nations.

He will not notice verse 19. This is us. This is you.

This is me. It applies now. He will not quarrel.

He will not cry out. This is openly challenging the slave markets, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin, the Romans. Jesus did not cry out against the structure that God put in place to provide a framework, both positive and negative.

Now let me ask you this. Let's just think for a moment. Suppose God, the father, knowing that he's going to send his son, the Lord Jesus, to be born in Bethlehem, to be raised in Nazareth, to come forth out of Galilee and offer the kingdom to Israel and ultimately provide salvation for the world.

God so loved the world that he gave his uniquely born son. Wouldn't it be great if God sort of arranged a preview of the millennial kingdom in those days, starting six or seven BC along in there, suddenly there was a beneficent king. Instead of Herod, you had a wonderful, faithful, God-fearing king overseeing Judea and Samaria.

Suppose you had godly men like Gamaliel and the apostle Paul, all populating the Sanhedrin and the upper echelons of the scribes and the Pharisees and the chief priests. These were people steeped in scripture. And when Jesus was born and the wise men came, there was excitement and celebration and acceptance and promotion.

What kind of a New Testament would we have? And behold, there was great rejoicing. I think it would be about four pages long. Jesus presented the kingdom, everybody

accepted it, and there was no age of the Gentiles, there was no age of the church, there was no rejection, there was no destruction of Jerusalem, there was no need for the seven-year tribulation at the end of the age of Israel.

It was all wonderful. What is it that gives us occasion to learn all of these wonderful principles of reliance upon God, of endurance under pressure, of faith in the face of trial, of wrestling against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age? We have all of this wonderful three-dimensional understanding of the conflict between God's goodness and righteousness and Satan's pride and evil because it was evident in the time of Christ. These things must come, said Jesus, about his betrayal by Judas and arrest by the authorities and mock trials and false accusations and ultimately crucifixion.

Wrongly, unjustly, unfairly, complete abuse of government power by both the Jews and the Romans. But look at the Bible we have as a result, look at the resources we have, the insight we have, the teaching we have, because God worked all of those things together for good to those who love him, to the called according to his purpose. These are benefits.

God turns cursing to blessing. And the curse of demon activity, the curse of fleshly affliction of disease and withered hands and blindness and muteness and the free exercise of satanic power throughout the region, God actually turns it to advantage and reveals his character and reveals truth to us through it. The same thing is true.

This is application now. Do not be intimidated by the fiery trials you face. Do not be intimidated by opposition.

Do not be intimidated by the strutting in your face manifestations of evil near and far that are everywhere evident. The testing of your faith produces character in the soul. We need these bad things.

I've told you before, I don't know where, somewhere in the Star Trek movies, Spock's brother is a Vulcan and he can pull all the angst out of your soul and relieve your pain. And when he does this hypno thing to the various personnel on the ship, they're just walking around having the beatific vision. And he gets to Captain Kirk and he says, let me, let me take your pain away.

Let me give you this wonderful, you know, hi. And James D. Kirk, William Shatner says, I don't want you to do that. Don't take away my pain.

I need my pain. It's part of what makes him who he is. God makes us who we are as we face and overcome challenges by his grace in his strength, reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These things have to come. They're necessary. It's no fun, but the testing of your faith produces patience.

Let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Well, he will not cry out. He will not quarrel, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.

Now, are people hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus? Have great multitudes followed him when he left town? Yes or no? You can answer out loud. Are people hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus? Yes or no? Yes. Are they hearing it in the streets? Is he going to the Agora, to the marketplace, standing on a box and saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Come to me all you who are labor and heavy laden. I will give you. Is he doing that in the streets at this point? No, he is not.

He has withdrawn. He has gone to private places, to the wilderness, and those who will follow him to that quiet place, far from the madding crowd, hear his voice. He will not quarrel, nor cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.

Circle it. They don't hear his voice in the streets. They're going to hear it when they follow him to wherever he is.

And he's not in the streets. He's not in the city. He's not antagonizing constituted authority, as evil as they are, as hypocritical as they are.

Couldn't find a way to save that word once I mis-emphasized it. What does he do? He withdraws. People follow.

Those are the ones who hear his voice. Those are the ones who are healed. Notice verse 20, a bruised reed he will not break and a smoking flax he will not quench.

The bruised reed and smoking flax, in my view, are the failures. These reeds ought to be strong. That flax wick ought to be burning brightly with the word of truth, but it's gone out and it's only smoking.

The reeds that ought to be standing up ought to be useful to weave baskets or to make whatever you want to make with reeds. They're bruised. They're bendy.

They're unfit for their purpose. Reeds were used for dozens of things in the ancient world, but you can't use these because they're bruised. They're no good.

They won't hold up. And this smoking flax, this is wicks. They made wicks out of flax and it's smoking, but he's not going to set fire to the bruised reeds.

He's not going to put out this smoking wick until he sends forth justice. Remember, we just had the word justice. He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

The declaration of that justice, the sending forth of that justice to victory. The people

who accept this, who understand the righteousness of God, who receive this delivery of what is right and what is just in the presence of Jesus Christ, they will be the overcomers. They will be the victors.

And in his name, Gentiles will trust. Judaism, Israel at this point is a smoking wick. It's a bruised reed, but Jesus is not going to overthrow them.

He's not going to try to address their social evils and their religious forms and their hypocritical attitudes. He's going to concentrate on his mission, which is to declare justice, to declare righteousness, to declare God's control of history, to those who will be victorious, who are going to engage in and be a part of God's victory over evil. In his name, Gentiles will trust.

There's going to be a new group. This kingdom will be taken from you and given to those who will bear its fruit, he says in another place, right? Well, we have a lot more to talk about here, but we're going to pause and take our break. But thoughtful believers will read this over, think about present circumstances and know how to act, know what to do, know how to vote.

Let's pause here and take our break.