

Matthew 20-08-30b

Boy, that piano sounds good. Both pianos sound good. Very ably executed.

Bound for the promised land. Thank you, Dan and Anna and Lori. And it's just the kind of music my father always appreciated is.

It's played with energy and enthusiasm and that's what we just heard. Wonderful reminder that this world is not my home. I'm just a passing through.

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore. Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 12.

Jesus answered these Pharisees and scribes saying, teacher, we want to see a sign from you. They call him teacher, but they're not listening to the teaching. It's hypocritical to address him as teacher, didaskalos, and not listen to the didasko, to the teaching.

So he answered and said to them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. Notice the, the tactfulness, if you will. I'm not sure Jesus was really intending to be tactful, but he doesn't say you are a wicked, evil and adulterous generation.

He says a wicked and adulterous generation, an evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign. So if you're seeking a sign, guess what generation you are, but it's, it's a bit of a once removed condemnation. No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Jonah is the only old testament prophet whose formal ministry was not to Israel or Judah. His formal ministry was to the hated capital of the Assyrian empire, Nineveh. So they're going to get the sign of the prophet Jonah.

The sign of the prophet Jonah is twofold, twofold. And Jesus is going to allude to both of those aspects of Jonah's ministry. The first one is Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, the great fish.

So will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth? What's interesting is the sign of Jonah's experience in the great fish did not become known to Israel until after Jonah went to Nineveh and preached and Nineveh repented and Jonah eventually returned home. But if you remember the story, Jonah is trying to leave and go to Tarshish because he doesn't want to follow God's command to go and preach to Nineveh. So he climbed into a ship and sailed away and he should have obeyed the Lord, but he didn't.

And so the winds began to blow and Jonah's ship began to toss. The sailors all decided that old Jonah was the cause. So they grabbed up poor old Jonah in the roughest of the

gale and threw him overboard.

And he was hit up by a whale. So the old gospel song goes, uh, wasn't necessarily well, but it was a great fish, but he has left the land of Israel. When he is regurgitated onto dry land, he proceeds on his God-given mission to Nineveh.

And the story of Jonah's experience in the belly of the great fish is not known in Israel until after his ministry is successfully completed in Nineveh. The book of Jonah isn't a book written to Assyria, is it? The book of Jonah is a part of the old Testament scripture for Israel, but it is a historical account of something that happened before they got the book and they didn't know about it until they got the book of Jonah. In the same way, Israel is going to receive the sign of the son of man in the heart of the earth after his ministry to the Gentiles is complete.

So the first generation of the church in Jerusalem, notwithstanding, uh, you could consider that maybe to be the sailors on the boat, but the son of man in the heart of the earth is going to be the sign that resurrected Israel is going to see and respond to at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. So it's interesting that in both cases, it takes a prophetic ministry to the Gentiles to wake up Israel and almost literally wake up Israel. When you think about the coming of the millennial kingdom, that's the first part of the sign of Jonah as an aside.

And this is something that I've noted many times, and this is the second of my single pair of tracks into the unbroken snow here. Not only do I believe on good evidence that there were no Jewish exorcisms until the Lord Jesus cast out demons. And the only time demons have ever been cast out is in the name of Jesus Christ.

There is none other name where demons have been cast out. There were no Jewish exorcisms, but I can't find anybody else who agrees with me on that. So you can take that with however much salt is needed.

Here's the second one. Everyone, including one of my favorite Hebrew professors, Dr. Alan Ross, wrote a fantastic intermediate Hebrew grammar that I had the privilege of using not once, but twice at Tulsa Seminary and later at Dallas Seminary. Dr. Ross literally wrote the book on Hebrew.

But Dr. Ross says that three days and three nights is an idiom. And he alludes to the practice in the Old Testament that if a king came to the throne in the 10th month of one year and died or was assassinated, maybe in the sixth month of the following year, he was only a king for a total of eight months. And yet he will have been said to reign for two years because he reigned in part of one year and part of another.

And so it says two years. He uses that analogy to say that three days and three nights is an idiom for sundown Friday to morning Sunday. I would try to go there except that it's

understandable that if you reign in any part of a year, you could count that year.

It's even understandable that you could say if you were in the tomb for any part of a day, you could count that day. And we do. However, when it says three days and three nights, you are sacrificing truth on the altar of an idiom for which the only evidence is this claim by the Lord Jesus.

In the same way that the rule that was made up and taught to me in seminary that, well, the rich man and Lazarus is a true story. It's not a parable. It actually happened.

And the way we know that is that Lazarus name is given. And in parables, the participants, the man who finds the pearl of great price or, you know, the sower of the seed and so on are never named. And so when you have someone named like Lazarus, that means it's a true story and not a parable.

The only problem with that is the only story where that happens is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. And so it's a circular argument. It's the only story.

And you're just saying, well, he's named Lazarus, so it must be a true story, but you've got no outside evidence for that. In the same way, saying that three days and three nights is an idiom when in the mouth of the Lord Jesus, he only says it about his time in the heart of the earth. All you're doing is try to fudge scripture to on the belief that it's a Friday crucifixion because scripture says the next day was the Sabbath.

Well, the next day was a Sabbath. It was the it was the Passover and the is a high Sabbath and they had to get the bodies off the crosses before sundown on Thursday because Friday was Passover 15 Nissan. And then you have the weekly Sabbath Saturday and the women were hastening to try to do as much with the spices and so on on the body of the Lord as they could because they couldn't touch it again for two days.

So they hastily prepare his body for burial. They get it into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and then they are. They can't get there all day Friday and all day Saturday and then early in the morning on the third day.

If he was crucified on Friday, it would have been early in the morning on the second day. So anyway, when he says three days and three nights, like every other thing the Lord Jesus said, you can take it to the bank. If he says he's going to be in the heart of the earth three nights, you better find three nights.

And that's Thursday night, Friday night and Saturday night. It is a Thursday crucifixion. All of the talk about the Sabbath being the next day.

If you read John, you can tell that they rushed the trials Wednesday night and early Thursday morning because they did not want to defile themselves. And you can't be sending out arresting parties and so on after dark from 14 to 15 Nissan. These people

can't be traveling around.

It's more than a Sabbath day journey. They're supposed to stay indoors with the staff in their hand and their cloak on and eating the bitter herbs and the matzo bread and all the rest of it. Everybody's supposed to remain indoors.

How are you going to get an arresting party? How are you going to have a trial with the Sanhedrin? How are you going to have the chief priest with a trial when he's supposed to be indoors in his house for Passover? If that day was the Passover, but it was the day preparation, John straightens that all out. So three days and three nights is three days and three nights. And in my humble opinion, it is a failure to work hard enough to reconcile scripture for best evidence.

If you stick with a Friday crucifixion, because you make a liar out of the Lord Jesus, he's only going to be in the hearty. There's two days and two nights. Anyway, that's the sign.

Now look at verse 41. This is the second part. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

And indeed, there is a greater than Jonah here. Gentiles hated Assyrians, Ninevites heard the preaching of Jonah and changed their minds. What is it these people are failing to do? Show us a sign.

The stuff you've done is all in the power of Satan. The men of Nineveh. Now, let me ask you this.

We're talking about how literal are the things that Jesus says are the men of Nineveh actually going to rise up in the judgment and condemn Israel? What does it mean? Who does condemnation at the judgment? Who is the one who either vindicates or condemns? Who is the judge? It's God, right? Judgment seat of Christ is the Lord Jesus, but at the great white throne, it is God himself. And to reject the Lord Jesus is to be an unbeliever and to be hell bound, to be lake of fire bound. So other people are not going to rise up and condemn those who are at the place of judgment.

What does Jesus mean here? The example of the men of Nineveh is going to be invoked at the judgment. You had the law and the prophets. You claim to be Abraham's seed and people of faith are children of Abraham.

Paul is going to make that argument later on. So what is your excuse? Even the godless unbelievers of Nineveh changed their mind when they heard the preaching of Jonah and you had far more going for you and you rejected it. This is personal responsibility.

And the question of the salvation of the men of Nineveh, when Jonah said 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed, he didn't say repent and have your sins forgiven, offer a bull,

here's a sacrifice, atonement, enter into relationship with God. All he said is in 40 days, your city is going to be blown away. And they said, well, that's believable because look around, we are an exceedingly wicked city.

And they changed their minds and they put on sackcloth and ashes. The king did. They changed their minds at the preaching of Jonah.

Jonah's message was, you're going to be destroyed. They changed their minds and they were not destroyed at that time. They were destroyed later, but they changed their minds at the preaching of Jonah.

And they've got far more by way of sign and preaching from the greater than Jonah, who is here. So the first part of the sign is going to be the three days and three nights and emerging alive. The second part is the condemnation of the men of Nineveh, the preaching of Jonah and the men of Nineveh and the example of the Gentiles changing their minds.

When they hear the word of the Lord, the queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And by the way, I don't discount the possibility that by believing the word of God, that generation in Nineveh qualified for the old Testament version of salvation. And it's entirely feasible, possible, and possibly likely that when Jesus said the men of Nineveh will rise up with this generation and just by their presence, condemn it.

What are these Ninevites doing here in the middle of the resurrection of Old Testament Israel? There's a whole city full of people that are not descended from Abraham. What are they doing here? And they will rise up with this generation and just by standing there, be the condemnation. Look at these guys.

They got one little short message, changed their mind. You had all the preaching of the prophets. You had the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ himself in your presence, in your midst, with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, authenticating him, convincing and persuading, and you couldn't change your mind.

Same with the queen of Sheba here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it. It's very possible that the queen of Sheba, after hearing Solomon, came to faith in the Old Testament sense in the God of Israel.

And she may, in fact, rise up with that generation. She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And indeed, there is a greater than Solomon here.

And when he says a greater witness, a greater persuasion is here. This is decision time. This is decision time.

Now you would think that this takes a weird left turn because he goes on to say, when an

unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest and finds none. You think, oh, well, new subject. We're going to talk about demonology.

No. Remember what we reviewed. This section began in verse 22 with the casting out of a demon, and it is emblematic.

Jesus has come at that time and that place in that generation and has demonstrated his authority and power in casting out the demon. And it is emblematic that this door of opportunity has been opened as Satan is bound and removed. Now, he's not literally going to be bound in the true sense until the millennial kingdom.

It tells us in Revelation 20 that Satan is going to actually be bound. And whatever that means, he's going to be constrained and thrown into the pit for a thousand years. But his ability to thwart belief and thwart the mission and purpose of the son of God is hedged in and prevented.

What that means is now it is up to the people. If Satan has been neutralized, if his effect and his demons are being stopped at every turn and they still don't believe, whose fault is it? Is this generation going to rise up and at the judgment and say, well, we would have believed, but, you know, it was all this satanic influence. Sorry, no.

Jesus neutralized the satanic and demonic influence. And the fact that you didn't believe is on you. And the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba are proof that even Gentiles who are willing to respond can respond to the word of the Lord.

So when he says an unclean spirit goes out of a man, what did Jesus say? How can you enter a strong man's house? Verse 29, plunder his goods, unless you bind the strong man, then he will plunder his house. When you plunder a house, what do you do? Flat screen TV, electronics, cash, jewelry, cash in the mattress. What do you do with it? You take it out.

You take it out of the house. So if you plunder the strong man's house, you take the stuff that's in it and remove it. You put it somewhere else.

So the house is now clean. The house is empty. All of this evil accumulation through by and for evil is removed.

That's what Jesus says. He essentially says, I have bound the strong man and I have plundered his house, the house of Israel. And I've removed him and his influence out of here for the moment.

So when an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest and finds none. Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came. Notice the man and the house are equated.

When he comes, he finds it empty, swept and put in order. Who's doing the emptying, sweeping and putting in order. The Lord Jesus has bound the strong man.

How did this section begin? Casting out a demon so that the man can see and speak. What is the condemnation? They just saw a sign and they're wanting another one. They don't, they're not convinced or persuaded by that sign.

What are they saying? He's doing this by the power of Beelzebub when they should be seeing and speaking like this demon possessed man who is healed by the Lord Jesus. They're doing the opposite. They are bringing out of the evil treasury of their hearts, these evil and careless words for which they will be judged.

And in the judgment, Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba are going to be counterexamples to any argument they try to offer. Your house was emptied, cleaned and swept. You had the example of people who in their own free will, hear the word of the Lord and respond.

And they're not even Israel. You're Israel. What's the matter with you? And because they do not accept, because they do not let the spirit of God come in.

What is the singular mark of the kingdom for Israel? What was the promise in the Old Testament? I will take out your heart of stone. I will give you a heart of flesh. I will pour out my spirit.

Joel 2, 23 and 24. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your old men will see visions.

Your young men will dream dreams. And there's going to be a harking back to that by Peter in Acts chapter two. He's going to quote that because what should have come to Israel being filled with the spirit is instead going to come to the church.

It'll start with that upwards of 200 in one place. That's going to be the nucleus, the Jerusalem church. That's going to be the first generation but there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ.

And it isn't redemption for the house of Israel. That's just the first generation of the universal church, neither Jew nor Greek bond or free, male, female, all one in Christ. So the house has been cleaned and swept, but nobody comes to occupy.

Jesus says, you know, famously in Revelation 3, 20, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens the door, I will come in. I'll inhabit, I will dwell.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my words. I and my father will come to him and make our home with him. That's a church age promise.

You look at what section of John that comes from. That's the upper room. That's the preview teaching of the Lord Jesus of the church age come with him and make our home with him.

So here the house is clean and swept. Nobody's there. So what does the demon do? He brings seven of his friends more wicked than himself.

They enter and dwell there. You have this principle over and over again in scripture, those who have tasted of the heavenly gift and the power of God. If they fall away, it is impossible to bring them back to the point of repentance because they keep going back and crucifying the son of God afresh and putting him to an open shame over there in Hebrews.

So this is a picture of Israel because Jesus has come and cleaned and swept the house, plundered it, sent the demons away. They're at a decision point. And because they have not embraced the presence and power of God, the end is going to be worse than the beginning.

And in the days of the Lord Jesus, they still were in the land. They were under the oppression of the Romans and they were under the oppression of Satan and the demons, but they were functional. They had some blessings.

They had access to the temple. They had access to the synagogue. They had their scrolls.

They had their culture. They had their families. They had their industries and their agriculture.

What's going to happen in 70 AD? Scattered. He who does not gather with me scatters. And they are literally going to be scattered to the ends of the earth and flung out amongst the Gentiles for centuries.

Jerusalem will be trodden underfoot by the with this wicked generation. That's the end of verse 45. It is true with us as well.

As I get older and look back on different observations, different churches, different times, different towns, I have seen groups of believers that were initially really excited to learn the word of God and plumb its depths and find those hidden treasures, seeking it as silver and searching for it to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. And there is a wonderful enthusiasm and excitement and growth and solidity. And over time, it's like the Ephesian church where the first love is sort of lost and there begins to be infighting and bickering and issues that crop up.

And I can name on all of the fingers of one hand and probably a couple of fingers on the other churches like that who thrived for a time in and on and around the teaching of the word of God and wonderful Christian fellowship and then sort of flagged and got ingrown, got distracted. It became habitual instead of inspired. And the next thing you know, the church splits, the splits split, they are fragmented and scattered.

Those who do not gather with me scatter. And if we do not recognize when we depart from that first love and start becoming poor and miserable and blind and naked, we lose our sense of need. We lose the centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It requires constant vigilance to be sure our house is occupied with the things of God, the plunder of God, not the plunder of Satan, the things of God, not the things of Satan, the presence of God, not the presence of demons. It takes constant vigilance. The Lord Jesus Christ has cleaned and swept the house.

With what do we fill it? How motivated are we? How much of a sense of need do we have? And a recognition, as Jesus said, without me, ye can do nothing. And ending up at the judgment seat of Christ with nothing but a flash fire, even wood hay and stubble will burn for a time. My fear is to get there.

And it's like flash papers, just like this, you know, pretty much a flash bulb. And, you know, great chunks of my life just vanished because the time was not redeemed. My focus and attention were not on my identity in Christ.

So this chapter now concludes. Look at the look at the conclusion here. These last five verses.

While he was still talking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and brother stood outside seeking to speak with him. Now, whether or not this corresponds to the to the what they often cite as a parallel in Mark chapter three, where it says they they thought he had kind of gone crazy and they were there to collect him and take him home and try to nurse him back to health. I personally don't think this is that.

But his mother and brothers stood outside seeking to speak with him is what Matthew tells us. Someone said to him, look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you. Jesus answered and said to the one who told him, who is my mother and who are my brothers? Now, this needs to be treated with some caution and some respect.

Matthew does not tell us why they are here, as happens in Mark chapter three. And the reason is that for the purposes of this narrative, their reasons are not important. And Jesus words here are not a condemnation of his mother and his brothers.

Rather, they are an indictment. What is Jesus just been talking about? The men of Nineveh, the queen of Sheba, who are not Israel, not related. Who is it that is related? You are not going to get in, Jesus says to the multitudes as they overhear him talking to the one who gives him news that his family is there.

Seeking to speak to him. And I personally think that this is a different occasion than Mark three and that they are there for positive reasons, and they represent those who do want

to come and speak to the Lord Jesus. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew.

Simon, the less James, the less and those others. But Jesus says relationship with me is not based on heredity. It is based on choice.

Choice. Choice is a good thing. That's as much political commentary as I'm going to give.

Choice is a good thing. He stretched out his hand toward his disciples and said, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Notice he mentions two female genders and one male gender. Mother, sister, and brother. You remember in the patriarchal society, they didn't focus on women and their vote, if you will, their ability to lead or to make choices.

But Jesus does. And he says, you are related to me. Fraternally, if you do the will of my father, that's the deciding factor.

What is the will of the father? Jesus says, not my will, but thine be done. Our sanctification, this is the will of God concerning you. Our laying hold of righteousness by faith.

It's not a hard thing to figure out what the will of the father is. If we have the words of the Lord and keep them, that is the expression of love. Loving God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength.

That relates us to the Lord Jesus. And he uses the example of this appearance of his mother and his brothers. Notice they don't say your mother and your sisters are outside, but Jesus brings it up.

My mother and my brothers and my sisters. The Lord Jesus cares about each of us, regardless of race, nationality, gender, background, culture. If we are seeking the father and the will of the father.

So what's the conclusion we draw this morning? Watch for those signs that have already been given. Watch for those answers to prayer that have already been provided. Watch for that guidance that has already been delivered in the word of God and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us.

We don't want to be anywhere near the evil and adulterous generation. You can go back and read Hosea and Jeremiah and Amos for examples where God tells Old Testament Israel, you are a faithless wife. You are an adulterous people.

You have broken your covenant. Adultery is the breaking of a covenant. Solemnly pledged, breaking your troth that you plighted is adultery and an adulterous generation.

Wickedness is what they're perpetrating on each other. Adulterous is the breach of their relationship with God himself. And of course, the wickedness is in violation of that covenant as well.

But wickedness primarily has as its object. It's pretty hard to be, you know, to be wicked to the Lord, but we can certainly be wicked to each other. But the adulterous generation, that's their covenant relationship with God.

No sign will be given. You can always go back to the resurrection. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10, 9 and 10. Delivered. Delivered at the point of salvation.

Delivered in time. Delivered in circumstance. This is our touchstone.

This is our lighthouse. The living Lord seated at the right hand of the father who by his flesh being torn like the veil has given us access to the father so that we can come to the throne to find grace to help in time of need. And that sign is ever present.

We don't want to miss it. The deliverance that God has effected for us through Christ past and present is an ongoing sign. Don't miss it.

Understanding what comes by request and what comes by what has already been provided is a basic skill for every believer. Don't pray for things that have already been provided. Don't ask for things that have already been given.

There are things that we can ask for and they shall be given. You can seek and you will find. You can knock and the door will be open, but not everything comes by request.

Some of them have already been provided. Forgiveness and cleansing already been provided. You don't have to ask for it.

You can claim it. It's already here. Provision, sustenance, your daily bread already been provided.

Your father knows what you need before you ask. Look at the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin.

So remember the condemnation that Jesus issues here in time. And there is going to be a condemnation at the judgment. There is the recognition of things against the Holy Spirit, both in this age and in the age to come.

We have the witness of the Spirit. How important is it in God's eyes for us to pay attention to it? From those to whom much is given, much is required. And you look at Israel and Jesus says, look at how much you were given.

And the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba are going to rise up in condemnation. Think about us. The men of Israel are going to rise up in condemnation.

Those who are faithful and they didn't even have the ubiquitous universal ministry, the Holy Spirit that the church has. So how much more faithful, how much more patient, dedicated and motivated should we be with all that has been given to us? If you think Nineveh is going to rise up and condemn Israel, think about Old Testament saints in Israel rising up and condemning us by their faithfulness and their presence when they didn't have a fraction of what we have by way of the Word of God, the presence and power of the Spirit of God. So we have been given the full armor of God.

Let's put it on. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word. Thank you for the powerful words of the Lord Jesus Christ preserved for us, for the Holy Spirit to minister to our souls.

And we pray that as we reflect on these things, the light of your Word will shine clearly on our path so that we can optimize and maximize the time that remains to us in this life as we look to the sky, waiting for the shout, the voice of the archangel and your trumpet to sound so that as the dead in Christ rise, whether we are one of them or we are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, we so look forward to being united with Him and presented before your throne. We pray that we can be found worthy in that day and that the things we've learned this morning will contribute to that goal. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.