

Matthew 20-11-22a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're at an auspicious day this morning on this 22nd day of November. It's one of those symmetrical dates 1-1-2-2-0-2-0.

But we're returning to our study in the Gospel of Matthew and we're picking up in chapter 13. We're going to see this morning the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soil. And as well-traveled ground as this may be, we don't want it to be a hard-beaten path where the seed sits on the surface and is quickly taken away.

So we're going to look closely at the words of the Lord Jesus here. This is a parable about hearing. And we certainly want to be hearers of the word and not doers only.

So getting this first-hand interpretation and application from the Lord Jesus is going to be central for us. Let's take a moment as we begin to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study. And we will then begin our investigations in Matthew chapter 13.

Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for another opportunity to redeem the time, to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ through fellowship in your word, through the effective ministry of your Holy Spirit, and the shared enthusiasm we have for the onward progress of your plan and purpose, specifically in our own lives and in the generation in which we live. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that your Holy Spirit will teach us, impress it on our hearts, activate its supernatural power to cleanse us, to motivate us, to enable and equip us for every good work.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. It has been some months since we were in the gospel of Matthew.

We devoted our full attention to the end time study, which is rapidly drawing to a close. And so as we approach chapter 13, having done the first 12 chapters in Matthew, it is not without need that we look at the tail end of chapter 12. I'm not going to do a review of chapter 12 only to look at the very last section, which leads into this.

You, of course, remember that the scriptures were not divided into chapters and verses in the original texts. And in some cases, these divisions are happy and in others, not so much. But in all cases, we want to be sure we're sensitive to the context.

And as you look at chapter 13, verse one, and it says on the same day, we know for sure that we want to be remembering what happened earlier that day. So back in chapter 12, verse 46, Jesus has been speaking to the multitudes. He was talking about a demon that is cast out and he goes away.

And when he returns, he finds the house empty and swept and put in order. And so he

gets seven more spirits like unto himself, more wicked than himself. And they come in and the latter end of the man is worse than the beginning.

There is an opportunity there. And if it is not one that we avail ourselves of, the latter end can be worse than the beginning. God gives cleansing grace.

He gives opportunities. What do we do with them? So then in verse 46, while he was still talking to the multitudes, Jesus' mother and brothers stood outside seeking to speak with him. This particular passage is a little hard on Catholics.

And I apologize in advance to any of those that have got a real pedestal on which they put the Lord's mother, the Virgin Mary, because she does not get the treatment that you would expect from the Lord Jesus and Catholics ever since who have raised her up to be co-redemptrix and on a par. Jesus is a little unattainable, so we will talk to Mary and so on. But the Lord does not even pay the attention you would expect to her here.

So she comes and his brothers. People have tried to explain this a way that, well, it was his cousins, because Mary only had one son and it was the Lord Jesus and she did not have other children. While the word brother can be used, particularly in the Old Testament, to talk about cousins or other close relatives, in the New Testament, it is much more specific.

And mentioning them in connection with his mother, when it says mother and brothers, when those are put together, these are his actual familial half brothers, if you will. These are the sons of Joseph and Mary. There's really no other way to take this without contorting the text.

So we know that there's James and Judas and Joseph. They're mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. So they come and we know from parallel gospel that they're a little concerned that this popular movement has carried him away, because at this point in his ministry, huge crowds are flocking to hear him and to see him.

Some of them want to hear him teach. Others want to see miracles. But there are enormous crowds that are gathering.

He is currently staying in Capernaum at the house of Peter, the household of Peter, which includes Peter's mother in law, his wife, and the disciples are staying there in Capernaum. And we find this out. Keep your finger here and turn forward to chapter 17 of Matthew, just as a quick reminder of the situation.

Look at 17:24, when they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, does your teacher not pay the temple tax? He said, yes. And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him saying, and they have this thing where he goes and catches the fish with the coin in its mouth. But this is Peter's house.

And those who come to collect the tax have accosted Peter sort of outside and Peter goes in and the Lord is there. But this is the house that is spoken of here. And so in verse 46 of chapter 12, Jesus' mother and brothers, Mary, and all these brothers whose names start with J, stood outside seeking to speak with him.

One said to him, look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with you. But he answered and said to the one who told him, who is my mother and who are my brothers? And he stretched out his hand toward his disciples and said, here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

This is important context for what is about to take place in chapter 13 because of the point of this comment. What is Jesus' point? The key is in verse 46 and verse 47. There's something that is repeated in those two verses.

Do you see it? Anytime something's repeated in scripture, that's a clue. What does it say in verse 46? That it also says in verse 47, his mother and brothers are wanting to do what they are wanting to speak with Jesus. They are wanting to have a conversation with Jesus.

We tend to think that the defining feature in this little episode is that they are his relatives. But the context here is his relatives have come. And so someone says, hey, your mother and brothers are outside.

They want to speak with you. What would the normal reaction be for many people? Oh, my mother and brothers, excuse me, folks. I need to go speak with my family.

My family has priority. They're my native household. This is where I came from.

So they, I will leave off speaking with you and go speak with them. Right? Isn't that what would normally happen? I'm at a social gathering and someone says, hey, brother Matt is outside. Brother Dan is outside.

Your sister, Denise, your mother, Jacqueline is outside. Oh, that's my people. They're the closest and most important to me.

That's the feature that Jesus focuses on here because he's looking at his disciples who are largely male. And he says, here's my mother and my brothers. Why doesn't he just say, these are my brothers.

There's for most sons, your mother and your wife, depending on which one is talking to you are the priority. Whichever one is in need, that's going to break off other activities, other conversations. It's a priority and rightfully so honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord, your God gives you husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, uh, for a normal man with those normal and living

affiliations.

That's, that's the priority. Jesus is talking here about priorities, priority of fellowship, priority of communication. And he says on the human plane, we have these close associations that define our level of importance that gets assigned to those around us.

It's based on family connection. It's based on marriage. It's and so on.

But he says in terms of me, the key here is seeking to speak with him. Jesus says, the ones who have priority for me to talk to are those who are seeking to talk to me. These that have assembled, these that have left all and followed me, these that have accompanied me around in my travels and in my ministries and done crowd control and risked hazards on the roads and on the sea and the rest of it.

These are my priority associations. Whoever does the will of my father in heaven, seeking the will of the father, that's who I prioritize. This is what leads into chapter 13.

So as we pick up now in chapter 13, on the same day, no accidental wasted words in scripture. We are to remember what we just saw as we move forward on this day. So Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.

Why is it that his mother and brothers are outside and someone has to come in and tell him that they're outside? Because there is such a packed crowd that their access is limited. Otherwise, if he was just sitting in there having finished a meal, there would be an open door. Mary and his brothers could just walk in.

Hello there, Yeshua. How are you? But they can't get in. They're outside there because of the crowds.

So Jesus leaves the house and goes to a place where more listeners can hear. Great multitudes are gathered to him so that he got into a boat and sat and the whole multitude stood on the shore. They could have sat on the shore.

They could have sat in sort of a natural amphitheater setting, but it says they stand on the shore. Why are they standing? You've heard of the term SRO for a concert. Tijuana Brass has an album called SRO Standing Room Only.

And there are so many people that to sit down is to not be able to see. There's not enough room for people to sit. This is an extremely packed audience.

And with so many listeners, there are going to be many different kinds of people there for all different kinds of reasons. His family has come for a particular reason that's given in one of the other Gospels. These people have come.

Some of them are thrill seekers. Some of them want to see miracles. Some of them want to hear the Lord Jesus teach.

Some of them want to know why is there such a crowd? People gravitate to a crowd. It starts to have an energy of its own. We had an event in Claremore the other night called Dickens on the Square or Dickens on the Street or You Little Dickens, What's Gotten Into You? I forget.

Something about Dickens. Anyway, this was the 25th anniversary of a sort of a get-together in the evening where all the antique stores were open downtown. And as you walk up and down the street, you see, oh, here's a little gathering.

And you go there and here's a man doing live music on his guitar. You go over here and here's someone that's got a table set up with a pot of chili. And you go here and here's someone that's got a live nativity scene and they've got animals in a trailer that you can look at.

And crowds tend to attract what's going on here. And so people are there for all different kinds of reasons. There are so many that it's literally standing room only.

And so Jesus gets into a boat and backs away from the shore so that he can be seen and heard by all of these people. He spoke many things, verse three, to them in parables. But this one is representative.

So he said, Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places where they did not have much earth and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

But when the sun was up, they were scorched and because they had no root, they withered away. Some fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop, some a hundred fold, some 60, some 30.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. This is all about reception of the word.

The disciples are going to come to him and ask why he is speaking in parables. In verse 11, Jesus answers, because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. Now, this immediately raises the question, well, has God arbitrarily chosen some.

And given them extra truth, additional insight, knowledge of mysteries, and arbitrarily he has chosen to not give it to others. Is God responsible for my level of knowledge, my level of reception? That's what it sounds like at first blush, but look at verse 12. Notice the word given.

It has been given to you, but to them it has not been given. Circle it given. Now who was standing outside wanting to speak with him? His mother and brothers.

When it's coming up on Christmas time here in a little over a month, who are you going to give gifts to? Not counting angel tree, toys for tots and charity type of things. To whom do you give gifts? It's people you know, right? People in your family, people with whom you have a relationship. If your mother is living, you're probably going to put something under the tree for her.

You've got brothers, sisters, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren. People like to give, but we don't just walk around and you pass somebody and, wait, come here. I've got something for you.

And here's a gift. So when you talk about giving, we want to understand why do you give just as in the preceding episode? If someone wants to speak, why do you speak? Why is he expected to speak to his mother and brothers? Because they are his mother and brothers. And he says, look, I will speak.

I will converse with those who are doing the will of my father in heaven. They are the ones I prioritize. So the priority is not just a human expectation, but their relationship to my father.

If they're related to my father, if they're doing his will the way I'm doing his will, that's who I'm going to be speaking with. Same thing here. To you, it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.

And we think, wow, God has given it to some and he's not given it to others. And a lot of times, especially when you start reading commentaries and people who get sidetracked on sovereignty and so on, Jesus goes on to talk about why it is given. Why do you speak? There's a reason.

Why does God give? There is a reason. God is not capricious. He's not fickle.

He's not arbitrary. He's not God has reasons for what he does. If someone has been given the understanding of the mysteries, if it has been given to them to know if they're going to get the explanation, there's a reason.

We do things for reasons. God does things for reasons. And he gives it in the next verse, verse 12, for whoever has more will be given very same word did to me to give.

So God has a reason for giving them these disciples to know the mysteries of the kingdom and to others. It has not been given. Why? Whoever has to him more will be given.

Why is this understanding being given to the disciples? Because they have already put themselves in that place of doing the will of the father. Jesus is speaking to them as though he were speaking to his mother and his brothers, because they have demonstrated that desire to do the will of the father. They have something that

distinguishes them.

There are haves and have nots and that having and having not is a choice to him who has more will be given and he will have abundance. He started with a little, he made the choice to follow the Lord Jesus, to listen to the Lord Jesus, to engage in some sacrificial changing of schedule and denying him time with family and business and so on. These disciples have left their businesses.

Matthew left his tax collecting. Peter, Andrew, James and John left their fishing. These other men had families, had occupations, they're grown men.

Everybody's got to make a living in Israel. These men have abandoned that, have entrusted their businesses and their families to others, and they're following the Lord Jesus. Why? They have something.

They have the motivation. They recognize the importance. They're interested.

They know who the Lord Jesus is. Peter is going to make the great confession. You are the Christ, the son of the living God.

If we go elsewhere, to whom would we go? You have the words of life. That's what they have. And because they have that, more is given.

God does things for a reason. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away. I'd love to talk about this in Greek because of the construction of these verbs, but I've decided to omit that.

That's just my little private enjoyment. But it's very interesting here when it says, even what he has, because that's not how it is in Greek, but it's too much trouble to explain. But what is the point? Do you decide to be one who has and wants more? He's going to say it a different way, has said it a different way.

Ask and it shall be given. If you have the question, if you have the desire and you go to God and ask, if you have that question and have that desire, ask and it shall be what? Very same verb, given. Ask and it shall be given.

To say that God is capricious and inscrutable and arbitrary in deciding to whom to give these things is just nonsensical. Scripture over and over and over again says there is a basis, change of mind, faith, obedience, perseverance, diligence. Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God.

Some workmen don't care. We had a guy come and put some carpet down and there was an edge that meets the tile that's in the dining room, in the kitchen. And he was a contractor.

That's all he does is come in and finish out these carpet edges. And he didn't do a

particularly good job. These are metal, these are aluminum strips, and you have to tap them down into place.

Well, he wasn't careful. And so it's dented in places, it's wavy in places, it doesn't grab the carpet evenly in places. And for a detail-oriented person, this is a bit of a tribulation.

But he was a workman that didn't care to be ashamed. His work is substandard, but he doesn't care. Are you a workman that cares enough to rightly stack the bricks, to rightly divide the word of truth? Do you care? Do you have the desire to not be ashamed, to not have your work analyzed and found short? Not all people do.

Think about it. There are people who don't care that their moral compass has got a magnet stuck to the side of it, and it always points in the direction of self-interest, self-aggrandizement, self-advancement. And they don't care what's moral.

They don't care what moral people would expect or think. They're not ashamed. They have no shame.

They are shameless. There is a subcategory of workmen who desire to not be ashamed, to turn in good quality work, to do good work even if it's never going to be seen. There's a wonderful story about, it could be apocryphal, but it makes a good point about a sculptor that was working on some of these wonderful pieces of statuary that adorn cathedrals over in Italy, Milan, and other places.

And someone climbed up there on the scaffold and was looking at the beautiful intricacy of this work. And he looked and noticed that the back side of these statues was carefully done, and the folds of the garments, and the flowing hair, and the heels of the feet, and so on, that you couldn't even see from a normal vantage point. You had to be up there on a scaffold.

The scaffold would be removed. Nobody would ever see it. And he said, why are you spending so much time on the back of these that's never going to be seen? And the sculptor replied, well, this is God's house.

God's going to see it. And it's a useful parable, if you will. Do we care? Do you have that desire to be pleasing in God's sight, to reflect His glory, to be accounted worthy at the judgment? We've been looking at that for many weeks now in our end time study.

What do you have? To him who has, more will be given. You can't get around it. It doesn't say to those whom God throws a dart at the phone book, it will be given.

To those who a falling leaf happens to hit, to those who look up when two doves fly over, it will be given. It's nonsense. To him who has.

Well, why does he have? You can't say, well, God gave him before, and now God's going

to give him again. God gave him a little bit. Now God's going to give him more.

That's not what it says. Look at the end of chapter 12. Who are my mother and my brothers? Not fate, not genetics, not generational happenstance.

Those who do the will of my father, who choose to do the will of my father, they enter into what is normally a relationship that's dictated by quote unquote fate or providence. You can be my mother and you can be my brothers by choice, not by happenstance. It's choice.

Whoever has to him, more will be given. Verse 12. And he will have abundance.

He had a little. Now he's going to have a lot. But whoever does not have even what he has, and this gets back to kind of what he thinks he has or what passes for having.

It's a bit of a contradiction, isn't it? Whoever does not have what he has will be taken away. And this, of course, is what he thinks he has in God's eyes. He has nothing.

It's like the Pharisees when Jesus said, if you were blind, you would have no sin. But because you say we see your sin remains, you really are blind, but you say you see. And because you won't acknowledge your blindness, your sin remains.

You won't come to repentance. You won't come to change of mind. And what you have, this alleged sight is going to be taken away.

You'll be even more blind. Therefore, verse 13, I speak to them in parables. Jesus speaks in parables for a reason.

Well, we're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to look at that reason and look at the interpretation of this parable. And as a point of application for what we have seen, why do we stand at the judgment? Just turn real quickly as we go to the break, turn over to 2 Timothy chapter four.

Paul says something in passing here that is extremely significant. You know, Timothy, he's a young pastor. Paul is the apostle encouraging him, talking to him.

And in the second letter, Paul says, I'm being poured out as a drink offering. I don't have much time left. But he says in chapter four of second Timothy, I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.

This is what we've been talking about night and morning and night and morning for the last several months. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. Judgment is coming.

How can we be held responsible if it's all up to God? Because God makes it available and

it is up to us. We choose. Am I going to be the Lord's mother and brothers? He says, those who do the will of my father, that's my mother and my brothers and my sisters.

Those who choose. It's a choice. We choose how to spend our time.

We choose how to invest our effort. We choose what to think about. We choose what to talk about.

We choose whether or not to find teaching of the word of God and not only listen to it, but reflect on it and think about it and make changes in our lives on the basis of it to cultivate the ministry of the Holy Spirit to activate it and energize it in our souls. That's a choice. God's not going to reach in and do that.

He's not going to push us into his kingdom. Strive to enter, Jesus said. He didn't say wait to be pulled, wait to be pushed, wait to be picked up by the hair of the head and dropped.

Strive to enter by the narrow gate. Wide is the gate. Broad is the way that leads to destruction.

And that's the way most people go. Narrow is the way. Straight is the gate that leads to life.

Few there be that find it. It's a choice to look for it and to find it, not only to ask so that it will be given, but to seek. Seek and you will find.

If few there be that find it, what does that tell you about how many are seeking? If they were seeking, they would find. God says, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. Seek him early while he may yet be found.

There's a limited time. You can climb on the ark with Noah, but once God shuts the door, that opportunity's over. Once this life closes, opportunities for faithfulness, for service, for asking and seeking and knocking are over.

You can't knock once you're no longer standing at the door. You can't ask and you can't seek when this life is over. Now is the appointed time.

Now is the day of deliverance. There's a rest that remains to the people of God, and we ought to be concerned. We ought to worry lest that promise of entering his rest remaining, we should fall short of it.

So it is a choice and we can evaluate ourselves. Judge yourselves. If we judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

Am I seeking? Am I asking? Am I knocking? Am I the Lord's mother and brother and sisters? Do I have so that he will give me more and I will have a abundance? That's the

burning question of the hour. We'll pause here and take our break. When we return, we're going to look at the intermediate explanation.

You would think that the gospel authors would just go straight to the interpretation of the parable, but there's something in between that makes this a wonderful, symmetrical presentation by the Lord Jesus. And we'll see that when we, when we return.