

Matthew 21-02-14a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's good to see the vast throngs of you that are here and staying warm, I hope, on this rather chilly morning. We're going to continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew.

We're in chapter 14 and we're going to be finishing up looking at John the Baptist and moving into the feeding of the 5,000. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and honor study and we'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for the opportunity to spend time together in nourishing our souls through the truth of your word, looking at the words and actions of the Lord Jesus as our example, as the author and finisher of our faith.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, the Holy Spirit will illuminate it for us and enlighten us with it so that we will be better equipped for every good work, that we can sanctify ourselves, that we can understand clearly the purpose and the mission that you have assigned to us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. Let's look at our passage together.

We saw the first portion of this last time on Thursday night, Herod the Tetrarch hearing about Jesus and saying to his servants, this is John the Baptist. He is risen from the dead and therefore these powers are at work in him. These powers that are at work.

Our preceding chapter was the parables of the kingdom. So the work that Herod is hearing about is that which took place several chapters earlier, back in chapter 12, when Jesus heals on the Sabbath, the man with the withered hand and so on. Jesus healing their diseases and it appears to be the healing that Herod has heard of.

So then we have the retrospective on the fate of John the Baptist and having gotten himself embroiled in the politics of the day. He is no longer heralding the presence and ministry of the Lord Jesus. So when you pick up in verse 13, when Jesus heard he departed from there by boat to a deserted place by himself.

When the multitudes heard it, they followed him on foot from the cities. When Jesus went out, he saw a great multitude and he was moved with compassion for them and healed their sick. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him saying, this is a deserted place and the hour is already late.

Send the multitudes away that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food. Jesus said to them, they do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.

They said to him, we have here only five loaves and two fish. He said, bring them here to me. Then he commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass and he took the five

loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

So they all ate and were filled and they took up 12 baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those had eaten were about 5,000 men besides women and children. The occasion recorded here does not indicate that Jesus did any teaching at this time.

The multitudes follow him. He is moved with compassion for them and heals their sick. It doesn't say he taught them.

It's an interesting detail because when you think of the symbolism of the bread, you might think, well, this is the word of God. And in the same way that he's feeding their souls, he's nourishing their bodies or that there is an analogy there. But we have no reference whatsoever to teaching.

He taught everything in parables in the preceding chapter and said to those outside, it's going to be in parables. But he looks at these people and has compassion on them. They have followed him on foot around the shore of the lake to where he is.

What has he done? He has gone to a deserted place by himself. Why would he do that? Upon hearing the news of John the Baptist, this is fairly straightforward. It is a time for evaluation.

It is a time for prayer. It is a time to grieve over the loss of John, perhaps, but it is a signal that the initial phase, the introductory phase of his ministry is over. And the introduction of the Lord Jesus to the people is over.

He's not in that phase anymore. But he sees the people. He has moved with compassion and heals their sick.

At the end of the day, when the disciples say they need to go away and eat, Jesus is again looking to their physical needs. This entire day seems to be dealing with the physical illness and now physical hunger. Jesus says they do not need to go away.

You give them something to eat. They said, we have here five loaves and two fish. Bring them here to me.

He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. Now, if you keep your finger here and turn over to Mark chapter six, beginning at verse 30, we have the parallel account. And this we think is Peter's eyewitness testimony.

You have in the preceding context of Mark six, the same situation, the same record of the fate of John the Baptist. So the apostles in verse 30 of Mark six gathered to Jesus, told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught because they had been sent out earlier in that chapter, verses seven through 13. And once again, we have

to piece together the chronology here.

In Mark, this is after the sandwich miracle of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, the rejection at Nazareth that we saw in chapter 13. The end there is at the beginning of Mark six. What we find out from Mark that we do not see in Matthew is that after this rejection at Nazareth, the prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, that Jesus then sends out his disciples.

So he calls the 12 to himself in Mark six, verse seven, and began to send them out two by two, gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey, except a staff, no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics, whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart. Whoever does not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them.

Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. So they went out and preached that people should repent. What is the message? Change your mind.

They cast out many demons and anointed with oil, many who were sick and healed them. So with this experience, when Jesus says, you give them something to eat, this shouldn't be quite the head scratcher that it appears to be in Matthew, because they have been able to be a channel for the power of the Holy Spirit for healing and for preaching and for casting out demons. It is during this time that the John the Baptist arrest and execution takes place.

So in verse 30 of Mark 6, when the apostles gather to Jesus and tell him all things, what they had done and what they had taught, I think it's interesting that the disciples told Jesus what they had taught. You get the idea that this is going to be a review and also an idea of the response that they got when they taught. But it's a reminder in our prayer life that we can communicate to God the things that we have learned.

We can rehearse what we learn, what we teach, what we discuss with one another, what we fellowship in and around in the Word of God. So they tell him what they had done and what they had taught. He said to them, come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.

For there were many coming and going and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place. This is verse 32 of Mark 6. They departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves, but the multitude saw them departing.

Many knew him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to him. Jesus, when he came out, saw the great multitude and was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.

So he began to teach them many things. And we have the detail here in Mark that we do not have in Matthew that Jesus taught them. When the day was now far spent, his disciples came to him and said, this is a deserted place.

Already the hour is late. Send them away that they may go into surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said to them, you give them something to eat.

They said, shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat? What's our new minimum wage? \$15 times eight hours would be \$120 in a day and multiply that times 200 for 200 days wage. Uh, that's a lot of money, right? A denarius was a day's wage. So if they say 200 denarii, that's 200 times \$120 in today's minimum wage.

So this is a sizable amount of money that they would have to spend to feed this crowd. He said, how many loaves do you have? Go and see. When they found out they said five and two fish, he commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass.

So they sat down in ranks in hundreds and in fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, gave them to his disciples to set before them. And the two fish he divided among all.

So they all ate and were filled. And they took up 12 baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Those who had eaten of the loaves were about 5,000 men.

Quite a bit more detail in this account. Teaching is brought to the fore where the teaching emphasis in Matthew has been in the preceding chapter. While we're looking at parallels, let's take a look at Luke chapter nine, beginning at verse 10.

In the preceding context there, you have the sending out of the disciples, going through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. That's verse six of Luke nine. In verse seven, Herod the Tetrarch heard of all that was done by him.

He was perplexed because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead and by some that Elijah had appeared. And by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, John, I have beheaded.

So who is this of whom I hear such things? So he sought to see him. So here we have the suggestion that others broached the idea that John had been raised from the dead. And evidently Herod came to believe it and he wants to see him.

Verse 10 of Luke nine, the apostles, when they returned, told Jesus all they had done. He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place, belonging to the city called Bethsaida. When the multitudes knew it, they followed him.

He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the 12 came and said, send the multitude away that they may go to the surrounding towns and countries, lodge and get provisions. We are in a deserted place here.

He said to them, you give them something to eat. Five loaves, two fish, unless we go and buy food for there were about 5,000 men. He said to his disciples, make them sit down in groups of 50 disciples did so made them all sit down.

He took the five loaves and the two fish looking up to heaven, blessed and broke them, gave them to the disciples to sit before the multitude. They all ate and were filled. 12 baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

This is one of the few miracles that is recorded in all four gospels. If you turn over to the gospel of John chapter six, we have the fourth account. There is a section of teaching and he refers to John the Baptist beginning in verse 31.

If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. This is John five 31. There is another who bears witness of me and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true.

You have sent to John and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He, John was the burning and shining lamp and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.

But I have a greater witness than John's for the works which the father has given me to finish the very works that I do bear witness of me that the father has sent me the works which the father has given me to complete the very works that I do bear witness of me that what that the father has sent me the father himself who sent me has testified of me. You haven't heard his voice at any time or seen his form, but you do not have his word abiding in you because whom he sent, you do not believe who is he talking to look back in chapter five to verse 16, uh, after he has, uh, healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, the man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well, for this reason, the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him because he had done these things on the Sabbath. You remember in our structure of the gospel of Matthew, we're talking about how after the presentation, Jesus is beginning to encounter opposition.

And now he only speaks in parables. Now he is going to deserted places and he's, he's no longer, uh, confronting people in, you know, large public ways like he did before. He's still going to do it, but not like he did before.

So when these people start giving him a hard time because he healed that man on the Sabbath, he says, my father has been working until now and I have been working. Therefore, the Jews sought all the more to kill him because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was his father making himself equal with God that

introduces this teaching section, which includes these words, but I want you to pay close attention to verse 37 and 38. The father has testified of me.

He's the one who sent me. You haven't seen or, uh, heard his voice, but you do not have his word abiding in you. Now, if it is the father who has testified, but they haven't seen his form and they haven't heard his voice, what is the testimony of the Jesus? It begins with his word, right? The word of God.

And when Jesus does his works, the word and the works are the father's witness. The works are a witness because the word identifies those works as belonging to the messenger from God, right? John bore witness and the people in the person of their King have now rejected John. He is, he has been killed.

You in verse 38, you do not have his word abiding in you because whom he sent him. You do not believe. Now you cannot believe the amount of misunderstanding that stems from what Jesus says in John chapter six and in John chapter 10 about no man can come to me except the father draws him.

Uh, you do not believe me. You are not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.

You are not my sheep. Calvinist reform theology makes all kinds of hay out of John chapter six and John chapter 10 in this regard. And they will quote these verses over and over and over again.

Um, the, uh, verse 44 of John six, just flip the page over there. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day. I'm laying a little bit of groundwork here because Jesus has a lot to say about bread in John chapter six and the introduction to this doctrine of bread, if you will, is the feeding of the 5,000 and what Jesus is doing when he feeds the multitudes in addition to expressing compassion is sending a message about the bread.

But the key and the key that is routinely missed everybody that goes to John chapter six in quotes, verse 44, no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. Notice he doesn't just say unless the father draws him, the father who sent me, the father who sent me that identical phrase is overlooked in verse 37 of the preceding chapter. I have a greater witness than John's the works, which the father has given me to complete, to finish the very works that I do bear witness of me that the father has sent me the works bear witness that the father has sent me.

Now, why would the works bear witness? Because they are detailed in the word of God, the father himself, verse 37, who sent me emphasis again, has testified of me. You haven't heard him or seen him. So what is his testimony? It seems a little odd when you just read through this, that Jesus suddenly talks about God being invisible and unheard

and unseen.

Why does he say this? He says, the father has testified of me, not by showing up visibly, not by speaking from heaven. How has the father testified? What is the testimony of the father? It is his word. It is the law and the prophets and the writing.

It is the old Testament scriptures. That is the testimony of God to Christ. Dr. Crystal likes to sum up the Bible.

The old Testament message is someone is coming in the gospels. The message is someone is here. And in the epistles and revelation, someone is coming back.

And the old Testament scriptures witnessed that God in Christ would reconcile the world to himself. Those are Paul's words. God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself.

He sends him to redeem Israel. He sends him to be a light to the Gentiles and his presence as being sent from God is going to be marked the way all of the men in the old Testament were marked as having been sent by God. What was the marker to Israel when they were in bondage in Egypt that Moses, their deliverer, had been sent by God? What demonstrated that Moses was the real deal? Put your hand into your robe and pull it out and it's leprous white as snow.

Put it back in again and it is healed. Physical healing. Aaron's rod cast down.

The nine plagues and then the death of the first born. Supernatural, divine manifestations of power at the behest of God's messenger. In later days, the prophets could interpret dreams, could tell you the dream that you had without you saying anything as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel.

In the Old Testament, the marker of the messenger was the miracle. That record is in the word of God and it is the word that testifies. You haven't seen God, you haven't heard his voice at any time, but your problem is you don't have his word abiding in you.

Why is it not given to everyone to understand the gospel of the kingdom, the mystery of the kingdom? Why did Jesus say that back in Matthew chapter 13? Do you remember what he said? To you it has been given. To those who is in parables, why is it given? Because when the word of God came, they were receptive. They were soil where the seed could penetrate.

Some to greater depth than others, but it is given to them because they were already seeking. They recognized the Lord Jesus because they had the word of God. The way Simeon did, the way Anna did, the way Zechariah and Elizabeth and Joseph and Mary and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and others.

What's the very first thing Nicodemus tells Jesus in John chapter 3? We're in John. You

can flip back two pages. Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God.

Why? No one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. Nicodemus has this figured out. That's why we have John chapter 3. That's why we have John 3.16. Thanks to Nicodemus who knew from the word of God that these signs would mark the one sent by God.

Very critical. We cannot understand the significance of the feeding of the 5,000 without this background. And that's the reason it's in all four gospels.

Key. The reason we are not reformed in our theology, the reason we are not Calvinists, is we do not believe that God arbitrarily has a select list of the elect and only draws them and draws them effectually and gives them saving faith, plants it in them. And your more detailed thinkers in Calvinism believe that God actually regenerates you before you express faith.

You have to be alive before you can believe. Alive spiritually. And so good Calvinists put regeneration ahead of faith.

God regenerates you, then he plops faith down in there, then you believe and your calling and election are made sure in that way. And it is a severe and tragic misunderstanding. This is the key.

If you're talking to a Calvinist and they say, look, nobody can come unless God draws them and God effectually draws them and he only draws the elect and when God draws you, you are fully and effectually drawn and you're going to come to Christ, he's going to put the faith in you, you're going to be elect and then TULIP is going to take place. Well, go back to John chapter 5. You do not have his word abiding in you, verse 38. And because you do not have his word abiding in you, the one that God sent, you don't believe.

You're not Nicodemus in John chapter 3, recognizing that the signs mean Jesus is sent by God. You don't have his word, so the signs do not convince. You do not accept the testimony of God first in his word and finally in these miraculous works, these signs, you don't accept it because his word is not abiding in you.

You've rejected the word, you're not interested in the word. So having rejected the word, you reject the living word, the word, capital W, the word that became flesh and dwells among us. Reject the written word, you're going to reject the living word.

Verse 39, you search the scriptures for in them, you think you have eternal life. These are they which testify of me. The scriptures testify of me.

You do not have the scriptures abiding in you. There's already been a point of rejection. Jesus is going to say in the later chapters of John, you are not my sheep.

My sheep hear my voice and they follow me. You are not my sheep. You don't respond.

Respond. No one can come to me unless the father draws him. He can't draw you because you don't have his word.

You've rejected his word and you've rejected his testimony. So the father does not draw you. The drawing takes place through the word who came to Jesus.

Now he came by night, but he came Nicodemus. Why did he come? No one could do these signs unless God is with him. I know that from the Word.

Was Nicodemus drawn? Was he drawn because he recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of those Old Testament scriptures? Yes. Do we have free will? Yes. Are we accountable for believing or rejecting the Word of God in its written form and in its living form? We are absolutely accountable and we will be held accountable.

And those who reject are placing their blood on their own heads as it were. Well, we need to pause here and take our break. But how important is it for God's Word to abide in us? How important is it for us to have the testimony of God in our hearts so that we can discern, so that we can understand the signs of the times, so that we can understand what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God? The Jews, certainly the leadership of the Jews in this day, missed the biggest event in history happening right before their very eyes.

They should have been the first to see it. It came to them first. It was presented to them first.

It was offered to them first. And they were totally blind to it. Why? Not because they weren't elect.

Not because God didn't effectually call them. Because they chose a path other than the implanted Word. The One who has my words and keeps them, He it is that loves me.

Jesus is going to say a few chapters hence in the Gospel of John. You do not have His Word abiding in you, because whom He sent Him you do not believe. The ultimate tragic consequence of not having God's Word in our souls blindness and deafness.

You can't see God. You can't see His form. And you can't hear His voice.

The only testimony you're going to get from Him is His Word. And if you reject His Word, you're cooked. You're done.

It's over. And the Messiah Himself can stand in your midst, the incarnate Son of God, and you're blind to it. It isn't seeing the form.

It isn't hearing the voice. It is having the Word. This is why it's so much better, you know,

sometimes we fantasize and say, oh, wouldn't it be great if I had lived in the days of Jesus, been able to see Him and walk by the Sea of Galilee with Him and see Him do His miracles and so on.

Jesus is saying here, it's not the seeing and it's not the hearing that counts. It's the Word that counts. If you have the Word, all these things will be added unto you.

We're going to have an infinite future to see the Lord, to walk with the Lord, to hear His voice. Missing out on the few years He was here at the first advent, at the incarnation, is insignificant compared to having His Word. Anyone can have His Word.

Anyone can receive His testimony. Anyone can be built up in the faith. Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit will all be at home and dwell with us when we have His Word and keep it.

The one who has my words and keeps it. He's the one that loves me. I and my Father will come to Him and make our home with Him.

Holy Spirit there, indwelling, sealing, filling, gifting, guiding, comforting, encouraging, illuminating the Scriptures, helping us identify our sins, all through the Word. Well, we're going to see how the bread and the multiplication thereof ties into this very important idea when we come back from our break.