

Matthew 21-03-07b

Thank you Dan and Anna and Lori for grace that is greater than all our sin. The principle of grace is one of those that we use to discern as we have been seeing in looking at this wonderful teaching from the Lord Jesus that is so pertinent and so applicable in our day. How do you know what's right? There are ideas swirling around left and right and I mean that in both senses.

And who's right? Sometimes even the people we consider opposition have a point. You're right, there's something wrong there. I recognize the problem.

I'm not sure I agree with your solution or maybe I radically disagree with your solution. I think your is evil, satanic, bad and promotes darkness. But to try to stand lashed to the mast of God's word in the midst of this maelstrom and storm of ideas and changes and demands and the wind that is blowing is our current challenge.

It's one of the main things we need to do. And it affects daily life. Prices are going to go up.

Taxes are going to go up. Freedoms are going to be limited. What you can say safely in public has changed and is changing.

And it eventually is going to impact our Christian identity and our life of faith directly. Behind a lot of these seemingly civil issues and social issues are spiritual issues. And there is a spiritual warfare.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. And it is not confined to any one side. The forces of darkness have got their hands in sock puppets on many sides of these debates.

And in both political parties and both houses of Congress and in the executive branch and in offices high and low at the state and local level, as well as at the national level, don't decide that, well, one side is good and the other is bad. One is holy and the other is unholy. The battle is more sophisticated than that.

And I liked that Russell Crowe line when he's the captain of a ship off on the other side of the world or something. I forget the name of the and they put them on the table and race them to see which one can cross the finish line. And the one that comes in second is the lesser of two evils.

And that's in many cases, both sides are evil. There is no good solution because we painted ourselves into a corner. And it's only which one is less evil than the others.

Well, the part of the Christian today, the part of faithful believers today is to discern. Paul's prayer is for discernment. I pray that you will come to know Romans 12 to the

good and acceptable and perfect will of God, three different levels.

Sometimes as close as we can get is the goodwill of God. Sometimes as close as we can get is the acceptable will of God. Other times we're able to enter into that perfect will of God, but we need the variation on the serenity prayer.

We need the wisdom to know the difference. We need to be able to discern the difference so that God can deliver us in this present evil age. And we can shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Now, this is all background. We have really taken a close look at this and tried to establish a solid foundation because this explains the rest of our chapter. Israel has already begun to manifest the rejection that is going to result in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and the denial of the fulfillment of covenant promises that God made to Israel in the old Testament.

Those are going to be set aside. They're going to be put on hold. They're going to be held in reserve and not fulfilled.

The kingdom was at hand, but the people, especially the leadership of the people, the religious leadership dialogued their way out of it. They reasoned their way out of it. This can't be the Messiah.

He doesn't sound like I want him to sound. He doesn't look like I want him to look. He doesn't meet the expectations that I have for political change.

He's not confronting the Romans like I want him to. He's confronting us, the religious establishment. If he were the Messiah, he would support us and be anti-Roman.

He has practically nothing to say about the Romans. The only thing I can see is that he helped the Roman centurion have his son or servant healed, but he hasn't called out Caesar. He says, render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

We want, if there's a kingdom, it ought to throw off Roman yoke and bring in God's king. This man's not right because I don't like what he has to say. He's shining light on the darkness in my behavior and my operation instead of aiming his power at provision of bread and destruction of the Roman government.

So he can't be right. He's got to be wrong. He's forgiving sins.

He's working on the Sabbath. He's violating the tradition of the elders. I find ways to dismiss him and to explain him away.

Even though there are signs that are clearly from God, Nicodemus saw them in John chapter three, no one could say and do what you say and do unless he were from God. And the honest man who has faith in his heart is going to come to understand that.

Nicodemus needs some prompting and some help, but you remember he is still around at the end of the Lord's career, along with Joseph of Arimathea and others to pursue what faith requires.

Well, all of this is background. We could spend time going through the other things in the list that Jesus gave of those things that proceed out of the heart, but they all begin with faulty logic that draws human conclusions and rationalizations instead of finding the path of faith, instead of discerning where the truth lies as it is reflected in the word of God. You and I have a hard enough time discerning where God's will and God's word would lead us in this flood tide of information and exposure and media and opinion and talking, talking, talking.

And I was thinking about this because it's easy in my calling as a teacher, it is easy to talk. There are those who are teachers or are presenters or are news people because they're fluent in speaking and you can be a speaker. There are radio talk shows, there are television talk shows.

You've got them hour after hour on various news outlets. I saw the passing of Rush Limbaugh a few weeks ago and of course that was his claim to fame. He could talk for three solid hours and very interesting to listen to.

The challenge comes if you are a talker in following the biblical admonition to be still and know that I am God, to stop talking and listen. I think all of us have had the experience of being in a conversation, maybe you're at a social gathering or you've come together for whatever purpose and someone is expressing an opinion and you either agree with them and your mind is stacking up illustrations and augmentations to the thing that they are saying that you agree with or while they're talking you're already assembling your different point of view, your counter argument. And so you're listening with one ear and you're constructing what you're about to say with the part of your mind that's not tied behind your back.

And if you listen to debate, if you listen to dialogue, if you listen to people on these talk shows where they have opposing points of view allegedly presented and you see how often people talk past each other, why is it that they don't take on a fair observation and address that instead of making their own talking point? Why don't they answer the question that was asked instead of ignoring that question and making a different point? The art of listening is 10 times more valuable than the art of talking. To listen, to hear, hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord. To hear and then to reflect on divine truth.

We cannot possibly source our conclusions and do the proper kind of deal. If we have not listened, if we are not already formulating a response or thinking of something different to take the truth of God and just let it sink in and soak in requires self-control. The fruit of the spirit begins with love and it ends with self-control.

God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control. Self-control says, you know, I'd really like to debate, I'd like to argue, I'd like to smash a hole in this point I just heard someone make, but maybe what I ought to do is just stop for a moment and not plan on talking. Let me just nod my head and listen and have the self-discipline to really analyze what I am hearing.

Anybody honestly can talk. Anybody can put their point of view out. Whether you're listening to media, whether you're on amateur radio, whether you're reading blogs, whether you're watching vlogs, whether somebody's on YouTube or streaming here and talking there, radio, whatever it may be, you find out anybody can put out a point of view.

Very few people seem to be humble enough and thoughtful enough. I know a few people like this and they are my role models in this regard. I've got elder, one elder member in my family in particular, is my hero in this and has been my example and has been my inspiration to really cultivate being a better listener and be more thoughtful about what I listen to.

Even if I don't like it, you've heard me say many times I've got a shelf full of bad commentaries and I want to have the discipline and the thoughtfulness to listen to what they have to say and why they are saying it and not just quickly dismiss it out of hand and say, well, I don't have time for that. I know that's wrong. Even what Satan said in the garden to Eve had an element of truth.

Even what the Pharisees said to Jesus when he told the young man paralyzed on the bed, let down through the ceiling, son, your sins are forgiven you. And they said, who can forgive sins but God? There's truth in that, right? We want to look for the truth. Where has the truth gone wrong? Where has the truth gotten twisted or been ignored? Are we citing the truth as a quick way to dismiss someone like the Pharisees dismissed the Lord Jesus instead of taking that truth and stopping and thinking about it? Only God can forgive sins.

Also, only God can heal someone who is completely paralyzed like this man. So if I've got two witnesses that this is God as a Pharisee or a scribe, I should come away from this experience thinking I have just had an encounter with God at work and I need to adjust my perceptions and my opinions and my reaction and response accordingly. But it was a snap judgment.

It's a truth that only God can forgive sins. But then that truth is mishandled, misapplied, and leads to error and an evil dialogue, an evil dialogue results starting with a good divine truth. So it is not enough to perceive the truth and understand the truth, but the dialogue in our hearts has to find the path of faith that leverages that truth and draws power from that truth and leads us through the narrow gate to life.

Why is that important? Let's take a look at our passage now. Look at verse 21. Sorry for the noise here.

I've got to get my glasses out from behind the microphone, which I changed during the break. Thank you for participating in my audio experiment. That was a wireless microphone and we're back on the wired mic, which I think works a little better.

Verse 21, Matthew chapter 15. Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon.

If you look at a map, this is north and on the coast. Remember Hiram, king of Tyre, construction of the temple, Cedars of Lebanon, all that kind of thing. Tyre and Sidon.

It's up north and it's also outside the boundaries of Israel. Why would Jesus go to the region of Tyre and Sidon when he's presenting the gospel of the kingdom to Israel? He needs a break from exposure to Israel because they are increasingly hostile and increasingly full of rejection, increasingly faithless, increasingly choosing their traditions instead of the truth of God. So Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

This is kind of like people that go to Mexico for a vacation. It's not that you don't like the United States, but let me get a change of scenery and charge my batteries and refresh, restore and renew. Get away from the normal exposure that is wearing me out and wearing me down.

This is when parents will park their kids with the grandparents and go take a little mini resort trip. And behold, verse 22, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely demon-possessed.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. You could debate whether she really understands, you know, the word Lord was kind of like Sir in those days and whether or not she understood that to be a capital L or a small l. O sir, O one in authority, but son of David is unmistakable. This is a Canaanite woman and she knows who Jesus is.

The report of who Jesus is and what he has done has extended beyond the borders of Israel into the regions of Tyre and Sidon where the Gentiles are. This lady has heard of him and has heard of what he can do and she has drawn a conclusion. Why is he son of David? Has he got a genealogy chart that he's showing everybody that his mother and his earthly father are both descended from? Why is he being called son of David? What does that title imply? It's not just genealogy or ancestry.

It's title to the throne. The son of David, the covenant promise of God is there will be a son of David sitting on David's throne. She doesn't just recognize Jesus as descended from David.

She recognizes Jesus as the rightful king of Israel. O son of David. And what is her request? What was the request of the crowds that chased Jesus back and forth around the lake? Let me touch your garment.

Make me some bread. What is her request? How does it differ? Have mercy on me. Be merciful to me.

Mercy comes from grace. When it comes from God, it is unmerited, undeserved. People saying, give us this bread always be our king.

Let me touch your clothes so that I can get well. Let my loved one touch your clothes so they can get well. These are self-interested appeals.

This lady has a demon possessed daughter, but she doesn't come and say, Lord, let my demon possessed daughter touch your garment. She says, you're the son of David. Have mercy on me.

I recognize your authority. And it goes beyond earthly authority in the spiritual realm. She says, have mercy on me.

My daughter is demon possessed. And I know that you not only have the authority as son of David, but I have heard that you have authority over demons. You are something more than a man.

You are something more than someone who has inherited title to a throne. I believe that. And I am appealing to your mercy.

Have mercy on me. Oh Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely demon possessed.

Now don't forget what we've talked about in the past week and in the first session this morning. What's our background? What do you listen to? Are you going to listen to rationalization? Are you going to be persuaded by the traditions of men, whether they are new or old, or are we discerning the truth of God? Are we looking for it and placing our faith in it? He answered her, not a word. How often do we have a tribulation in our life? And we go to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy on me. I know that you've got authority by your word. This situation could be resolved.

This health issue, this financial issue, this personal issue, this intransigent challenge in my life could be solved. You are the God with the power. Have mercy on me.

And he answers us, not a word. I was talking with my mom about this yesterday. It strikes me, and I mentioned on Thursday, I read a lady's opinion that maybe it was a good thing for the country that the previous president did not get reelected because it has exposed the depth and the level of what the opposition intends.

It has been revealed and is now being implemented for all to see in a way that we might not have been convinced of its roots and its intensity and the dedication that people have to it if it had not been allowed to run its course. This is what God is doing with human history. Why are we not saved at the point of salvation? Why has God let human history run on so long and have so many tragic consequences? Why the Holocaust? Why Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, Stalin, Hitler? Name your recent or distant evil.

Why does God let this stuff continue? Why does human history run? Our lives begin, endure, and ultimately end. And we are subject to the slings and arrows of outrageous, not fortune, but outrageous sin and evil. The exposure is necessary for us to see sin as sin indeed.

When God's law comes, now we see sin for what it is. The contrast and letting sin express itself and be exposed, its depth, its consequences, its corruption, its contagion. To see what it does, to experience it at first hand is to want to escape from it.

If you're a person of faith, if you're a person that loves God, would you ever choose to come back to this at any time in the eternal future? Does God have to prevent me from making a bad choice? Or have I been inoculated by exposure to this horrific virus of evil and sin? And I've got spiritual antibodies and I will never, ever want to be anywhere near the kind of horrific, hellacious environment that sin and evil creates. Exposure and observation to show its true heinous nature is sometimes necessary to convince us. Anybody that's raised kids know this.

You can tell a child, you shouldn't do that, that's going to hurt you. Don't run in the house with scissors. Don't stick the butter knife into the plug in the wall.

Don't ride your bike too fast. Don't run in the house. But when you engage in those things anyway, don't touch that, it's hot.

You touch it anyway and get burned. You remember the burn an awful lot longer than, well, I don't really know if a stove is hot or not. My parents told me to touch it, so I just never did.

We learn our lessons by experience. So we're learning a lesson now, for better or for worse, by the removal of one kind of emphasis in our national government and replacing it with a quite different one. And we are seeing the outcome quite differently in a way that simple debate would never convince, persuade, or develop a conviction in people's minds.

Sometimes you just have to see it. And many times in the past, when one side has gotten complete control of all three branches of government, the midterm election, everybody reacts and says, whoa, that's too much of that. And they drop 50 or 60 seats in the House of Representatives, or they lose a number of seats in the Senate because

people say, I don't want an unadulterated dose of that viewpoint.

That needs to be balanced. That needs to be held in check. The beauty of a two-party system is, with a lot of friction and a lot of heat and sparks, they tend to balance, or they have historically up to this point, balanced each other and kept us generally in the safe middle of the road and not into one ditch or the other.

Well, pay attention now, because Jesus has just made the point of how important it is to not just hear a thing, but analyze it for its truth and take the path of faith. We are intellectual people, but ultimately and finally, we are people of faith. And there are times when you have to believe against common wisdom.

You have to believe in spite of what human tradition would say. Sometimes in spite of your understanding of what Scripture says, think of those Pharisees who can forgive sins, but God alone. Latched onto a truth, misapplied it.

If only God can forgive sins and this guy says he's declaring this man's sins forgiven, well, this is blasphemy and this is a bad man. Got a hold of the truth, but deceived themselves with the truth. Missed it.

Look at the contrast here. Jesus answered her, not a word. Sometimes things take time.

Write it down. Sometimes things take time. Jesus did not answer her the first time she said, son of David, have mercy on me.

He didn't say anything. What's he, what's he testing for here? Was this a shot in the dark? Is it? Well, let me try this. You know, I'm kind of out of options here.

What have I got to lose? Shot in the dark. Hey, oh, son of David, have mercy on me. He didn't answer.

Well, he must not be the son of David or he's not the person I heard. Or those are probably just rumors and stories that told in the caravan fires at night. And this can't be the real deal.

He answers her, not a word, but she doesn't quit. She is calling and calling and calling. She perseveres.

She believes she is not going to let this go so much so that the disciples come in verse 23 and urged him saying, send her away. She keeps on crying out after us. They're traveling down the road.

They're trying to go to a village, maybe find a place where they can get some food. And this lady is not letting up. She's calling after him.

She will not let him go until he blesses her, if you will. So the disciples say, look, just tell

her to go. Well, notice the Lord does not tell her to go either.

He doesn't encourage her and he doesn't discourage her. What is his answer to her up to this point? It starts with a W and ends with a T. Wait, they who wait upon the Lord are going to be blessed. But sometimes you have to wait.

Sometimes it is the perseverance of faith. It is the continuity, continuing to pray, continuing to persevere, continuing to trust that makes the difference. Well, how can you demonstrate perseverance and patient continuance in well-doing if you're not given the opportunity to patiently continue? So her daughter continues to be demon possessed.

She continues to be not at home, not doing what she normally does. She's following the Lord and she's persevering in her request. Jesus makes that opportunity for her to demonstrate the intensity of her faith.

And that's what it is. When the disciples say, send her away, he answered them and said, he doesn't answer her. He says to the disciples, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Who can forgive sins but God alone? This is a truth. Jesus was not sent to the Gentiles. Very interesting discussion I've been having somewhat by proxy with Elizabeth and some people.

She's having a deal of gizmos with about, you know, is there a difference in Jesus and Paul and the gospel of Paul and the gospel of Jesus in theological world? There's all of this stuff about, well, you know, Paul basically invented Christianity and corrupted the teaching of Jesus, some think. And why does Jesus say one thing? Paul says something else. Well, we understand that Jesus is Old Testament and Paul is New Testament.

Not until you get to the middle of John chapter 13, is Jesus New Testament. He is sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It's Old Testament.

He is challenging them to ready themselves for the fulfillment of Old Testament promise. Well, people who think that Jesus started the church, you're Peter and on this rock, I will build my church. And that what Jesus said is directed primarily at us now.

No wonder they see problems between Jesus and Paul. It is a misunderstanding of dispensations, misunderstanding of purpose, ignoring context and so on. I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

So he says, the reason I am not answering her is that's not a part of my mission. I am not here to interact with Gentiles. I am here to challenge Israel to hold up their end of the covenant and to prepare the way the kingdom is at hand.

Repent, change your mind, act in faith, not in reaction of dialoguism. So the woman

comes, not only does she continue, she comes right up and worships him saying, Lord, help me. Now Jesus answers her.

And this is of a piece with what he told the disciples. It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs, the kunarion, the little dogs. This is not a pejorative.

It's a picture. Who are the little children? Who are the children? The house of Israel. I am here to put bread on the table.

What was our, what was our emphasis a few lessons back? Our six word theme. It is all about the bread. Are they imbibing? Are they partaking? Are they accepting and taking in the bread, digesting it? Just as it is not what goes into a man that defiles a man, it is also not what goes into a man that sanctifies and perfects him.

Partaking of the bread alone is not enough. It needs to result in something proceeding from the heart. What proceeds from the heart either justifies or condemns us.

It either sanctifies or defiles us. What happens to the bread when it goes in? This is why our, our recent emphasis on we have got to prioritize time in prayer and reflection. In that law, he meditates day and night.

That's the tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth its fruit, bringing forth that which is good. It is not enough to take it in. In case you missed that.

It is not enough to take it in. Jesus said, it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man. It is also not what goes into the mouth that sanctifies a man.

What proceeds from the heart? You have to take that bread in, of course, but what does it do to your heart? Pharisees understood only God can forgive sin, but what came out of their hearts was evil. This woman understands. And when Jesus says, it is not good to take the children's bread, I was sent to the lost.

It's a different metaphor. I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They're lost sheep.

They're the house of Israel. They belong to God. They are sheep that were in the fold and they got lost.

I am here to retrieve them and bring them back to where they should be. They're already owned. He's not converting the sheep.

He's not turning goats into sheep. He's not finding wild sheep and taming them. I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to bring them back.

Different metaphor here. I was sent to put bread on the table for the children, right? That's the picture. Very clear.

The children are the house of Israel. It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs who are in a different status. She said, yes, Lord.

Yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table. The children aren't eating all of the bread when they're at the household table. A lot of that food is getting wasted.

Twelve baskets of fragments are being taken up. Can I not have something that has been rejected by the children, has been ignored and lost by the children? Can't I have some of that? What is Jesus' response? Oh woman, great is your faith. She has reasoned this out in her heart and her response is faith.

I know what's going on. I understand that a lot of people are speaking negatively about this man, but I think he is the son of David. I think no one could do what he does and say what he says unless he were from God.

I'm with Nicodemus. I think he's the real deal and he's got the power of God and he can drive the demons from my daughter. I believe it and I think he will do it.

I believe he will do it. There's people in his own land who he can do no great work in his own hometown because there's so little faith. They didn't believe and he could do no great work there.

He healed a few and that was it. She says, I know who he is and I know what he can do. Jesus recognizes her faith and notice by ignoring her and by waiting for her to come and by discouraging her with a truth, remember that the Pharisees took a truth and discouraged themselves and decided he wasn't the Messiah.

Jesus gives her a truth and she points her faith at that truth and Jesus says, you've got great faith. Let it be to you as you desire and her daughter was healed from that very hour. What do you do with the bread? It is all about the bread.

This is the bread from heaven. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the bread from heaven.

Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you're done. It's over. Many turned away from following him.

John six and John seven, you remember that many turned away when he gave them that truth. This woman is a Gentile from up in the region of Tyre and Sidon, but she gets it. And it doesn't matter the rationalization that she's a Canaanite and not one of the lost sheep.

The rationalization that the bread is only for the children doesn't slow her down because she's a woman of faith and she believes in the mercy of God through Christ. That is

salvation to believe in the mercy of God through Christ. The one who comes to God believes that he is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him.

This woman is a prime example and it doesn't matter that she's not an Israelite. It doesn't matter that it's not a part of Jesus' primary mission. Her faith overcomes all of that.

Our faith recognized by God as such unleashes God's ability to have mercy on us, to have grace on us, and to do great things that reflect his glory in us and through us. It's a wonderful thing to reflect on. It is of a piece with what we choose.

Are we going to teach as doctrines the traditions of men or are we going to evaluate the truth of God and its pertinence in our own lives in the light of faith, with a response of faith? It's not an easy thing. It's not a quick thing. Many times it takes a process.

It takes time and God is not going to respond immediately. He's going to leave us with that challenge and give us time to think and to pray and to come to the kind of conclusion that this woman came to. She did not come to this conclusion overnight.

She thought about this. She heard about Jesus over and over. When she heard that he was near her, she came to him and she fell down and worshiped him and she importuned him.

When Jesus gave her that opportunity to demonstrate her faith and she did so, then that faith was richly rewarded as it will be for us. We'll close here in a word of prayer and we will pick up our study next time. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you for the revelation and the clear light that it shines on our path and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will help us to think and reason properly to discern the difference between what is genuine divine truth and what is constructed truth and constructed righteousness that is actually the rationalization of the human heart and the human mind. We pray that as a result we can live our lives in a way that causes others to ask us a reason for the hope that is in us, that shines as a light in the midst of our generation, that causes others to see our good works and glorify you as our Heavenly Father. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.