

Matthew 21-03-11b

As we continue our study, let me give you just a few more tidbits, and I'm not going to take along with this, but in Bristol, in the United Kingdom, there were street preachers that were preaching the gospel on the street and were arrested for Islamophobic and homophobic speech and hauled into the clink. And ultimately, they were acquitted, but the fact that they were arrested at all is significant. And when they tried to sue for harassment, the lawsuit was dismissed, and the judge determined that they were lawfully arrested.

The arrest was lawful, and it is a harbinger of things to come. There will come a time when you will not be able to preach great portions of the Bible. They'll probably let you do the golden rule and love one another, and that's about it.

There is a movement afoot to discredit churches and the conservative point of view that is expressed in many of them. LifeWay, which used to be the Baptist Press for the Southern Baptist Convention, they changed their name to LifeWay some years ago. But last fall, between September and October, LifeWay Research collected the answers of 1,007 Protestant pastors of churches around the United States.

49% of the respondents agreed with this sentence. I frequently hear members of my congregation repeating conspiracy theories they have heard about why something is happening in our country. In contrast, 46% disagreed with the statement.

White pastors were more likely to agree than black pastors, and those leading large congregations of over 250 members were those who agreed most. 61% said that they had heard it. Scott McConnell, Executive Director of LifeWay Research, said, Christian churches resolve to be places focused on the truth, yet half of pastors hear the spread of assumptions about plots often.

This is a startling disconnect. Well, on the surface, it sounds like, wow, these churches are hotbeds of conspiracy theories and people believing in plots and so on. Well, when you have a media that is in the tank for only one point of view and you cannot get information that would balance and allow you to draw conclusions, if you draw a conclusion that is not based on information that's in the mainstream media, you believe in a conspiracy, just by definition.

There is no evidence that X took place. There is no evidence that Y is true. Why is there no evidence? Because it's not being published.

And if you follow back channels and talk to people directly or listen to people who are speaking from first-hand experience, well, that's not evidence. That's anecdotal. That's not been confirmed or verified.

No press reports have picked that up. Therefore, that's not true. So it's alarming, according to these reports, that half the pastors say, my people in my church believe conspiracy theories.

Well, it's not the half of the people or half of the pastors. The problem is, how do you define conspiracy theory? Conspiracy is anything that isn't being promulgated as the official dogma. If you don't believe the government version of events, you believe in conspiracy theories.

How do you define conspiracy theory? Well, it's anything that the current majority and the current woke group think promulgates. Anything other than that is a conspiracy. So it is a convenient label.

I want to read you one final thing here. This is an opinion piece by a man named John Podoretz. It's hard to pronounce and even harder to spell.

P-O-D-H-O-R-E-T-Z. The recent Dr. Seuss kerfuffle is a valuable case study in the classic four-step method by which the left conducts itself in the American culture wars. It goes like this.

First, and I would encourage you to write these down and just see if this is your observation as well. This is what the left does. It's a four-step method to success.

First, someone on the left stages a provocative assault on a cultural artifact. Might be a statue, might be a book, might be a belief, might be an institution, might be a cartoon character. Second, someone on the left stages a provocative assault on a cultural artifact or cultural norm, usually as an outgrowth of a fashionable idea from within the leftist coalition.

The move generates a shocked reaction from the right, which had nothing to do with the initial promulgation of the controversy. We don't like Pepe Le Pew. We don't like Dr. Seuss.

We don't like pick whatever the current thing is. People on the right say, I didn't invent Pepe Le Pew. I didn't invent Song of the South or Uncle Remus or Aunt Jemima syrup or Uncle Ben's rice.

I didn't invent any of that. I don't stick it on my table and glory in the fact that I've got white privilege or something. These are just existing things from days gone by that don't have any current traction in terms of anything meaningful, but it'll be picked up and assaulted on purpose.

And the purpose of the assault is to provoke a defensive reaction. We're going to get Pepe Le Pew and say he's sexist and he's forcing his attentions on this cat without her consent. And this is a terrible role model for children.

Pepe Le Pew is a terrible role model for children. Did you not know this? I'm so glad someone helped me to understand that I shouldn't act like Pepe Le Pew. Come with me to the Casbah, et cetera.

So it is designed to provoke a response, a defensive reaction, like what's the big fuss. At this point, the left uses the counter reaction it provoked to accuse the right of pursuing a culture war against the left. You're part of the problem.

You're dragging us down. You're not supporting needful change. You're a bad guy because you don't like our assault on Pepe Le Pew.

So finally, the right finds itself accused not only of trying to divide us and polarize the country and the culture, it's our fault, but of being crazy for taking the initial provocation seriously. How dare you question any of this? Well, you can go on, if you can find Podhoretz, P-O-D-H-O-R-E-T-Z, and just look up that. And the title of this is The Left Has Perfected the Art of Gaslighting in the Culture Wars.

If you don't know what gaslighting is, look it up. It comes from the movie Gaslight, where you plant suggestions in someone's mind and you keep provoking it until they start to believe it themselves. The left has perfected the art of gaslighting in the culture wars, and they really have.

It's gotten to the point where you're paranoid about saying anything about anything. You stop and think twice before you point out that a transgender book got pulled from Amazon. Am I going to get in trouble for pointing out that Amazon did this? Well, I don't care.

Anyway, as a final note, and this is the last one, I promise, a Manhattan private school aiming to use more inclusive language is encouraging its students to stop using the terms mom, dad, and parents, because the words make assumptions about kids' home lives. The Grace Church School, this school was founded by Grace Church. They have since parted ways from the church, but they kept the name, has academic courses for junior kindergarten through 12th grade.

They issued a 12-page guide, 12 pages of how to talk. The school is telling students and parents 12 pages, this is how you should speak, to support their mission of inclusivity. The detailed guide recommends using the terms grownups, folks, family, or guardians as alternatives to mom, dad, and parents.

It also suggests using caregiver instead of nanny or babysitter. Caregiver. Families are formed and structured in many ways.

At Grace Church School, we use inclusive language that reflects this diversity. It's important to refrain from making assumptions about who kids live with, who cares for them, whether they sleep in the same place every night, whether they see their parents,

etc. The guide reads.

Of course, they use the term diversity and parents, both of which they proscribe in the guide itself. We're promoting inclusivity and diversity, but we don't want you to use the term diversity anymore. And you're assuming whether they see their parents, but we don't want you to use the term parents.

So, you know, the document states how to use appropriate terms related to gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Instead of asking a person, what are you? Where are you from? The query should be, what is your culture or ethnic background? Where are your ancestors or your family from? And you can look up some of the other ridiculous things that this guide suggests. But see, this is the first one.

This is the toe in the water. Everybody says, oh, that's silly, but you've already heard me talk about what Congress passed in terms of the non-gender specific language they're going to use. You can't say father and mother or sister and brother anymore.

You just, you know, it's more and more general and just watch. It is just going to keep on. Well, just a little, little cultural observation there.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 15. We're going to, I'm going to do what they told me not to do in seminary and that is read a verse and then jump away from it to other places. I am going to devote my resources to the benefit of the synagogue and the temple and the people who attend it.

And as I do that, I am going to dishonor my father and mother in direct violation of the law of God transmitted through Moses. This is what Jesus points out in the first few verses of Matthew chapter 15. You transgress the commandment of God by your tradition, by your made up standard of righteousness.

Traditions in this culture are humanly devised standards of righteousness. What did we just spend the whole first session looking at? Humanly devised standards of righteousness. It's not based on God, not based on the Bible, not based on absolute morality.

It is based on what is trendy at the moment. And we're not just going to implement it now. We're going to dig back through the past and excoriate, vilify, root out and destroy the past.

Hypocrites, verse seven, Matthew 15. Well, did Isaiah prophesy about you saying these people draw near to me with their mouth, honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me.

And I'm talking about the Christian segment or those who claim to be Christians in this country, which is still over two thirds to three quarters of the population, depending on

how you define Christian, two thirds to three quarters of the people in this country claim to be believers in the God of the Bible. And yet this stuff is going on in vain. They worship me.

Verse nine, teaching as doctrines, the commandments of men, teaching as doctrines, the commandments of men. This is truth. This is morality.

This is proper ethical behavior. This is the standard by which you are going to be charged, judged and sentenced in the culture is whatever we say. This is man by man's efforts, building a tower of Babel.

We will ascend. We will be like the most high. It's the five I wills of Satan perpetrated by human beings.

And it is the big lie. If angels in heaven can be deceived by the big lie and one third of them can follow Satan out, do not think that it can't happen. Even to God fearing Bible, thumping Christians, God fearing Bible, thumping Christians, abused slaves.

We can be blind in certain areas and it takes humility. It takes appeal to the throne of grace. Search me and know my heart.

Try me and see if there'll be any wicked way in me. Purge me with hyssop so that I can be clean. Wash me, make me whiter than snow.

Show me my secret faults. All of that's out of Psalm 51 in no particular order. We have got to ask God for wisdom.

Now, here's what's interesting. If you flip back three or four pages to Matthew chapter 10, something we have already covered. Matthew chapter 10, verse 16.

In my new King James Bible, this section is uninspiredly subtitled, Persecutions are Coming. Jesus says to his disciples, Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. You feel that way sometimes looking around at what's being said in the mainstream media, what is being prosecuted and advertised as what is right, what is proper, what is good.

And if you don't go along with it, you're a bad person. I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as does.

One of the reasons I spent the whole first session giving you a few current events, and I encourage you find some Christian news outlets, use the evil web and find them. There's what's it called? I believe it's cnsnews.com. Some of these articles came from there. Anything that even purports to be Christian in its perspective, check that.

Some people used to check things like the Drudge Report and other things to try to find back channels of information. I've given you in the past sites that track persecution of

Christians around the world. Find those, check them once in a while just as a counterbalance to the standard flow that you tend to hear.

You'll hear people talking here and there. You'll overhear conversations and people espousing the point of view that is being flooded, flooded by every orifice that society has. It is coming at us.

And you feel like a lamb in the midst of wolves, and you hesitate to bleat or to make any noise at all, lest you become dinner. Well, here's what Jesus said, beware. And if you may recall, you may have done this when I suggested it's still this way in my Bible.

In verse 16, circle be wise. Do you have it circled in your Bible? Do you have be wise circled? In verse 17, beware. Beware of men.

Be wary. They will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. Councils, this is more the secular side of government.

This is the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the interface, the buffer between the largely religious government of the Jews and the secular government of the Romans. And the Sanhedrin filled the gap between those two in many cases.

Verse 18, you will be brought. You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, secular authority, because of your faith for my sake. So I have be brought circle, be wise, beware.

You will be brought. Now, here's what's interesting to me. If we're doing what we're supposed to do, and we're God fearing, Bible loving believers, just minding our own business to the extent that it's up to us, live at peace with all men, we're doing that.

But somebody grabs us by the stack and swivel and hauls us up before kings and governors for some seemingly innocuous thing, something we said, something that you tweet or post in Facebook or some comment you make somewhere, and you suddenly get hailed up before whatever passes for court. It might just be the court of public opinion. You might get your account reviewed and canceled, or you might get called on the carpet at work as somehow putting a bad face on your employer or whatever.

You will be brought, Jesus says. They will deliver you, Jesus says, for my sake. And my question is, why does this happen? Why doesn't God protect me from this? Why doesn't he warn me to take reasonable steps, duck and cover, put on my camouflage, get down in my fighting hole and use my cover and concealment and stay off the military crest, stay out of the sights of the enemy? He says, no, you're going to be sighted in, you're going to be exposed, you're going to be found, you're going to be hailed in front of various authorities.

So he doesn't say, if you do this right, you'll never be found. You'll never be outed.

They'll never use the trove of data and find out that you're a Christian and where you go and who you associate with.

They'll never find it if you just do this right. He says, they're going to, you are going to be outed for my namesake. I say, okay, should this alarm me? Should I be afraid? Should I, you know, wear an extra pair of underalls or something? What should I do? Jesus says, the reason it is going to happen in verse 18 is as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

It's a testimony to the synagogues and the council, your Jewish authorities, and to the Romans, to the Gentiles, to the nations. It is a testimony to those on the inside and those on the out. In the church age, the interpretation application would be your example, whatever it turns out to be, is going to be noted by those inside the church and those outside the church.

It is going to be a testimony. Now you say, I don't want to be a testimony. I want to be incognito.

I want to disappear. I want to blend into the background. I want to be a face in the crowd that they can't single out with face recognition technology.

I don't want to be a testimony. Yes, you do. Yes, you do.

This is not something to fear. This is something to covet. This is something to request.

This is something to ask God in grace to grant. Now, I know that seems counterintuitive, but stop and think. Stop and think about this.

Am I a soldier of the cross? Dan played that for us not long ago. Are you ready to don the full armor of God, put on the helmet and the breastplate, pick up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God? Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? Yes. Who else? You want some fill in denominational name here to be called upon by God to be his witness and his testimony? Why have you been attending Bible class all these years? Just self-gratification.

Oh, God, bless me. Do you not want to be a testimony? Do you want to stand up and be counted? Do you not want to be one of those that the Lord Jesus can point to and say, you see, fill in your name here. They belong to me.

That's one of mine. That's what you want, right? It's a privilege. Pray after all of this preparation to be found worthy to be a testimony.

Now, it's not likely to be on a huge stage. You're not going to be interviewed on, you know, the national media, but we can be a testimony to those in our immediate surroundings, in our local vicinity. You never know how big that testimony is going to be.

The people in the Bible had no idea they were going to be in the Bible. Not a one of them. None.

You name anybody in the Bible, go through the concordance, look at all the Bible figure names. None of them thought they were going to be in the Bible. You don't think you're going to be in a Bible, but wouldn't it be a great thing if you were the guy who just stood on the quarter beating his breast and saying, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The testimony for that guy is in the eternal pages of scripture. Jairus and his daughter, the Roman centurion, the people that we have seen here, the people that let the guy down through the roof, the disciples, Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene and Lazarus and Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, Timothy, Titus, Mark, these other guys, many of them. You can go to Romans 16 and get a whole list of wonderful believers that are called by name and they're in the eternal pages of scripture for their testimony.

Listen, don't be afraid. Be wanting this, be hoping for it and be ready. You know, when you study your brains out before a test and you're confident that you know the answers and you know the material backwards and forwards and you've worked the extra credit problems and you have got it, you look forward to the test.

You say, give me that test. I'm going to ace this thing, right? That should be us. If not us, who? Who should be better equipped after the amount of time that we have spent studying and thinking about and applying the word of God day after day, week after week, month after month? Who other than us, shouldn't we be the ones that God calls on and says, you're going to be my witness.

You're going to be my testimony. Look at that verse again. Verse 18, you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake as a testimony to them.

I want to be a testimony. I don't just want to be a Christian because I'm hoping God will bless me and mine. I want to represent Jesus Christ as his body.

And so do you. And it's our privilege to do so. Look at verse 19, when they deliver you up, do not worry.

It's circled in my Bible and it should be circled in yours. Be wise, beware, get ready to be brought as a testimony and do not worry. You've got no worries.

We're never tested above what we're able to bear. Don't worry about how or what you should speak. I wonder what kind of test, what should I say? Should I remain silent like a lamb before it sure is as dumb? Should I speak up? You know, the great privilege of being called up to be one of God's testimonies.

You have a special presence and power and ministry of the Holy spirit. It will be given to you in that hour. This is like the writers of scripture.

When they sat down, when Paul sat down to write these letters, John Peter, when they sat down to write these things, God, the Holy spirit was present in a special and unique way so that their testimony was inspired by God. And if you are called up to be a testimony, large or small, and I'm not saying that this has to be in a courtroom or before civil authorities, this may just be the courtroom of family or the courtroom of employment or the courtroom of school or the courtroom of associations. Some place where people are observing.

If you stand out as a testimony for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, because you refuse to support unbiblical, unethical, immoral policies and points of view. And you may not be militant and you're not out there as a proactive advocate, but if you are asked, or if you are put in a position where you are forced to do something that you did not believe from the word of God, you ought to do, this may be your time as a testimony when they deliver you up. And he doesn't say you won't be delivered up.

God will supernaturally shield you and hide you in the cleft of his hand and in the, in the cleft of the rock. And you'll, you'll be protected and you won't be put through the onerous and scary process. He says, if you're ready to be a testimony, I'm going to let them call you up.

I'm going to let them hail you up before the authorities because you're representing me and it's good. You're going to be given special grace. What a privilege.

What an opportunity. Don't you want to be one of these people? You say, no, I really don't. Yes, you do.

You think about this and you pray about it. You think about queen Esther never thought when she was Hadassah out there taking care of her uncle and then suddenly called up and put in the harem and selected by the king brought to the kingdom for such a time as this. There's a reason why we were born in this age.

And at this time, there's a reason that we are Americans in this culture, in this society, at this place, at this time, in this hour, there's a reason could have been born anywhere at any time. God put us here and put us now be ready, be leaning forward. I want to be the one that is picked.

Teacher asks a question in the class. You should be the one sticking up your hand. I know that answer.

I know this material. I'm ready. You should be ready.

If you're not ready, good time to review and pray because we have got everything we need. It is the power of God, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, sayeth the Lord of hosts. It is the Holy Spirit who will give us courage.

It is the Holy Spirit who will give us strength. It is the Holy Spirit who will bring to our mind the knowledge that we have, the living water that we have drunk in the past will strengthen us and sustain us. Do not worry.

This is a command from the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not worry. If anything I read in the first session worried you, don't worry.

It will be given to you in that hour, what you should speak and by extension, what you should do and how you should act when they deliver you up. Do not worry. It is not you who speak first 20, but the spirit of your father who speaks in you.

This is a great opportunity to be a vessel containing God's word and God's spirit. God does it. It doesn't depend on you and it doesn't depend on me.

This is God working His will, speaking His word. All these people talking about speaking truth to power, you haven't seen anything until you see God speaking His truth to puny human powers. Greater is He that is in you than anybody that is in the world.

We don't have to fear anything or anybody, any movement, any social constructs, any programs, any policies, any laws that change, any taxes that are levied, any penalties that are inflicted. Do not worry. My father in heaven is going to take care of me.

Our father in heaven is going to take care of us. No conditions, no questions. Brother will deliver up brother to death and a father, his child.

He doesn't say, but if you're faithful, I will prevent this. He says it, it can happen. And the testimony is going to be no fear, no compromise, no second guessing of faith or doctrine, God's truth.

The Lord Jesus didn't shrink back. The apostles did not shrink back. And why try to hang on to things in this life that you cannot keep when you have the opportunity to gain things in eternity that you will never lose.

It is not a time for falling back onto perdition, but by faith and patience to inherit the promises. Verse 22, you will be hated by all for my namesake. Now in America, this is kind of a new thing, but people around the world could tell you this has been happening to them for decades and in some cases, centuries.

We're new, we're green behind the ears or wet behind the gills or whatever. We're, it's new to us. It's not new.

There have been people historically all down through the centuries that have been persecuted for the name of Christ. And in other countries, this has been going on a long, long time. You'll be hated for my namesake.

He who endures to the end will be delivered. You're not delivered from the test. You are

delivered through the test and to experience the grace of God through the test is greater than being delivered from it.

This is the witness of scripture. We will know God better. We will understand God's plan and purpose and his truth.

We will be drawn closer to God through the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit by being taken through adversity. This is why we are not born up into the skies on flowery beds at ease. We often think back, um, I was having a conversation not long ago thinking, you know, why didn't this go an easy way? Um, why didn't this happen when I was prepared, when I had the resources, when I had the opportunity, but when the resources left and the opportunity was gone, then I got hit with the test.

Then I got hit with the challenge. This is by design delivering us through hardship, delivering us in spite of opposition, strengthening us when human strength is inadequate. This is how we come to know God.

Think about it in the eternal future. Where's the opposition? Where's the challenge? Where's the hardship? Where is the weight to push and grow our muscles? We're going to use our strong muscles and our, uh, knowledge through faith, our wisdom and our epinosis in the eternal future, but we develop it by resistance and opposition and strength training. Now I want strength training.

I'm not asking for the hardest way, but I know that God in his wisdom is going to chart my path in a way that will most enable me to grow and to become strong and to become reliant on him, on his grace and on his truth, grace and truth. That's how we prevail. And it is in hardship.

It is in opposition. It is in trial that these things are built into our souls in a permanent and eternal way. And we lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven.

So do you want to give testimony? Do you want to be a witness? Do you want to be brought before Kings and governors and councils? Yes. Yes, you do. This is the chance to shine and reflect the glory of God.

So no need to hide, no need to quail, no need to reserve our commentary and our opinions. Lest somebody over here and report us to the Politburo of cultural correctness. Be who you are, express the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of the word of God unabashedly and unashamedly.

You don't have to pick a fight, but you don't run from a fight. This is what my dad taught me when I was a little kid. Don't pick fights, but don't run from a fight.

If somebody picks a fight with me, they had better be ready for staunch opposition and return fire. I am not going to be run off the playground. I am not going to be run out of

the realm of ideas and the place where debate is taking place.

We should not be silent. We should not be culturally invisible. We are here to be salt and light.

If the salt has lost its savor, if you're tasting the food and you taste no salt, but there's supposed to be salt there, what happened to the salt? That's not supposed to happen. Sodium chloride is sodium chloride, no matter what, right? It's its constitution. It's its elemental composition.

How can it lose its savor? You and I are to be salt and light. Do not be cowed. Do not be intimidated.

Do not be abashed. Do not be ashamed. Do not be silenced.

Don't pick a fight, but don't run from a fight. If we get called on the carpet for our beliefs, for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it shouldn't just be political opinions or memes and tropes and all the rest of that stuff, we stand on the word of God. And when it is the truth of the word of God, when it is God's righteousness that is on the line in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the last thing we should do is have a spirit of fear.

We should have a spirit of power because we're right. We should have a spirit of sound mind because God is our father and he will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Any moving that gets done for us is for his glory to be a testimony and a witness on his behalf.

And we want to be that person. So I'm excited, frankly, that the culture is turning so much against classic Christian faith and classic Christian truth, because that's what we stand for. And this is our hour to stand fast, stand firm, having done all to stand.

Go back and read your armor of God passage in Ephesians six. This is our chance. We've been mobilized.

We've been called up from the reserve into active duty, so to speak. So as never before, it's time to be us and to reflect the Lord Jesus Christ in our thinking, in our behavior, in our words. And in the light that shines in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation.

So every time you see a new downward trend in the culture, it's not the culture as an abstract that speaks for Christ. It's you and it's me. And if you look at what's his name, the painter of light, what's that guy's name? Kincaid, Thomas Kincaid, painter of light.

Anytime you see somebody that really uses light, well, there's been a few others like Monet that are really famous for their use of light. The reason the light is so noticeable is there is a contrast with the darkness. Well, there's never been a greater opportunity to

offer a contrast and an option away from darkness and away from human ingenuity and human solutions and human versions of righteousness than now.

We are primed, loaded and locked for this hour. And it ought to excite us. We ought to be enthusiastic.

Enthusiasmos, great Greek word. And it's what we ought to have. This is a great time to be alive.

It's a great time to be an American watching the nation slide downhill because we're the alternative and there's never been a better opportunity to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ than now. Never been a better time. As the day is drawn to a close and the return of the Lord is near, it's a necessary time to stand up and be counted and be visible as a testimony.

So with that encouragement, we'll close in prayer. And this Sunday we'll pick up our study moving forward in Matthew chapter 15. Father, thank you for your grace, your wisdom in positioning us in time and in space with everything we need to accomplish your purpose in our lives.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will encourage us, call to our minds the things that we have learned over many months and years and enable us to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, to not be conformed to the world, but that the transformation of our minds through the renewal of your spirit and your word will be evident and will offer hope and encouragement to those who are seeking you. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.