

Matthew 21-03-21b

As we pick up our study now in Matthew, we're looking at the formal opposition. It takes a lot. This is like getting oil and water to mix.

You know, if you get a sufficient vibration going at the right frequency, you can actually emulsify oil in water, but it takes a lot of work. And Jesus, as one of his many miracles, has managed to unite the Pharisees and the Sadducees in opposition against him. And I think I forgot to include this in the miracle study, but maybe I should make that the 37th miracle is unity.

One mind amongst the Pharisees and Sadducees, they all hate him intensely. But in chapter 23, Jesus said, describing them, this is the nature of their thinking and the nature of their opposition. Look at verse six.

They love the best places at feasts to be. I saw the most nerve jarring thing. If you try to stream your entertainment so that you avoid, you know, 17 and a half minutes of commercials every hour, you still get commercials, but typically they're very repetitious.

If you get on one of these streaming services and they're going to put in commercials, it's often the same commercial over and over and over again. And I don't know what they think they're accomplishing by that. If I was an artist, if I was a guy writing commercials, what I would do is do like Jesus' parables and make it extremely subtle to where you had to watch it 15 times to get the message instead of it just being blatantly obvious and then just mind numbingly repetitious.

But there's one in particular that I saw recently and I can't and I won't even describe it to you except to say it is the glorification of things that ought not to be glorified. So there are very large women with beards. There are roller skates involved.

In your face, there's a rap song underneath that says, you know, I'm great. And it just reminded me of the portion in Romans where it says, whose glory is their shame? And there are people who know because of whatever factor is involved, their orientation or their ethnicity or whatever, that you're not allowed to criticize anything that they choose, anything they wear, anything they espouse. They're nine feet tall and bulletproof because they've got a Teflon where you're not allowed to criticize.

If you say anything, you are some kind of a phobe, you know, a blank-o-phobe, fill in the blank here, or you're bigoted, racist, whatever it may be. So you're not allowed to say, you know, that really looks dumb. That's just disgusting.

That's not something to celebrate. But this thing is so in your face and this rap song underneath is just, look at me, I'm great. And there is nothing great except perhaps, well, I won't even say.

It's just, it's a great example of taking everything that would normally by any common sense person be considered as a symptom that someone needs help, that someone needs the Lord, that someone needs objectivity. They need self-worth that is based on the work of Christ. They need worthiness that is founded on, I was not redeemed with money or with silver or with gold.

I was redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. That establishes my value. They always say, you go to Craigslist or eBay or Amazon or wherever, something is worth what someone is willing to pay.

Every once in a while, I'm trying to find an auto part. I was shopping transmissions here this past week. And you get on eBay especially, and there will be a thing.

Take Zenith Transoceanic radios. They're shortwave radio receivers made in the 1950s. I've got one, my dad got me when I was a kid and wouldn't part with that thing for anything.

But they typically sell, depending on condition and operability, for somewhere between 250 and \$500 now on eBay. And I promise you, my dad didn't give that much back in the late 60s, but that's what they're typically worth now. Well, I was looking down through these Zenith radios and here's a Zenith Transoceanic that's listed for like \$2,350.

And every once in a while, I've been looking for something. And here's an example that's just priced with extra zeros. Instead of 230, it's 2,300 or 23,000 or some outrageous thing.

But every once in a while, they post things like that purposely. It's not a slip of the keyboard because someone will be willing to pay that price just so they can say, I paid this much. People that are just awash in money.

I don't know anybody like that, but evidently there are some. So the principle is something is worth what an individual is willing to pay on any given day. And this is when you get bidding wars.

And I watched a watch, a diver's, a Seiko diver's watch that was worth about \$300. There came a bidding war and the thing went all the way up over \$600 because two people just decided they really wanted that watch and they weren't gonna let the other one have it. And they bid it up to twice its value.

And I know because I was the one that sold it. It's the only thing I've sold on eBay. We found it in the warehouse and I paid about a hundred bucks to get it fixed, put it on eBay.

And I was expecting about 300, but a bidding war happened and it went up to 600 and it sold. This was years ago. And I thought, well, that's the grace of God there.

Obviously some expense is coming up because God's blessed us with a little extra cash. And by the way, anytime there is an influx, be like the wise aunt and store it up because winter is coming. That's my view.

But anyway, it's worth what someone is willing to pay. So what are you worth? What is this roller skating gal with the sequins and the painted on eyebrow pencil in beard on her face and this rap music? I mean, it's just the most atrocious thing you've ever seen. And it's like she's daring anybody to say anything at all about, you know, that's goofy.

Not allowed to say that. But why would someone do that? Why do people make an issue? Why do they glory in any particular thing? And particularly glorying in that which is normally considered shameful. If you psychoanalyze, and I've had, you know, two semesters of psychology, so I know what I'm talking about.

There is a problem of self-worth. And I feel bad about myself. I'm going to make people outside of me, accept me and celebrate me because of some feature over which I have no control.

It's like the Pharisees. Well, we are sons of Abraham and we glory in that. You get no credit for being a son of Abraham.

You have nothing to do with it. You lucked out being born in Israel at a time when being a son of Abraham in your particular society could be credited, but there's no value in it. There's a whole bunch of the sons of Abraham that are going to be cast out of the kingdom.

Many will come from the Northeast, South and West and sit down with Abraham and his son and grandson. Then you yourselves will be thrust out. And it doesn't matter that you're a son of Abraham.

It doesn't matter what your birth ethnicity, genetic compliment, pluses and minuses, your strengths and weaknesses, whether they're genetic or anything else, victim of circumstance, doesn't matter. What are you worth? What is your personal value? Are you valuable because you're smart? Are you valuable because you're good looking? Are you valuable because you're well off? Did you get born into money? Did you get born into practical skill that has enabled you to get ahead? That's not your value. Are you valued because of who you know? Are you valued because you're able to string words together and you've got a following? You've got some subscribers.

What is your value? There's only one measure of value. And that is what is God's estimate. God purchased us as believers in this age with the precious blood of Christ.

We were not redeemed with silver and gold as valuable as some people think those are. The precious blood of Christ. In God's estimation, we have been bought with a price.

Therefore, we should glorify God. We were purchased at great cost. Make it worthwhile.

Nothing worse than paying a big price for something and you get it and find out, people have paid for Rolex watches and then found out that it's a Schmolex. It's not a Rolex. It's got a Rolex face, but it's a fake.

It's a copy. Wasn't worth what it was paid for. God tells us to make ourselves worthy, be worthy of the price that was paid because it was a high price, a dear price, an inestimable price.

That's what we are worth. So live up to the cost. Bear fruit worthy of change of mind.

This is a daily task. It's easy to be petty. It's easy to be self-centered.

It's easy to be petulant and impatient and out of sorts. That's not worthy of the price. That isn't fruit in keeping with change of mind.

Any unbeliever can do that. Only believers blessed with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, with the light of the word of God shining, with the advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ himself interceding at the throne of grace. We are the only ones who can rise above fear, worry, circumstance, cultural challenge, social disintegration, political non-sensory.

Anybody can rail. Anybody can shake their fist. Anybody can rant.

Anyone can carp and gripe. Anyone can find fault. Only believers can reflect the perfect peace of those whose mind is stayed on the Lord to bear the fruit of the spirit.

Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control. The genuine value of those reflects the genuine price that was paid by the Lord Jesus. And it does not come from us.

It comes from the Holy Spirit. How do we bear that fruit? We've got to be the tree planted by the rivers of water. That way our roots are not going to be chopped up by the ax that is even now laid at the root of the trees.

So Jesus says, look at these people. What is the great commandment? Love the Lord your God. What is the second great commandment? Love one another.

All the law and the prophets are summed up in these. What do the Pharisees love? Verse six, chapter 23 of Matthew. They love the best places at feasts.

They love the best seats in the synagogue. They love, verse seven, greetings in the marketplace and to be called by men, rabbi, rabbi, to be esteemed, to be recognized, to be valued. I go to the marketplace where everyone knows your name.

It's like cheers. What does Jesus say in verse eight? Pay attention now. This is for us.

This is for now. You do not be called. Notice, but you do not.

There's emphasis here. You should be different. You should be distinct.

You should stand out. You do not be called rabbi. Don't seek approval and approbation and the esteem of people.

You've got a teacher. You've got someone who can be celebrated. You've got someone whose name should be called.

It's not your name. It's the one, capital O, who is your teacher. The Christ is actually not in verse eight.

It comes up in verse 10. It's not there in verse eight. Doesn't hurt, but it's not in the original.

That's not what Jesus said. You do not be called rabbi. You've already got a rabbi.

You've already got a teacher and you are all brethren. You are trying to accumulate to yourself and arrogate to yourself that which belongs to the Lord. Esteem, approval, a high estimate.

That belongs to your teacher, not to you. You are all brethren. You should be on an equal footing.

This is the great thing in Oklahoma churches. All the ones I've been in, it's brother Fred and brother Bob and hello, brother Sam. Are you here to tune the piano? We are brethren.

And you know, from nearly 30 years experience that I don't let anyone call me anything else. I won't even take mail that says Reverend Sam Hall on it. I just think that is how obviously and directly can you disobey what Jesus said than to put Rev in front of your name.

I am the revered one, the revered Sam. I mean, come on. Let no one call you rabbi, but we'll call you Reverend.

Oh, come on. I mean, please, y'all are good. Any of y'all have never done this and I thank you for that because look at your Bible.

Let no one, we are brethren. It doesn't matter what your function in the body of Christ is. This is pre-church, but the same principle applies.

These disciples are gonna be apostles, but they don't get Apostle with capital A in front of their name. This is why the King James Bible is off because it says, you know, the

gospel according to St. Luke, the gospel according to St. Mark, the gospel according to St. Matthew. Everybody's a saint.

If you're a believer, you're a saint. Why call somebody a saint as though they are on a pedestal? It's wrong. Jesus says so.

You are all brethren. We should look at each other alike. Guess what? Jesus is not an advocate of equity.

Well, James the Less, maybe he's a short disciple. We call him James the Less or the Younger. So let's elevate him.

Let's give him special attention and make him feel, he feels bad about himself. Judas, you know, is gonna have some psychological problems. Let's spend a little extra time on him.

Jesus does not preach equity. He preaches equality. We are one in Christ.

We are the same. We don't reverse discriminate. We don't say, well, you're short.

Let me give you a box. But this guy that's tall, he doesn't get a box. So I'm gonna give the short people something extra so that they can look over the ballpark fence.

That's equity says, I'm going to try to compensate instead of just saying, look, there's a fence, there's a game, you wanna see it? Figure out a way. You're all equal. If you're short, that's your problem.

If you don't have a ticket, that's your problem. Nobody ought to be looking over the fence anyway. Go buy a ticket, go sit in a seat.

That's equality. You pay your money, get your ticket, sit in your seat. All of the seats are pretty much the same.

If you want a cheap seat, sit at the top. That's where we are. I've got a great pair of binoculars with a couple of times we've gone to a concert.

But if there's inequality, that's for me to figure out. That's for me to overcome. That's the particular hand of cards that I was dealt.

It is not God's way to overcompensate with anything but his Holy Spirit and his word. And that is available to all. If you want grace to help in time of need, go to God.

Don't go to society. Don't expect society to feel sorry for you and compensate you in ways that it doesn't compensate others. And I've got native American roots in a couple of different directions.

I don't expect the government to give me reparations because gold diggers took the

state of Georgia and took my ancestors' land away and sent them all on the Trail of Tears. The past is the past. The past is dead and gone.

The people who need reparations are all in the ground. And the reparations they will get are gonna be based on what think ye of Christ. What did you do by way of bearing fruit in keeping with repentance? The only thing that counts is God's estimate.

The only help we need is God's help. And it's the best help. It's perfect help.

It is grace to help in time of need. Don't be called rabbi. Don't be picked out as something special among your brethren.

You're all brethren. And there's one teacher. And if you wanna call somebody teacher and give them esteem and honor, it's the one, capital O, who deserves it.

Verse nine, do not call anyone on earth your father. Catholics somehow had this verse drop out of their Bible, didn't they? All of the priests are called father. Father this and father that.

Do not let anyone on earth be called father. One is your father, he who is in heaven. You've got one teacher.

You've got one father. Do not be called teachers. One is your teacher, the Christ.

He who is greatest among you is the one most likely to be serving. The servant, the one who has the servant heart, the servant attitude, looking out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. That is the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

Philippians chapter two. Servant, how can I put a shoulder under the load for others? This is the second great commandment. Love your neighbor as yourself.

He who is greatest among you, look for the one who is serving. Look for the one who is accommodating, who is looking out for the interests of others. That's the one who's greatest, not the one who gets a title or a prefix.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Take comfort when you look around today, everyone exalting themselves, exalting their party, their position, their power, their viewpoint, their ability to shame and silence and cancel others. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and we don't need to try it, we don't need to do it.

Lord God in heaven has got a perfect set of books. He's got absolute accounting. Our task is to be sure that we are not exalting ourselves.

God is going to handle those who are exalting themselves. I don't want to be one of them. We don't want to be part of that.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. He who humbles himself will be exalted. The apostle Paul knew these words when he wrote the letter to the Philippians, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.

Even the death on the cross for this reason, God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name. Why did God exalt the Lord Jesus and give him a name, a title that is above every other name and title? Because he humbled himself and was obedient unto death. Humility is the key to approval and opportunity and blessing from God.

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due time. It is humility that is the goal. And we can only be genuinely humble when we are genuinely submissive to the presence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, impressing on our hearts the word of God.

But woe to you, verse 13, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, these are the people confronting Jesus in chapter 16. This is the attitude. This is the problem.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. You don't go in, nor do you allow anybody else to go in.

I could make a joke here about schools, but I won't. You don't go to school and you don't let anybody else go to school. You won't get educated.

You won't learn the lessons of history. You won't learn the economic lessons of history. You won't learn the political lessons of history.

You won't learn what nature itself teaches you scientifically about a lot of things. And you won't let anybody else go to school either. You neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Woe to you, verse 14, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You devour widows' houses. And for a pretense, make long prayers.

You pontificate and you posture, and you try to show yourself to be superior and righteous and an icon of adoration and example. And it's a big pretense. You will receive greater condemnation.

If you see a text note there that says that's an omitted verse, that verse belongs. This is one of the cases where the majority text is right. And there are good reasons.

You can get a great, when we get here, I'll tell you about the homoitalioton and the false homeoarcton that took place in this verse, but the verse belongs. So you can scratch out that text note that says it's not in the NU text. The NU text is wrong on this case.

This is a genuine verse. It belongs. Verse 15, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites.

You travel land and sea to win one proselyte. When he is one, you make him twofold the child of hell that you are. You're sons of snakes, you're sons of Belial, you're sons of hell.

Can't get a greater combination of condemnations than that. You travel land and sea to win a proselyte. In some cases, you invite them across the borders to be proselytes.

And you're going to make them twofold the child of hell that you are. Woe to you, blind guides, who say whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged. This is cancel culture at work.

You said the wrong thing. You used a wrong term. Your Seuss book sends the wrong message.

Here's the right way. This is why you can't have Curious George. Curious George says the wrong thing, sends the wrong message.

Here's the right message. That's what this is. Fools and blind, which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? You say whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is obligated.

Nonsense, you're fools and you're blind. Which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? And notice both of these examples are based on what you say. Your speech is wrong.

You're swearing, you're vouching in the wrong way. He who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it.

He who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits on the throne. This is where we're going to need to stop for this morning, but I want you to look, he who swears by heaven, he who swears by heaven, circle it and right out beside it, Matthew chapter 16, Matthew chapter 16, verse one. Verse one, the Pharisees and Sadducees came and testing him, asked that he would show them a sign from heaven.

That's key. Every word counts. Show them a sign from heaven.

Remember our objection earlier? Well, hasn't he heard about the bread? Hasn't he heard about the healings? Jesus spending three days healing all who come. You know how they've gotten around that? It's a great sleight of hand. Those are earthly signs.

This is stuff you're doing on the ground. We don't want signs on earth. We want a sign from heaven.

Jesus is going to condemn them later on in 23, talking about swearing by heaven,

believing a sign from heaven. You've missed the point. It's not heaven.

It's the one who dwells in heaven. It's not the sign. It's the source of the sign.

It's not the quality of sign, the extent of the sign, the visibility of the sign, the extent of the sign, the astonishment factor of the sign. It is the source of the sign. It is not heaven.

It is the one who dwells in heaven. That is the key. Food for thought.

We'll pick up here in Matthew 16 next Sunday. We are going to start a new study this coming Thursday. I want to get back into the Old Testament before I forget all of my Hebrew.

And you're welcome to submit suggestions, but my current plan is to tackle three great books. These books marked the end of an age. They marked the end of an age.

They are the post-exilic prophets. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. And the more I look at them, the more I think, as we approach the end of our age, what better study could we do than look at the books that defined and explained and illuminated the end of the previous age? And that's those three books.

So if you want to read them over and kind of see where we're going on Thursday, do so. You've got about four days, and I could say three and a half days, but that would be pregnant with prophecy. So we'll say you've got four days.

That's how long Lazarus was in the tomb. If he had his reading glasses in there, he could have read these books. But prepare for the post-exilic prophets this coming Thursday.

Get you a fresh notebook, and we will dive in back into the glorious, glorious Hebrew language. Nothing better, nothing greater, nothing more fulsome, more communicative, more poetic than Hebrew. And I can't wait to get back into that text.

So post-exilic prophets starting this Thursday, but we'll close for this morning in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the assurance, the peace, the power that we have in our lives because of your grace through the work and the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, the presence and power of your Holy Spirit. We have confidence that though society and its foibles perish with the using, the world and its forms are passing away, but we partake even now of eternity and eternal life.

We have within us your presence and your provision. We pray that as we reflect on the truth of your word, that your Holy Spirit will help us to see how pertinent it is in our given circumstances, and that by bearing the fruit that is in keeping with our changed minds and with our transformed hearts, with the power of your word that corrects and instructs, rebukes, and gives us the truth to live by, that we can present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable in your sight as our reasonable service. We pray these

things in Jesus' name, amen.