

Matthew 21-04-04b

I want to thank Dan and Anna and Lori for that wonderful reminder of what a great day this is. It's so significant when you go to Romans 10, 9 and 10. You can read a little around that, 8 through 13.

But it is, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart, we're talking about faith. What is the nature of that faith? What do you believe? If you confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, that's his divinity and his humanity. He is son of man and son of God.

And you believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead. That is our deliverance. There is no faith.

Paul talks about this at length. If, if the dead are not raised, Christ is not raised. If Christ is not raised, you are yet in your sins.

We think that Jesus' work in atoning for sin and accomplishing the work of our salvation was complete at the point that he died. No, Paul makes it very clear. If Christ is not raised, you are yet in your sins.

It's not finished until he's raised. And this is the day that that took place. And what a wonderful confidence, what a wonderful hope, a wonderful truth.

We will be united with the Lord Jesus. He was raised. God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus.

The dead in Christ will rise. We who are alive and remain, hopefully that we is a real we, and that includes us. That would be fun.

Most of the people that unite with the Lord Jesus in the air at the rapture will be those who sleep. There's just going to be a tiny fraction that are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord. It would be fun to be in that group.

We'll see if we can last that long. I think it is near. I think it is soon.

Of course, it is always near and always as proximate as our last heartbeat, our last conscious thought, the last little quiver on the electroencephalogram and whatever time remains to us needs to be invested, redeeming the time because the days are evil. It doesn't take any convincing to realize that the days are evil and increasingly so. So the theme that we look at this morning that Jesus emphasized, it's so interesting that Jesus did not do soteriology in Passion Week.

He didn't spend time on, do you realize the forensic nature of atonement for sin and redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, what I'm about to do on the cross? Do you

understand how the Father is going to make me to be sin for you so that you may be made the righteousness of God in me? That's not what he taught that week. It's so interesting that on this momentous run up, and you know that the Lord Jesus had to be thinking about why am I committing to this purpose of the Father? What is it going to accomplish? And in his own mind and in his own heart, he was fully aware of its necessity and the salvation that would come to us in satisfying the righteous requirements of God in his life and in his death and the work being fulfilled in his resurrection. For this reason, God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name.

But for his disciples, what did he teach? And we're looking at it here. If you have faith, if you are living by faith, this is a durative, present tense, ongoing living by faith in present time, present subjunctive, and are not caused to doubt. Don't let yourself doubt.

It's middle and it's passive, both. Middle, you do something to yourself. Passive, it is done to you.

You don't let doubt. Remember Higher Ground? I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day. And then at some point in there, it says where there's doubts and fears assail.

I'm not going to let that happen. My fears are not going to assail me. Doubts are not going to creep in.

If we're on the upward way, those doubts and fears cannot be allowed by us to get in. That's what this middle, informed, passive, and meaning doubt verb means. And it's subjunctive because it's a potential.

It's always potential that we can stop walking by faith. It doesn't matter how long we've been doing it. I was listening to some guys talking on ham radio the other day, and you always have to be careful when you're using a chainsaw.

That needs no explanation. A guy was talking about a friend of his that is in his 60s, late 60s. He's been cutting firewood with a chainsaw his whole life.

Over 50 years he's been doing firewood. And a couple of weeks ago, he nearly cut his foot off with a chainsaw. Been doing it 50 years.

You would think, well, by now you just can't make a mistake. Badly injured himself with a chainsaw after 50 years of cutting firewood with a chainsaw. Don't think it can't happen to us.

That's what the subjunctive is. It's the mood of potential. Anybody can fail.

Anybody can fall short. Anyone can get tricked and deceived and end up with doubt

sneaking its way in. Live by faith.

When the occasion arises, don't be doubted into failure. Don't be tricked into failure. Don't be moved from your hope.

Don't let your house slide off its foundation on the solid rock. If you do this, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree. I had to sit and think about that for about 20 minutes.

It's one thing to say I'm going to accomplish great things by faith. God can use me, put me in situations and my faith can make a difference. I can be led and guided and empowered and enabled.

I can be a blessing to others through faith, being faithful, being consistent, not falling apart. But Jesus says, you will do what was done to the fig tree. And not just that, but other things.

You will do what was done to the fig tree. What was done to the fig tree? It was evaluated and Jesus made a declaration that ended its potential. I don't have time to go into it in detail because we've got other places to go.

But remember when Jesus tells Peter, I'm handing you the keys and the sins that you forgive on earth will be forgiven in heaven. The sins that you retain on earth will be retained in heaven. This is why Catholics think he's the first Pope.

What was Jesus talking about? We are the body of Christ here. We are the presence of Christ here. Jesus Christ not only blessed little children, he not only healed the sick, he not only fed the hungry.

What else did he do while he was here? He went into the temple twice and rendered judgment. He pronounced the seven woes on the Pharisees. And our presence here representing the Lord Jesus Christ not only means love and encouragement and blessing and self-sacrifice.

It also means that there are times when we call out iniquity. We identify it. We give a name to it.

We stand in contrast to it. We oppose it. Woe to you scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites.

This is the nature of your hypocrisy. This is the nature of your false religion. This is how you lead people astray.

There are times when pastors and teachers and believers who speak the truth to one another in love have to have to say, this is not righteousness. This is leaves without fruit. This is appearance without substance.

This is form without content. This is parading itself as righteousness and it is not righteousness and it ought to be rendered fruitless. It ought to wither away and no longer be present.

Jesus did it. And he says, if we are faithful people and we don't get intimidated and brow beaten and canceled out, then we will also wither fig trees by faith. That's what Jesus says here.

There is no getting around it. You will do what I have done to this fig tree. You.

Now, how can you do that? If you shrink and retire and avoid any time the subject of false righteousness and hypocrisy and bad standards where people set up their own standard of righteousness. That's what the Pharisees did. That's what Israel did.

Not having the righteousness of God, Paul says in Romans and seeking to establish their own, their own type of righteousness. My righteousness is not working on the Sabbath. My righteousness is making long prayers on the street corners.

My righteousness is tithing the spices in my cabinet and making a big show of righteousness, whitewash on the outside, dead men's bones on the inside. Jesus called that out. We are here representing the Lord and there is a time.

It's not always the time. There's a time and a season for everything. There's a time to build and there's a time to tear down.

There's a time to throw stones and there's a time to gather stones. If we are living by faith, if we are not allowing ourselves to be doubted into silence, we will know. Jesus said, it will be given to you in the hour of confrontation, what you should say.

There were times when Jesus spoke. There were times when Jesus, like a lamb before its shearers was dumb, he opened not his mouth. How did he know when to speak and when not to? God, the Holy Spirit.

If we cultivate on a daily basis, this is why practice makes perfect. The small daily appeals to God in prayer, the small daily reliances that we make on the Holy Spirit to guide us. He that is faithful in that which is least, the daily things, conversations, tasks, priorities, goals, values, our daily walking by faith, it's practice.

Practice in the small things, listening and watching for the Holy Spirit, impressing the truth of the Word of God on our hearts at the point of application on the small things. Remember the parable of the talents? We just looked at it Thursday night. You've been faithful in a few things.

I will make you ruler over many things. You got five talents and made five more. Well, here's another one from this guy that did nothing with it.

Faithfulness, live by faith. And when the big challenges come, it's the same thing. They make little fake bullets.

They're called snap caps or something, but they're simulated ammunition. And instead of a primer, they just have a little spring-loaded plastic thing so that you don't damage your firing pin. And you can dry fire with these.

You can practice your trigger pull so that you can hold on a target and practice and get used to the feel of the trigger. How tight does it get before it releases the firing pin and shoots? And you put these snap caps in. And of course, they're painted bright red so you know the difference.

And you practice with this non-ammunition. There's no recoil. There's no flash and bang and the rest of it.

But there are certain aspects of your technique that you practice with these. Then you put the real bullets in and you do the same thing you did with the non-ammunition. You've practiced and practiced.

It's muscle memory now. And you do the same thing. And when it counts and you've got to put a round in a particular spot, you can do it because you have practiced with a lesser thing.

Same thing here. Constant faith, faith day by day and small things. When it comes time for us to call out evil, when it is time for us to wither a fig tree with our faith, we will know when and how to do it.

Very important. We are not all light and peace and love and sacrifice. Jesus was all of those things.

But he was also the Lord of judgment. And on specific occasions, he knew when to speak out and expose corruption and hypocrisy and false standards of righteousness. In this day and in this time, we face that same challenge.

When is it that we are silent? When is it that we speak up and say that is just wrong and that needs to stop? That is a fruitless tree. And that should never be allowed to continue in a believer's life, in a Christian church, in a society that purports to honor God on its money and in its constitution. This should not pass.

This should not be accepted. This shouldn't be allowed to stand. You will not only wither fig trees, but you can say to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea.

What mountain is he talking about? He doesn't say a mountain. He says, you will say to this mountain. What mountain is he standing on? Is it the Mount of figs? Is it the Mount of bread? What is it? This is the Mount of olives, right? There's only one mountain between

Bethany and Jerusalem.

It's the Mount of olives. You will be able to say to the Mount of olives, be removed and be cast into the sea. What sea? There is one sea that you can see from the Mount of olives.

One and only one. What sea can you see? I've never been there, but I know people who have. And if you talk to somebody that has visited the Holy land and has gone to Jerusalem and gone to the Mount of olives, gone up there, seen Gethsemane, seen all the tombs that are now on the side of the Mount of olives facing Jerusalem.

But you know what you can see from the southern ridges of the Mount of olives? The Dead Sea. 1200 and I wrote it down. Where is it? Oh, that's not my right notes.

You can tell I haven't even been looking at my notes. It's 1292 feet below sea level. The Dead Sea.

Standing on the Mount of olives, when he says, you can say to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea. It's the Dead Sea. Now, what would happen if the Mount of olives, the Holy Mount of olives, got cast into the Dead Sea? What would happen? Prepare ye the way of the Lord, level the mountains, fill in the valleys, make his way straight.

Right? Jesus is not just grabbing concepts out of nowhere and flinging them hither and yon. When he talks about taking a mountain, one of the most important Holy Mountains to pilgrims and cast it into the Dead Sea. What is he saying? It's not about the mountain.

It's about the approach of the Lord. Get your priorities straight. Don't worry about the Holy Mount of olives and how important it is.

And didn't David ascend this mountain when he was run out by Absalom, crossed the Kidron Valley. And then, uh, you know, won't the glory of the Lord come back over this mountain according to Ezekiel and return to Jerusalem. And what would happen if this mountain was gone? Your priorities are wrong.

Your faith can say to this mountain, you need to go get chunked into the Dead Sea because what's important? Prepare the way of the Lord. It's about the Lord, not the mountain. It's about the Lord, not the sea.

It's about the Lord, not the opposition. If you are faithing your way through life, don't let doubt creep in. Don't be passively knocked out of your walk.

And if you're doing it right, there will come a time, there may be a mountain that is impeding the progress of the Lord in our lives toward the temple. There may be a time when there is a deep Dead Sea that is unproductive and fruitless. And it is time to take that mountain and cast it into that sea so that you've got level ground from the east,

from the south.

Remember the Dead Sea is kind of south and east of Jerusalem. Take this mountain and get it out of the way so the glory of the Lord has got a smooth, flat entrance right through that gate, straight into the temple where He belongs, where the glory belongs. We are the temple and that mountain means something.

That sea means something. And it's what we need to do by faith. But notice it's not us doing it by faith.

Look at the passive voice here. You say to the mountain, be removed, passive. Be cast, passive.

Our faith, power of God. The faith of man, the power of God. It's the power of God that removes the mountain.

We trust God does it. This is why Jesus says, whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. Now, I want a new truck.

I want my mortgage paid off. I want this. I want that.

When Jesus says, whatever things you ask in prayer, how many times have we seen that when you find promises of God, you've got to be sure and look for the conditions? Is there a condition on this promise in verse 22? What if I just cut this out of my Bible, paste it on cardboard, put a magnet on it and stuck it on the fridge? Hey, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. I want a million dollars. I want gold doubloons.

I want a Cadillac. What is the condition on this promise? Assuredly subjunctive mood. If you are living by faith, if you are not allowing any doubt to creep in from nefarious sources, whatever things you ask in prayer, what kind of prayer are you going to pray when you are living by faith, when you are submitting yourself under the mighty hand of God, when you are like the Lord Jesus saying, not my will, but thine be done, what are you going to pray for? Why would you pray for a mountain to be removed? Well, Lord, I'm just tired of climbing this mountain.

It's wearing me out. My knees are giving out. I don't want knee replacement surgery.

This mountain is just a hardship to me. This mountain is an impediment to me. Why would you pray for the mountain to be removed? If you are a person living by faith every day, and if you have no doubt in your mind whatsoever, that it is the will of God for that mountain to be removed because it is in the service of the glory of God.

It is in the service of the approach of the glory of God to move into the city and into the temple and into the Holy of Holies above the ark, the mercy seat, throne of God. This mountain has got to get out of the way. Remember the George Frederick Handel Messiah

part? Every valley shall be exalted.

Remember? And every hill and mountain be made low. Well, the easiest way to do that is take the mountains, put them into the valleys, put them into the seas, and you've equalized it all. Take the high stuff, put it in the low stuff.

It's flat. Why? So that the glory of the Lord can be revealed. That's why you're praying.

That's why you're asking. You're not motivated by self-interest. You're living by faith.

And there's no doubt in your mind that God is going to answer that prayer in the affirmative because it is in his service to accomplish his purpose. Right? Well, I've got to move here. Do you remember another time when Jesus was talking about faith in recent days? Turn back just three chapters to Matthew chapter 17.

We're going to be here very soon. You have the transfiguration in the first 13 verses. In verse 14, when they came down to the multitude, down from the mount of transfiguration, Matthew 17, 14, they came to the multitude.

Man came to him, kneeling down to him, saying, Lord, have mercy on my son. He is an epileptic. Your New King James has a note there, moonstruck.

And that's the literal term. He's loony. You know, Claire de Lune, Claire the lunatic.

He suffers severely. He often falls into the fire, often into the water. So I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him.

They could not cure him. Keep your finger here and turn back to Matthew chapter 10. Don't lose your place in 17.

Turn to Matthew chapter 10 and look at verse 8. This is the sending out of the 12. We've already covered it in our Matthew study. What does he say? What does Jesus command his disciples in Matthew chapter 10, verse 8? Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.

Jesus has given his disciples the authority, the ability to cast out demons. They've had it for seven chapters. Flip back to Matthew chapter 17 and write 10.8 out in the margin.

See Matthew 10.8. Your disciples could not cure him. Jesus answers and says what? Oh, faithless and perverse generation. You should have been able to do this disciples by faith, but you're a pisteia, alpha privative, negative.

A in front of a word in Greek means no, a pisteia, no faith. You're faithless. You're without faith and perverse.

How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? How many times do I have

to tell you? And this is back in chapter 17. Bring him here to me. Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him and the child was cured from that very hour.

The disciples came to Jesus privately. Of course they would come privately and say, why could we not cast it out? Why could we not cast out this demon? Jesus could say, well, if you flip back to chapter 10, verse 8, you should have been able to. Jesus said, because of your a pisteia.

There's a text note that says little faith. That is a conscious scribal change here. People didn't want to believe that the disciples were without faith because they get mixed up with saving faith.

So they changed it from a pisteia to oligopisteia. You know, oligos means few, like oligarchy, rule by the few. So oligopisteia, O ye of little faith.

Jesus didn't say little faith. He said, because of your faithlessness. This is operational faith.

This is not doing what Jesus said when he's talking about the fig tree, walking by faith, present tense faith all the time. Because of your faithlessness, assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say what? Mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you. You can not do what you were commanded to do.

It's all about the faith. Turn back a few more pages to Matthew chapter seven. This is something we've already seen starting in verse 19.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit. We're talking about the fig tree, right? Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. You remember this? We dwelt on this a long time.

Good tree, good fruit, bad tree, bad fruit by their fruits. You will know them. The tree we're on the tree, right? If you're a good tree, you're going to bear good fruit.

If you're a bad tree and you're not bearing fruit, bearing bad fruit, you are going to be withered by their fruits. You will know them. What kind of fruits? This has been quoted endlessly.

Well, you know, I will show you my faith by my works. And if you don't have works, if I don't see you evangelizing and, you know, helping out at the John three 16 mission, if you're not out there, elbows and knees, you know, doing some visible works, I know that you're not really a healthy believer because by your fruit, I know you and, and the fruit is works. No, no, no.

Keep reading in Matthew chapter seven, verse 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord,

Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father in heaven. Now notice not everyone, this is kind of like you will not only wither fig trees, but you will move mountains.

Some people who say, Lord, Lord will enter, but not everyone. He doesn't say no one who says to me, Lord, Lord, he says, not everyone who calls on my name and calls me Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father in heaven, this ought to dissuade anybody who thinks that the kingdom is a synonym for salvation and that everybody who saved is going to be in the kingdom doing the will of the father. That would be salvation by works.

If the kingdom is quote, unquote, heaven and eternal life, then salvation is by works because Jesus says, it's not what, what do we say in Romans 10, again, 10, nine and 10. If you confess with your mouth, the Lord, Jesus, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord confesses me with their mouth is going to enter the kingdom. But the ones who do the will of my father, many will say to me, verse 22 in that day, by the way, this is really unique.

I don't think I pointed this out when we went to, when we went through Matthew seven, but you know, Moses never said anything like this. The prophets of the old Testament never said anything like this. John the Baptist never said anything like this.

Moses never said there's going to come a day where I am going to judge you. Elijah, Elisha, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, none of these guys said there's going to come a day where I am going to evaluate you. This is a very bold statement by the Lord Jesus.

Many will say to me in that day, they will talk to me, Lord, Lord, notice again, Lord, Lord, the vain repetition of the Lord's name in prayer or in preaching or in other modes, singing praise songs, Jesus condemns it. It's not saying Lord, Lord, that matters. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, many will say to me in that day, even in that day, Lord, Lord, they said it here.

They're going to say it there. Well, we're calling you Lord. Remember on Thursday night, the temple, the temple, the temple, Lord, Lord, look at what I'm saying.

Leaves, leaves everywhere. Look at the appearance of my leaves. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not now read the list prophesied in your name, circle in your name.

Verse 22, Matthew seven, we've prophesied in your name. We have cast out demons in your name, circle it. We have done many wonders in your name, circle it, circle, Lord, Lord, at the beginning of 22 circle, Lord, Lord, at the beginning of 21.

We've, we've been flying your flag and saying your name and doing things in your name over all, all along the temple, the temple, the temple. It's all for the Lord. Look, we're,

we're freely flying the flag of the Lord and his name.

Look at verse 23. This is where we close this morning. Then I will declare to them, I never knew you, Ginosko.

And when it says, I will declare that word, declare, you can circle it and put a little margin note. First John one, nine, the word declare translates the Greek verb homo logeo. I will say the same thing.

Homo, the same logeo to say or speak or declare. What same thing is Jesus declaring? Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, verse 21, I will say in that day, what I am telling you now, I telling you now, what I'm going to tell them then saying, Lord, Lord, doesn't cut it. Identifying yourself as a believer and doing what you do in the Lord's name doesn't cut it.

Look at what they've done. The disciples can't cast out demons because of their lack of faith. These people say in your name, we've cast out demons.

I will homo logeo to you. I'm going to say to them what I just said to you. I never knew you depart from me.

You who practice, this is a present tense. This is just like practicing faith. This is anomia lawlessness.

You practice what the law of God does not approve. The law of God defines righteousness. You have made up your own righteousness.

You think prophesying and doing mighty wonders in my name is righteousness and it's not doing the will of the father is what counts. Looking at where God is at work and joining him in his work and doing works is a fatal mistake. It's not about works.

It's about will. If you pursue and seek out the father by faith, the works will follow. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, your provision and your works, the words that you need to say and when you need to say them will follow.

You cannot pursue the works. You cannot pursue the words. You can't just say, Lord, Lord and succeed.

You're not going to be in the kingdom. You're not going to be a resident of the new Jerusalem. You're going to miss what Jesus Christ emphasized right up until the day he was crucified.

You've got to live by faith, daily faith, consistent faith, regular faith. And on the occasions where doubts and fears assail, you've got to push them away. How can you not be doubtful? Because I know whom I have believed.

I'm persuaded of what he is able to do both now and in that day. I can pray confidently without a shadow of doubt because I know the will of God. I know that he works to honor and glorify his son.

I know that he works to reveal his own glory. I know that he works for salvation. I know that he is compassionate and long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to change of mind.

I know that he is not pleased by works of righteousness, which we do. He's impressed with those who avail themselves of his mercy, those who come to the Lord Jesus and take his yoke upon themselves and learn from him because he is meek and lowly of heart. That's where we find rest for our souls.

It is about faith. If you had even a little faith, you would know where and how to use it. You would use it confidently.

You would live in it daily. Doubts would not creep in. You would be confident.

You would have peace. And you are going to be with Christ when God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus, every knee bows and every tongue confesses that he is Lord in the genuine sense, not the self-serving sense. Lord, Lord, let me in.

Am I not saying your name? Is this not the open sesame to get me into the banquet hall with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? In your name, in your name, in your name. Appearances, leaves, not fruit. The fruit is the will of the Father and many times it is done in secret.

When you do your alms, Jesus said, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. And your father who sees in secret will reward you. That's what pleases the father.

You workers of anomia, you work things that you have defined as righteousness that are not righteous. They are outside the law of the righteousness of God. Depart from me, be departing.

This is also present tense. It's kind of scary because he says, not just leave, but keep on going. Be departing.

You go and you keep on going. You get as far away from me as possible. Be departing from me, you workers of lawlessness.

I'm sure that you share my fervent hope that we never hear these words. Easy to claim the name of the Lord. Easy to believe and to deceive ourselves into thinking that we're doing things in his name.

Jesus emphasizes to the disciples, using the fig tree, talking about the leaves. Go back to Psalm 1. Walk not in the counsel of the ungodly. Don't stand in the way of sinners.

Don't sit in the seat of the scornful. Our delight is in the word of God and we reflect on it day and night. That makes us like what? A tree planted by the rivers of water who brings forth his fruit in his season.

Unlike the fig tree, his leaf also does not wither and whatever he does will prosper because it is God's work. It is God's will. It is God's glory that is at stake.

So when you think of the withered fig tree, just go back to Psalm 1. If you want to be a fruitful tree that also has leaves, you can't bear fruit without leaves, but you can't have only leaves. Men will see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven, but there's fruit on that tree. And in Psalm 1, the fruit is mentioned first and the leaves are going to be there to help sustain the tree and they don't wither.

But you've got to have both. You can't only have the one. Well, much to think about on this beautiful Resurrection Sunday.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the powerful teaching that the Lord Jesus left for us.

Last words are so important to us in so many cases and these last teachings of the Lord Jesus are profound and meaningful for us. We pray that your Holy Spirit will impress them on us in a way that will be fruitful and be meaningful in the time that remains to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.