

Matthew 21-04-11b

Give you a quick view behind the church. The dogwoods are in bloom. It's very beautiful.

Thank you, Dan. Thank you, Anna and Lori for our blessed assurance reminder. That song is one of the first ones that ingrained itself into my memory when I was a tiny child.

My mom had that on vinyl and it took me a while to figure out what assurance was, but I really liked the tune. So, and we are confident and our point of application from the first session, if I didn't make it extremely clear, I think you could figure it out. But when we find ourselves purposely put in a position of weakness or shortfall in terms of resources, such as the Lord Jesus was in his time of testing, that's the time to get excited.

That's the time to be leaning forward and watching for the test. Because if we're doing what we're supposed to, if we are living in the light of the word of God, if we have stored up for ourselves, that spiritual strength, then the victory is spiritual. The glory is God's.

And these times when all of a sudden money runs out, all of a sudden time runs out, all of a sudden opportunity is in short supply. There's a loss of health. There's a loss of potential of some kind.

There's a reverse that tends to get us down and make us want to use human means, human recourse. I think about churches that see dwindling membership. And so they go out and start looking for secular organization techniques to survey the neighborhood and, well, what color would you like us to paint the church? Would you come if we showed movies? And using human strength and human energy to solve a problem when that time has been provided by God to expose faith and to give us exercise of our patience.

And it's just like we said, when Jesus said, I've not come to bring peace, but a sword, the Lord Jesus and the issue of the Lord Jesus is what separates people from one another. Do we believe what he said? Do we follow his example? Do we take his way to the Father? Or are we like so much of the world where I'm happy to be a Christian as long as I'm happy being a Christian, but if there's any kind of adversity, well, I've got to fall back on something else. I need a different way.

I need another plan. This is not working for me. And we are seed planted in the shallow soil that springs up in a day with joy, but doesn't last through the heat of the day.

How do you know your roots are deep? How do you know you're going to bring forth a 30 fold, 60 fold or a hundred fold multiplied result? You don't fade when the heat's on. You don't wither. Your roots are not shallow.

God sends that sun. God's in charge of the weather, right? If he knows the seed is in shallow soil, why doesn't he just make sure there's a convenient cloud shadowing that

spot so that the seed doesn't wither? The purpose of the sunshine in that case, in that parable is to test and to expose that which is deep and abiding and that which is shallow and fleeting. That's the purpose of the test.

So we should be spiritually speaking, glass half full people. When water starts disappearing out of the glass, get excited. There's going to be an opportunity to demonstrate to God how much we love him and to the Lord Jesus Christ, how firmly convinced we are by his teachings and opportunity.

Hardship is an opportunity. Hunger is an opportunity. The Lord Jesus showed us how it's done.

Don't worry about physical bread. Look to the word of God. That's life.

That's how we live. So these individuals come to Jesus, testing him, show us a sign from heaven. Now, does Jesus have this ability? He's got just as much ability to make a heavenly sign as he had to turn rocks into bread, didn't he? But what does he know? As was rightly pointed out in the first session, this is not the time for the crown.

This is not the time to have everyone bow and say, I see now that you are the Davidic king. Obviously, with a sign from heaven, you must be the Messiah. Jesus could easily do so.

He's going to say later, do you not know I could call on my father and he would send a dozen legions of angels? Just because you can doesn't mean you should. Just because it's available or suggested or offered from a worldly point of view doesn't mean that we should rationalize our way into doing it. It is always the plan and the purpose of God as expressed in his word that guides us.

It may be the easy way, but in my experience, the easy way is seldom the right way. Jesus didn't say in this world, you're going to have it soft. Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will waft you to heaven on flowery beds of ease.

He said, there's still a yoke. You may be burdened and heavy laden. You're going to exchange that burden and that load for my yoke.

But my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Why? Because you don't carry it in your own strength. Don't carry it in your own strength.

Well, so looking at Matthew 16, when this answer is given, a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. Jesus is going to go on in the latter part of the chapter to talk about the Pharisees and Sadducees a bit more, but scripture has already defined them.

Remember, what did John call these guys? Brood of vipers. What did Jesus call them in

chapter 12? A brood of vipers. This is a real interesting phrase because there's not really a word for brood in Greek.

And this word could be one of two words with equal effect. And it's kind of, it's almost a word play. So is it from, is it genema or is it genema? The word that's translated brood here in Greek is genema, G-E-N-E-M-A or G-E-N-N-E-M-A.

And the difference between one N and two Ns is the difference between two completely different roots. Genema with one N comes from genomai, which means to become or to come from a thing. You turn into a thing.

Genema with two Ns comes from genao, which means to generate. We get our word generate loosely from this. Genao, the word generation comes from genao.

So is it genomai or genao? Are they coming from this source or are they generated from this source? And either one really works. Both work and both seem to be true. What's interesting though is when it is, and I think the weight of opinion is that this is two Ns and it's from genao, which means it is generated.

When the Old Testament in Proverbs is talking about children are a gift from the Lord. And what, do you remember the second part of that? Children are a gift from the Lord and something is His reward. Do you remember that phrase? It's not fruit of the loom.

It's fruit of the womb, right? Fruit of the womb. This is often, you know, the idea of being fruitful and multiplying has the idea of giving out with offspring. And this is where generation comes from.

They have been generated from their parents. So, and hence the translation brood. You were two snakes bred and you are the offspring.

You are the outcome. But outcome is the genomai idea. It has come forth.

So where does this come from? Where did John the Baptist get it? Where did the Lord Jesus get it? It comes from the Old Testament and there is a very pungent passage. Turn with me back to Isaiah long about 55. The Lord Jesus has been steeping his soul in Isaiah for years.

It talks so much about his earthly ministry. So chapter 55 of Isaiah, Jesus quotes this on the last great day of the feast. Remember, everyone who thirsts come to the waters and you who have no money, come by and eat, come by wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread? Why do you spend your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me and eat what is good. See the contrast? You're spending your resources on physical satisfaction, physical nourishment. Listen to me and

be nourished.

Be nourished by the word. Incline your ear. Let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Incline your ear and come to me here and your soul shall live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. The sure mercies of David.

You respond. The sure mercies of David will follow. Jesus has been thinking about this.

Look at verse six. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. He will have mercy on him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways, says the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Give us a sign from heaven. Jesus' words are the sign from heaven. Jesus works.

Jesus says if you don't believe my words, believe the works. They testify of me. The Father testifies of me.

And all of this is so good. I don't have time to read it, but we saw chapter 56 in our recent study. Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak saying the Lord has utterly separated me from his people.

Don't let the eunuch say here I am a dry tree. Those who keep my Sabbaths are going to be blessed, are going to be honored, are going to be united with me on my holy mountain. Remember, we just looked at this within the last week.

Look at chapter 57. The righteous perishes and no man takes it to heart. Merciful men are taken away.

No one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace. They shall not rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

Come here, you sons of the sorceress, verse 3, Isaiah 57. You offspring of the adulterer and the harlot, wicked and adulterous generation, product of adultery, practitioners of adultery. Offspring of adulterer and harlot, whom do you ridicule? Ask yourself if this applies to these Pharisees and Sadducees.

Come here, you sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the harlot, whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth and stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, offspring of falsehood, inflaming yourselves with gods under every green tree and so on? You've chosen another form of worship. It's a

righteousness of your own making and you enjoy it. It satisfies your lusts.

It satisfies your cravings. Look at verse 11. Of whom have you been afraid or feared that you have lied and not remembered me, nor taken it to your heart? Isn't it because I have held my peace from of old that you do not fear me? God's withholding of wrath and suspension of judgment has made them bold.

There are no consequences, so I can run amuck. Everything's going fine. I'm not afraid.

I'm not fearful. I can lie about God. Isn't it because I've held my peace for a long time that you do not fear me? I will declare your righteousness in your works.

This is sarcastic. Let me talk about your righteousness in your works, for they will not profit you. When you cry out, let what you've accumulated to yourself deliver you.

The wind will carry them all away. A breath will take them, but he who puts his trust in me shall possess the land. You've collected stuff in the present.

You've got treasure on earth. You're satisfying and gratifying yourself on earth. A mighty wind is going to come and blow all of that away, and it is those who trust in the Lord that are going to inherit the land, the eternal land, the future land, the land of promise, and inherit my holy mountain.

Turn the page to chapter 58. Cry aloud, spare not. Lift up your voice like a trumpet.

Tell my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice.

They take delight in approaching God." Superficial. This Pharisee Sadducee question to Jesus is superficially acceptable. Well, if you truly are the Messiah, you should show us a sign from heaven.

We're ready to accept you if you'll just provide this sign. We're objective. We're balanced.

All you need to do is show us a sign from heaven, and we're ready to accept. And it is false. It is lying through their teeth.

These people will not accept the Lord Jesus no matter what he does. Some of these individuals have seen him heal a man with a withered hand in the synagogue. They have seen him heal multitudes.

These guys have had their minions and their spies out in the multitudes for months in various locations all around the land. They know exactly what Jesus does. They don't know how he does it, but they've seen him.

They can't account for him. They just hate him. So they're trying to, they keep trying to ask him a question he can't answer.

They keep trying to set a bar that he cannot leap over. Look at chapter 59. Now, this is where we have the intersection of our passage, and we've memorized these first couple of verses.

It should look familiar. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. Your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.

Why? Watch the subjects and verbs here. Your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies.

Your tongue has muttered perversity. What do these men do with their hands and with their fingers? It is bloodshed and iniquity. It costs others up to the point of their life.

Your lips have spoken lies. Your tongue has muttered perversity. You've got hands and fingers, two parts of how you do your work, and then you've got the lips and the tongue, the two components that enable us to speak.

No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. Did the Pharisees and Sadducees come to Jesus asking for truth or justice? They come for a sign. It's a wicked and adulterous generation like we saw two chapters back in Isaiah.

Offspring of adultery. Practicers of adultery. They trust in empty words and speak lies.

We're in verse 4 of chapter 59. They trust in empty words and speak lies. They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.

This reminds me of a verse my mother helped me learn when I was a tiny child. We were going through a little memory verse pack. Remember James 1 15? But when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.

And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Comes from right here. They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.

Conceive and bring forth. Think about this now. Offspring of vipers.

A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. All of these words for bearing and generating and bringing forth are related.

Look at verse 5. Here's our point of connection. They hatch viper's eggs and weave the spider's web. He who eats of their eggs dies.

And from that which is crushed, a viper breaks out. I can do two sessions right now on

this one verse. Look at it.

There is so much in this verse. You can't believe it. Let me just give a few brief points because we're not doing Isaiah 59.

The word for hatch here isn't like the little chick, you know, pecking its way out of the shell. This is the word that is used for bursting forth, for breaking up violently. This is used in the judgment passages when it says your pregnant women will be ripped open.

It's this verb. They burst violently forth from viper eggs. There is this explosion of this leathery egg and out comes these wriggling vipers and they weave the spider's web.

It looks like it's something, but it's nothing. All it can catch is insects. They're trying to weave a web around the Lord Jesus and catch him in his words.

They're trying to challenge him with something that he can't or won't do and then make much of it so that they can destroy his effectiveness among the people. So they weave the spider's web. He who eats of their eggs dies.

If you eat this instead of the bread from heaven, Jesus said, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. You're either partaking of the word, capital W, or you are partaking of snake eggs, serpent offspring, viper eggs. Notice this last phrase, though.

From that which is crushed, a viper breaks out. Let's say somebody brings you one of these eggs and you say, I don't want to eat that, and you say you're going to crush it. The act of trying to crush it in physical strength pops the viper out.

If you crush it, it gets worse. We've talked before about what pressure does. It's similar to what the Lord Jesus said.

I've not come to bring peace, but division. When there's five in a household, there's going to be three on one side and two on another. When pressure comes, it's like squeezing a piece of fruit.

If you squeeze an orange, you get orange juice. If you squeeze a lemon, you get lemon juice. Whatever you put pressure on, what is inside is going to be forced out.

If you try to put pressure on these individuals by legislation, by demonstration, by argumentation, by human means, human energy, we're going to take back the country for God. We're going to put up signs. We're going to launch websites.

We're going to have movements. We're going to sign pledge cards. If you try to crush these eggs, all you're going to do is mash the vipers out faster.

You cannot crush these eggs in human strength. Mashing the egg spits out more vipers.

From that which is crushed, a viper breaks out.

Where do you remember this word, crush, from? Genesis 3. I will put enmity, O serpent, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The seed of the woman is going to bruise the serpent's head. He will crush your head.

You will bruise his heel. Only the seed of the woman, only the son of man, only the Lord Jesus is going to be able to crush this viper effectively. And the first place for it to be crushed is within us, not to be led astray, not to be taken in a moment of weakness or anger or reaction to the forward progress of iniquity and the adulterous generation.

At a point of vulnerability, when we see the loss of good things, when we see the disintegration of the moral fabric around us, be careful. If you start trying to crush that, you're just going to squeeze out more vipers. Go to the one who has the power to smash this thing with his heel.

Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. It is the spirit of Christ. It is the spirit of holiness.

It is God's Holy Spirit that brings to us who have his words and keep them. Remember John 14? Jesus said, the one who has my words and keeps them has my words in the same way that he had the father's words when he was paid rods out in the desert. He has the father's words when he is being tested by these Pharisees and Sadducees.

And he says, you're looking for a sign from heaven. You're going to get the sign of Jonah. What is the sign of Jonah? Son of man is going to be in the heart of the earth.

Three days and three nights. There's lots you can say about that sign being in the heart of the earth. One thing that did not take place is, did Jonah preach before or after his three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish? When was his effective witness given that caused the entire city of Nineveh to change their minds to repent? It was after the three days and three nights, right? When is the effectiveness of the Lord Jesus' words and works going to have its telling effect? Not with this generation, but with the next, with those after Pentecost who respond.

The faithless branches are broken out of God's olive tree and wild branches are grafted in. We want to be these people. We want to be those who by faith and patience inherit the promises, who recognize that our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

No affliction, no glory, no cross, no crown. These things must come, Jesus said, woe to him by whom they come, woe to them by whom they come. Let God recompense the people who are seemingly on the march and on the move and are prevailing and are trying to run the rest of us out.

The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. It is only those who have iniquities separating them from God and who have sins hiding his face that are going to have a problem. Look at verse six, their webs will not become garments.

They're weaving these spider webs. What can you do with a spider web? Well, if you're a spider, you can catch insects. We are not insects.

The Lord Jesus is not an insect and the webs don't work. So what else would you try to use them for? These webs, these tissues of lies and so on that people like this spin. We're surrounded today by a culture that is spinning these webs on a daily basis.

But guess what? You can't make anything out of them. Their webs will not become garments. They're not useful to cover your nakedness.

And you can see through these thinly disguised paradigms that are being put forth, nor will they cover themselves with their works. I'll be back to the fig leaf in the garden. Nothing these people do, what they consider to be righteous, what they consider to be just is no more effective by way of covering the nakedness of iniquity than a spider web.

Their works are works of iniquity and the act of violence is in their hands. This goes back to verse three, your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. You are costing other people, their lives and their livelihoods.

Their feet run to evil. They make haste to shed innocent blood. There's two places in Proverbs where you can find that almost identical phrase.

Remember these six things God hates, yea, seven are an abomination to him, proud look of lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, feet that are swift in running to evil. Wasting and destruction are in their paths, the way of peace they have not known. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

And there is no justice in their ways. They can put justice in their name. They can become a warrior for justice.

Doesn't make it just or justice. They don't know what justice is and there is no justice in their ways. They have made themselves crooked paths.

Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. And you notice that just like the Sadducees and the Pharisees, what Jesus does is never enough to satisfy their standard. It doesn't matter what you do, how much you apologize, how much you try to atone for sins that were committed by people in the historical past.

They're never satisfied. It's never enough. You can pay reparations.

You can change laws. You can fall over yourself. You can destroy society and hand them a pyrrhic victory where the entire country is dismantled and gone, sacrificed on the altar

of political correctness and wokeness and the rest of it.

They still won't be satisfied. And it'll be our fault. Too little, too late.

You should have done it sooner. The reason the economy tanked and the reason the country went to rack and ruin is because we couldn't change it fast enough and soon enough when in fact it is those changes that are actively destroying the country. So the last half of chapter 59, this is what Jesus and this is what John are referring back to when they say brood of vipers.

This is the passage that is in Jesus' mind. That's why justice is far away and righteousness does not overtake us in verse 9. We look for light, but there is darkness. We look for brightness, but we walk in blackness.

We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes. We stumble at noonday as at twilight. We are as dead men in desolate places.

We growl and moan. We look for justice, for salvation. Our transgressions multiply because they are exposed.

Our sins testify against us in verse 12. Our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. Unconfessed, unacknowledged, therefore unaddressed, and the weight of them and the penalty of them remains.

Verse 14, justice is turned back. Righteousness stands afar off. Truth has fallen in the street.

Equity cannot enter. A lot of talk about equity these days. I heard somebody say yesterday, these social movements and all of this crusading and trying to change everything is not about equity.

Don't let anybody fool you that they are after equity. This is not motivated by equity. It's motivated by envy.

It is not equity. It is envy that is at work. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

If you separate, now you're a target. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice, and it is the Lord who can crush the serpent and his offspring. That's where we look for our justification, our vindication, our protection, and our future.

We can use these times of challenge as an opportunity. Yes, hard times have come. Hard times are coming, but it's an opportunity.

This is where the division is going to take place. Which side of the sword are we going to be on? Are we going to be on the side of those who, like the marking angel, went

through Jerusalem and found those who were concerned about the things of God and marked them? Destruction cannot come until they are protected. Or are we those who are swept up in current events and lose sight of who we are and why we're here? Expect hardship.

Expect shortfall. Expect challenge. And when it comes, this is the exam.

This is the time to shine. This is the time to demonstrate that all of this time in Bible class was not in vain. We remember what we've learned.

We know whom we have believed, and we are persuaded of what He is able to do, what He is able to preserve against that day, looking toward that day. It's a wonderful hope. It's a wonderful opportunity.

They have classes now where there are no tests and there are no grades. What's the point in that? It's a better class that teaches us and then tests us and allows us to demonstrate that we cared enough to learn and to internalize the truth. Read Isaiah 59 again.

Are we going to let truth fall to the ground? Or are we going to represent it as the body of Christ and not be crushed nor try to crush those who oppose? We commit our way to the Lord. He will bring it to pass. So in these troublous times, it's fruitful to look at the example of the Lord Jesus.

And notice in earlier days when there was a hope that some might turn, Jesus explained things. At this later date in His ministry, when it is clear that their minds are made up and they're only looking for an excuse to perpetrate violence and hostility, His words are very short and sweet. You want a sign? It's going to be the sign of Jonah.

Go figure it out. Talk to somebody who was there when I explained it last time. I'm not explaining it again.

You've made your minds up. You're not bothered by the truth. Why present it? The Lord Jesus is very terse and we're going to see this pattern increasing throughout the rest of the book.

We'll close here for this morning in a word of prayer and we'll resume our study in the post-exilic prophets this coming Thursday in the wonderful book of Haggai. It's a corking good read and we'll pick that up on Thursday, but we'll close here. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for Your provision of grace, strength, the presence of Your Holy Spirit, the power of Your Word. We pray that as we reflect on the example of the Lord Jesus and His drawing on Your Word in the Old Testament to confront His generation in Your strength, we pray that we can follow that worthy example and be those who shine His lights in the

midst of our crooked and perverse generation and those who are seeking and are amenable and looking for truth can find it when they observe the example of Your power at work in us. We thank You for these things and we pray our requests in Jesus' name.

Amen.