

Matthew 21-05-23a

This is the 23rd day of May, May the 23rd, 2021. And we continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew this morning, picking up in chapter 23. Matthew chapter 23.

What? No, Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16. We've recently seen the great confession, followed by the great mistake, and we are coming up on the transfiguration.

So, and verse 23 is in my mind, get thee behind me, Satan. You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. And this is the, probably the signature verse in this chapter, the one most important to remember.

So we're going to pick up at that point and move forward and take a look at the very telling and important scene on top of the Mount of Transfiguration. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study, on our retention and application of these truths. And then we will begin.

Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for preserving us and bringing us to this place with your provision, your protection, your blessing, the challenges that come our way to give us opportunities to apply and to put into practice the things that we learn. We pray that as we investigate the scriptures this morning, that God, the Holy Spirit, will impress these things on our hearts, help us to understand their importance and their needfulness as motivation and encouragement for us in the days ahead.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. So picking up at the point where having affirmed the Christhood of the Lord Jesus and being blessed in verse 17, Peter in the space of a few breaths is suddenly rebuked.

In verse 23 of Matthew chapter 16, he turned and said to Peter, probably one of the more overlooked words in this entire chapter is the word turned. Jesus turned. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

And Jesus turned. If you look at verse 22 and 23 together, Peter took him aside. So Jesus is in the group.

Maybe they're walking along the road. And to say this, Peter has sort of some fatherly advice for the Lord Jesus. So he pulls him aside and is telling him something quietly.

But the fact that Jesus turned in the next verse is an indication that he wasn't looking at Peter to begin with. The Lord Jesus has his eyes on the road. He has his eyes on the future.

He has his eyes on the plan of God. Peter is trying to pull him aside and distract him from that path. And in order to rebuke him, Jesus has to turn from that perspective, from that vision, from that objective, and speak to him.

So he turned and said to Peter, he's not looking at Peter while Peter is talking to him, but he turns to Peter and looks at him. When he says, get behind me, Shaitan, Satan, which basically is the accuser. This is a personal enemy.

But his title, his name comes from the verb that means to bring a charge. You are an offense to me. Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah.

You are an offense to me. Now, how do you get from one to the other so quickly? Peter has turned aside from the gaze that he had, looking at the Lord Jesus and understanding who he is, to looking at circumstances. He's looking at the suffering that Jesus mentions in verse 21, that he will be slain and be raised the third day.

Well, there is no resurrection. There is no glory of the resurrection. There is no fact of the resurrection.

It is the single distinguishing feature of our faith. People say, well, Christianity is just one of any number of religions on the earth. Maybe you want to be a Buddhist, or a Zoroastrian, or a Confucianist, or you can be a Muslim.

You can be, just pick your God, pick your religion, pick your science, or whatever you want, a philosophical approach. The distinctive of the Christian faith, even when you say, well, but it's personal. It's a personal relationship with God through Christ.

And that is true. But the reason that is true is because of the resurrection. The resurrection is the distinguishing and deciding factor for Christianity amongst all other options people want to consider for a system of faith.

There is no other system that accomplishes what resurrection accomplishes. You say, well, it just confers life. There's people who believe in reincarnation, and you come back and you have life.

Have you found anyone who believes in reincarnation, who believes that in that process, your sins are forgiven, and your soul is cleansed, and your person is sanctified, and made holy, and given an unending life with the Creator? That is only possible because of the resurrection, and it's particularly only possible because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I saw a depiction of a man who, when he was 30 years old on his birthday, inexplicably got a horrible pain in his jaw. And he went down to the doctor, and they couldn't figure out what was the matter.

It was excruciatingly painful. He couldn't chew. He couldn't talk.

He had this terrible, terrible pain in his jaw on his 30th birthday. Went down, saw the doctor. He's got the medical records.

And then later on, some years later, he was visiting a Civil War battlefield at Antietam

and had a completely squirrely experience. He got depressed. He got distracted.

He started crying. He got completely psychologically shaken and stirred. And long story short, he picked up a book at the gift shop, but he didn't read it.

And later on, he read the book, and when he saw a picture of a particular general, it blew his mind. The guy looked exactly like him. And long story short, he believes that he is the reincarnation of this Civil War general.

And as he investigated his life, he found out that that general, on his 30th birthday, had been shot in battle in the face and had a bullet go through his jawbone. And so he thinks he's the reincarnation of General Cornelius T. Cornpone or somebody that was fighting in that battle. Well, let's say it's true.

Let's say that that were a fact, just as a hypothetical. It's not, but let's say it was. What's the advantage of being the reincarnation of some past person? What good does that do me? Does my paycheck go up? Am I smarter? Can I remember the life experiences and do a better job this time around? People who think that they're the reincarnation of Nefertiri or... It's always somebody famous.

They're never, well, I'm the reincarnation of a galley slave and all I can remember is the back of the guy in front of me and an oar handle. It's always, oh, I was a general. I was some potentate here hither and yon.

And it fills some sort of an insecurity or a need for recognition or something. People have a sense that there is something more than this life, but you get no advantage. This is the point.

The resurrection accomplishes something. It's not just, oh boy, I get to live. A lot of people, they've got the Indiana Jones movie.

The one with Sean Connery in it. Bond, James Bond. And they go and find the cup of Christ, the Holy Grail.

The only good part of that movie in terms of factuality is at one point when he has this whole selection of cups and he says it's going to be the humble one, the simple one. It wasn't to be jeweled chalice. Well, of course.

But it's a search for eternal life. People want this cup because you drink from it and you live forever. Well, that's a horrific sentence if you're not cleansed of your sins, if you're not sanctified, if you're not given a purpose and an environment and a future that means something.

To live forever in our current state of corruption and befoulment is a curse. The resurrection is not just life from the dead, life after death. It is sanctification.

It is glorification. It is being given relationship and a future with the Creator God and accomplishing His purpose for our lives. And that only comes through resurrection and only through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, why am I belaboring this point? When Peter stops the Lord on the road and pulls Him aside and says to Him, Far be it from You, Lord, this shall not happen to You. You will not be killed in Jerusalem. You will not die.

The entire program for the salvation of the historical human race and the future human race is on the line. If Jesus says, You know, you're right, this whole going to Jerusalem and dying thing is for the birds. I don't want to do that.

You know, Satan offered me all the kingdoms of the world. I don't have to die. Once again, the crown without the cross.

And the point of the cross is not just the death. Romans 10, 9 and 10, how many times have I quoted it? If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that He died for your sins, you will be saved. Is that what it says? What's the essence of the gospel? What's the... boil it down to the simplest terms.

These are the minimal things you must believe to be saved. If you don't believe these, you're not saved. If you do believe these, you are.

What does the Bible tell us? Romans 10, 9 and 10, In the King James, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. The resurrection is the central feature of our salvation. Without the resurrection, the atonement doesn't apply.

Because if Christ is not raised, we won't be raised. There is no future life. And what does Paul say? If Christ is not raised, you are yet in your sins.

It's not enough that He died. And you say that with some humility and reservation, that the death of Christ on the cross was not enough. But the Bible says it was not enough.

Paul says, If Christ is not raised, you are yet in your sins. Resurrection is essential to the sanctification and the glorification that comes from all of those other T-I-O-N words that happened on the cross. Redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, and so on.

So the reason Jesus is so fierce in His rebuke is Jesus understands the essential nature of the death, burial and resurrection for His mission and His purpose. And if He doesn't go to Jerusalem and die, He can't be raised from the dead and accomplish our salvation. These things are of a piece.

So that's why it is so critical here. You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. Let me ask you a pop quiz question.

I think nearly all of you are here for our Thursday night study. What is the theme of the book of Haggai? What is the theme of the book of Haggai? The call of Haggai and Zechariah is to build the temple. Because why? What is the rebuke? Why does he say, consider your ways? Why does Haggai say, consider your ways? Why does Zechariah say, turn from your evil ways and your evil deeds? Why? What's the problem after they come back from the captivity? What is the problem in Jerusalem? In the days of Haggai and Zechariah.

In the days of Zerubbabel and Joshua. Read this verse. You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

You live in paneled houses. God's got no house. You're happy to dwell in the land, but you're not concerned whether God is dwelling in the land.

Immanuel, God with us. We've seen that for weeks now in Haggai, right? This is the same problem. And it's our problem.

How easy is it to be distracted today by the news, by events, by the flow of information. There's none of us that doesn't look at a little rectangular screen or a big rectangular screen multiple times in the day. This, by the way, is new in history.

It's only been in the last less than 100 years that people are fed their information through audiovisual media. Think about it. Thousands and thousands and thousands of years, communication was done in a different way.

Now we get it in movies. We get it in visual and audio form coming across a screen. Someone else has carefully crafted it and presented it, pitched it for a purpose, and that's how we get it.

We have to be careful because none of the people who create media, none of them have as their foremost goal to put our minds on the things of God. They want us to look at the things of men, right? That's the content. Unless it's Bible class.

Now, for some of you, I'm coming across on a little square screen or rectangular screen or audio, video, or both. But what's our goal in doing this? And other churches around the country on this Sunday morning, what is the purpose? We are hoping, and I hope other churches like us are doing this. We're trying to get our minds focused on the things of God.

The Lord Jesus says, if your mind is on the things of men and not on the things of God, you are Satan. Get behind me. Get out of my way.

Get out of my field of view. You're not helping. I don't want to look at you.

If someone's behind you, you can't look at them, right? Do you really want to not be

looked at by the Son of God, by the Savior? I want to be in His presence. He is Emmanuel, God with us. If I want to keep my mind on the things of God, I'm going to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

That's how we keep our minds in this maelstrom, this tornado of information that gets thrown at us every single day, almost every waking moment. All you got to do, there's a vibration in your pocket, you take out your phone, news alert, somebody said something, somebody did something, somebody didn't do something, somebody investigated somebody else, some new loss of freedom has just occurred. How can you keep your mind on the things of God when you're constantly putting your mind into the maelstrom of the things of men? We need to be aware.

We need to be informed. But to have our minds on that, I'm worried about the Middle East. I'm worried about COVID.

I'm worried about the French. I'm worried about the Koreans. I'm worried about people who are not even on my continent.

Why? The only place I should have my mind on is the New Jerusalem. I want to go there. I want to live there in my eternal future.

I want to be visible to and in the field of view of the Lord Jesus as He sits on the throne as the Lamb who is the light. I do not want to be caught up in the things of men, be an impediment to the Lord and His plan and His purpose and the purpose of the Father, and have no place in the future purposes and plans and missions and opportunities because I've never had my head in that space. We have to pull up and pull out.

We have to wake up. There is a waking vision that is being created by people around us who have a satanic underpinning. They do what Satan does.

They take our minds off the Word of God, off the plan and purpose of God, and involve it in anything else. Let's do it with music. Let's do it with art.

Let's do it with humor. Let's do it with comedy. Let's do it with stimulation.

Let's do it with entertainment. Let's do it with pornography. Let's do it with social issues.

Let's get on a crusade. Let's hop on a train. Let's do anything other than build the house of the Lord for His presence in our lives.

I just don't want my house. I want my paneled house. You know what they call the big screen that is your TV and is your computer monitor? It is a flat panel display.

You have panels in your house. Right? Stop and think. Circle this verse.

Put a star beside it in the margin. This is the point. It's the point of Haggai.

It's the point of Zechariah. We're about to look at the eight visions in Zechariah. Oh my goodness.

But look here. You are an offense to me. And that's the reason.

So then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself. Now, self-denial is tough because we are built. We are bred.

We are inclined. And we are encouraged to look to ourselves. That's self-gratification.

That's how the world tilts the table is toward giving me what I want. Ever shop Amazon? Look on there. I find something I want.

Listen, I shop Amazon. This is not a condemnation. But I just want you to note.

You go to the website. You find something. Oh, I need that.

I need that right there. That's the one I need. I order it and it comes.

Now, what is on the box? What's the Amazon symbol? It's a smile. It's that little curvy arrow looking thing. It's a smile.

I'm happy now. My Amazon box came. Here's my smile.

Amazon's business model is self-gratification for its customers. Make them happy. Ship it fast.

It's amazing. You can order something and it will show up the next day. Free shipping.

Next day. I see it. I want it.

I have it. But you know what? I'm back on Amazon. I see something else.

I want that. Bring that tomorrow. And there can be a daily train of boxes.

And there's nothing intrinsically wrong with shopping Amazon. Although I will say, if you look at the positions that the company Amazon, the company Apple, the companies, many of the large companies subscribe to, are heinous. They are putting tens of thousands of their corporate dollars into destroying the moral fabric of this country.

Look it up. There is a consortium of companies that is supporting legislation that lets men compete in women's sports and encourages and funds efforts to do chemical castrations and chemical modifications to children as young as two years old for gender reassignment. Amazon supports that.

So does Apple. So does Verizon. So does Google.

So does anything you use. You can't boycott everybody unless you've got a big farm and a large garden and a freezer and you can be completely independent of all marketers. We have to use these people, but we don't have to like it and we don't have to be silent about it.

You look up what these companies support with your money in the same way that the government takes tax dollars and supports heinous things. The companies that we patronize use our money to support things that are not only hateful and tragic, but are anti-God, anti-biblical, anti-Christian, anti-moral. So what do you do? If you can't boycott everybody, can't turn off my phone, I'd starve.

That's how I make a living. Can't turn off the Internet. That's how I make my living.

What do we do? Let me submit as a suggested type of application that for our own benefit, we think about what Jesus says here. If our thoughts and minds are centered on God and not on the things of man, then I am only going to use these heinous, evil supporting services when it is necessary, not when it is optional. I have to have an Internet connection and so do you.

I have to have a phone and so do you. I have to order certain things, repair parts for my appliances and so on. Yes.

But we can cut down the amount of our money that gets used to fund and support evil by not being immersed in that world. Any unbeliever can get immersed. This is people that spend all their money on the shopping.

It used to be the shopping channel. You'd go to Home Shopping Network and some of these others and people would have their, it's like an episode of Hoarders, but everything in there is new because they were just buying, you know, it's a good deal and that there's an adrenaline rush. There's people that used to sit on eBay and sharpshoot and win auctions, never opened the thing that they got.

It was the thrill of the chase. And it's like the hunter-gatherer instinct. I'm hunting bargains and I'm gathering stuff and it's all sitting here.

I didn't really need it. So my suggestion is, because this is what I've concluded personally, these things must come, but woe to him by whom they come. I have to use Amazon to get parts to fix things that break.

I have to use Amazon to get certain things that you just can't get anywhere else. I'm installing a shower faucet now that I found from a vendor that Amazon is the intermediary. I don't like it, but it's the only one that will work.

Nobody in America makes this particular thing. There isn't one. You have to get it from overseas.

You have to order it. Okay, fine. I will use it, but I don't have to like it.

And I do it with my eyes open. And I understand that I'm doing business with a company that supports gross, heinous, evil. Why do I maintain a consciousness of that? Because I want my mind to be on the things of God.

We live in an evil world. We observe evil all the time. We have to unconsciously participate in evil.

I'm sure some of the meat that we eat came from animals that were raised in inhumanly sad conditions, and it comes close to animal torture. I grieve over that. I am concerned over that.

I don't like that. I don't support it any more than I have to. And if I have an opportunity to avoid, if I can buy cage-free instead of this hen grew up in a box, I will.

But I cannot escape the world yet. We're going to escape the world one day, but we can't yet. We are in the world but not of it.

We have to make use of these things. We don't have to like it, and we don't have to be blissfully unaware of it. Our minds should be on the things of God.

When our minds are on the things of God, we will know evil when we see it. Now, is it a wonderful good thing that Jesus is going to Jerusalem and is going to be arrested and abused by the scribes and chief priests and religious leaders, and that he's going to be turned over to the Romans and crucified? Are there a lot of components of evil involved in the death of the Lord Jesus? Absolutely. Did he say, well, I can't go to Jerusalem.

Even evil people live there. I can't have contact with these scribes and Pharisees and chief priests because they're evil. They've got an evil agenda.

They're tearing the country down. They're leading these people to rack and ruin. In it, but not of it.

Use it, but don't become part of it. Jesus' mind was always on the things of God, even when he was talking to Pharisees and scribes, even when he goes to Jerusalem, knowing that he is going to be central to the machinations of a completely evil, corrupt, self-serving system. But Jesus went anyway.

Why? Because God's purpose is going to be accomplished, despite the evil. I'm going to get this shower installed, despite the evil company I had to use to get the parts, right? But it's for the benefit of people I love, who are believers, who need to be able to shower to get their wonderful work done. So all of us, we live in an evil world.

We circulate our money, goes into the pockets of people who may do Lord knows what with it, but we're conscious and we're aware. And to the extent that it is up to us, we

eschew evil and choose good. If there is a better company that is founded on better principles, and if I have a choice of eating chicken at Kentucky Fried or Chick-fil-A, I'm going to Chick-fil-A.

And you can research that and find out why. So to the extent that it is possible, we can avoid sponsoring evil, but it is impossible to completely avoid sponsoring evil. We are in an evil world.

So we have to find a way to navigate it. This verse is the key. The application for us that I would suggest in this verse is, find ways to keep our minds on the things of God, not on the things of men, not be driven.

And I'm in the process of listening to an audio book that I got, and I'll tell you what I find out from it. But it's all about how our minds are manipulated and our decisions are unconsciously influenced, and in some cases dictated by things we're not even aware of. It goes way beyond subliminal suggestions and so on.

It's really a fascinating look at the way we think and the way we decide, and how people have figured out the strings to pull. We think we're making a free will choice, and we're not. And that's a scary thing.

I want my mind to be on the things of God. And this truth, Jesus said, if you know the truth, the truth will set you free. It sets you free from the manipulation of the world, and playing into the hands of Satan, which is what Peter is doing right here.

Playing right into his hands. Satan would love nothing more than for Jesus to turn around and not go to Jerusalem and not bear our sins on the cross. And Peter plays right into it.

And Jesus says, Peter, you might as well be Satan standing right here talking to me. Get behind me. Get out of my face.

Get out of my way. Stop being an impediment. You're a stumbling block to me.

You're an offense. Scandalon. You're tripping me up.

You're slowing my progress. When we find those things in our lives that take our mind or try to take our minds off the things of God and put them on the things of men, we've got to identify it and we've got to rebuke it and get it out of our face and out of our way. You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

Another great refrigerator magnet verse. As you're reaching for the Haagen-Dazs, put it on the freezer side of the refrigerator. Mind on self-gratification, not on the things of God.

Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we return, we're going to move forward into taking up the cross, following Christ, and hopefully I will move fast

enough to get us to the transfiguration.