

## **Matthew 21-08-29b**

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 19 by way of Matthew chapter 10 and now Micah, the book of Micah. We're going to be looking, if you will turn back there, at what Jesus quoted in Matthew chapter 10, where a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. As I suggested earlier, this seems so far-fetched in days when you're growing up in America and blood's thicker than water and people have such strong family units as a rule, not without exceptions, but the family has been one of those, what has been called divine institutions of where you've got freedom, you've got marriage, you've got the family, and then you've got the nation, and all of those things have been so greatly attacked in recent years and the last few decades in particular.

They began at the core by attacking marriage and the whole free love movement and relaxing of moral standards inevitably then deteriorated the fabric and foundation of families and with that falling apart, now the nation is divided against itself and as the Lord Jesus said and as Abraham Lincoln quoted him saying, a house divided against itself is not going to stand for long and that's what we have now and it is a sharp divide. But the thing that surprises me, I didn't see it coming. I always expected that if there was going to be a great deterioration in the United States, it would just be a continuing decline of morals, that they would take away the last restrictions on what gets shown on broadcast television and they would hear whatever language and see whatever they wanted to show like you do at a movie theater or on cable, but that isn't where it happened.

What has happened is that the people who are fans of socialism and fans of acquiring power for themselves by undermining the pillars that made this nation great, they figured out how to do it and they have done it by co-opting communication for the purpose of presenting an alternate version of events, an alternate version of reality, an alternate version of truth and they have created division instead of unity. If you want an example of what happens when Jesus' call for unity, the Bible's call for unity is ignored and trampled, look at what's happening in our country. Identity politics gives unlimited ways to fragment the population.

How many different races are there? How many different classes are there? How many different genders are there? How many different pronouns are there? How many different formerly off-limits places are there that we can break into? This is on all sides. I am not limiting examples to just one party or just one political point of view. There is self-interest and there is a desire to appeal on the basis of all kinds of divisive issues.

We have had presidents in the past that were able to unite the country. There were times in the past where because we had a common enemy, we were briefly united. Those of you who remember the days after 9-11, there were a few months there where the president could do no wrong, the military could do no wrong.

We were united in fending off this foe. The aftermath of that was a wonderful but very brief time of setting aside minor differences to focus on major priorities. It didn't last long and silly decisions were made.

We went into Afghanistan, for example, to get at the roots of the terrorist entities that had attacked us, and then we never got out. Some of you, I'm sure, said what I said at the time, and some of you remember me saying at the time, did we not learn from the 17-year experience of the Russians who got imbroglioed and mired in Afghanistan and never got themselves out? That was very recent history when we went in there. I distinctly said at the time, if you want to raid the place and root out some bad guys, fine, but don't stay.

Look at the Russians. They lost countless lives, countless rubles in a failed attempt. You can't nation-build, you can't alter government, you can't change the centuries-old rooted bitternesses and lack of structure that characterizes that country.

It is a mistake to be there. Well, for various reasons, people on all different political sides wanted to stay there. People who in the military thought, hey, this is a great place to practice.

We can have a shooting war and isn't that a wonderful thing? No, it's not. But people who aren't there getting shot and getting blown up and coming back minus limbs and minus eyes or in a zipper bag, our lives just become numbers on paper, casualties become numbers on paper. Anyway, that this kind of division has been embraced.

To divide is to conquer in some cases. And so the politics of division have become the norm. People used to say, we need a great uniter.

We need someone who can bring us together. We need someone who can work in a bipartisan way. That is such a sham and such a fallacy now.

So why am I talking about this? You know, I really try to not talk about politics to any great extent, current events to too much of an extent, but it is an example of what Jesus is invading against here. We are not to be divided. And yet he says in Matthew 10, I have come to bring division, not peace, but a sword on what basis God created marriage to unite a man and a woman.

And what God has joined together, let no man divide. Right. And yet there is a time for division.

There is a time for the body of Christ to be united. There's a time for families to be united, but there is also circumstance and occasion and issue and reason and basis for division. Both things are true.

It is not unity at all costs. It is not love without condition. All love is conditional.

I'm probably the only guy who would ever be brave enough to say that, but all love is conditional. God's love is conditional. Now, does God love the world? Yes, he does.

Does God love everybody he's ever created? There is a sense in which he does in the sense that he has a concern for well-being and provides an opportunity for every single creature, every sentient creation, whether angelic or human, God has made a way for relationship and for blessing and for opportunity and for mutually beneficial interaction. We love God. God loves us.

God loves the angels. The angels love God. There is a universal sense in which God's desire is for that unity.

It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all should come to faith, come to repentance. However, God is the author of division. There is a lake of fire that some creatures are going into and others are not, and there is no bigger division than that.

There is a time in Ecclesiastes to gather, and there is a time to scatter. There is a time to unite, and there is a time to divide. There's a time to be one with, and there is a time to separate.

What is the basis for the separation? We've been looking at these issues at the end of Matthew 17 and all through Matthew 18 and into Matthew 19 about our efforts to do what God endeavors to do, which is to unite in love, to create solidarity and commonality and mutual interest in the needs of one another. God has sacrificially interested himself in our well-being. We take up our cross and sacrificially interest ourselves in God's plan and purpose.

And Jesus says, if you're not willing to do that, take up your cross and follow me. You're not worthy of the name disciple. If you are not willing to divide when it is necessary to divide and to leave things behind when it is necessary to leave them behind, there is a time for division.

There is a time for separation. So, you know, it's the oft-quoted serenity prayer idea. God grant me the serenity to change the things I can.

Well, I think it starts out to accept the things I cannot change, the wisdom to know the difference, essentials and non-essentials. What is essential? What is non-essential? What should I unite with and what should I separate from? We need God's wisdom to know the difference. That's what we're looking at.

So because Jesus quoted this man's enemies will be the members of his own household from Micah, we're turning back now to Micah. And I want to start in, you remember this Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk. This is in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah.

You remember Hezekiah is toward the end. So this is the latter days of decline in Judah. And it speaks powerfully by way of analogy.

And by way of comparison to our days, I want to read. And I want you to read with me chapter three. This is Micah chapter three.

This is not what Jesus quotes, but context is everything. Look at chapter three. If you want a hint, look at the beginning of chapter two, woe to those who devise iniquity and work out evil on their beds at morning light.

They practice it because it is in the power of their hand. They work it out at night and they implement it with their hand in the morning. That was chapter two, chapter three here now, heads of Jacob and you rulers of the house of Israel.

Is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil, who strip the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, flay their skin from them, break their bones and chop them in pieces like meat for the pot, like flesh in the cauldron. What is it to be consumed, to be eaten, to be chopped up? This is, this is loss due to the actions of others. This is confiscatory taxes.

This is artificially high prices. This is implementing policies that cause loss, loss of freedom, loss of opportunity, loss of your job, loss of the, the ability to do work. You are not yet.

Why, by the way, you know, those of you that have had economics and such, most of us have, at least in high school, what are we called? What, what you've got, you've got retailers, you've got wholesalers. What are we, when we go get some money, we're called consumers, right? We are those who consume the production of free enterprise, enterprise creates services and products, which we having worked and gained the wherewithal, then consume. So we are called consumers.

We're not supposed to be consumees. But what happens when you import countless millions of consumers who do not have the wherewithal to pay, you have to get it from those who are still working, who are still earning and redistribution of wealth. You take it from the wealthy.

And this is the view. There's a good book. If you want to get it, Elizabeth recommended it to me by Dinesh D'Souza.

What's the name of that thing? Yeah. The United States of Socialism. I got it as an audio book.

I can listen to it when I'm driving or brush hogging or whatever. But D'Souza makes the point that we have a situation now where socialists don't believe that what you earn is yours. That if I work and I'm recompensed for that work, that recompense belongs to me.

If I come up with a good idea, if I'm creative, if I have an enterprise in my freedom and I create it, I deserve the harvest from that plowing and planting and cultivating. When the harvest comes in, it's mine. Socialism says, no, no, no.

Your possessions are ours. This is why you have people in our government and you can think of them by their initials or by their first names. They've become household words with their Green New Deal ideas and their socialism ideas.

But they are saying what should happen to your earnings and my earnings. They think that what you and I have earned belongs to them for them to allocate, for them to spend, for them to confiscate and to redistribute according to their vision. And most of them have never held a job, has certainly never worked for a company or provided a service.

And yet they feel qualified to say what happens to the output of corporations, companies, businesses, individuals. They have the wisdom to decide it. You know what this is? This is we are consumeers now.

That's what the Bible is talking about. Look at this. Heads of Jacob, you rulers notice this is the government in Israel that God is talking to in chapter three.

You hate good and you love evil. You strip the skin for my people and the flesh from their bones. You eat the flesh of my people.

You flay their skin from them, break their bones and chop them in pieces like meat for the pot, flesh for the cauldron. Now were the elders and rulers in Israel literally doing this? Of course not. This is metaphorical for taking what belongs to the people.

Remember what man ever yet hated his own flesh? You know, you should love your wife as you love your own body if you're a husband, right? What man ever yet hated his own flesh? Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. But here they're doing to others what they would never want done to them. And they are consuming the people instead of allowing those people to be free and to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

But look at verse four, then they will cry to the Lord. These who are being flayed and skinned and consumed, they will cry to the Lord, but he will not hear them. He will hide his face from them at that time.

Please understand you look around at the spiritual malaise, the apathy, the outright reconstruction of Christianity and man's own image, the idolatry, the perversity of that which is called Christianity in this country. And people are now suffering under the results of the moral turpitude and the complete ethical disintegration in this country. And now they want to have a national day of prayer.

You know, let's get the nation back for God or whatever. He will not hear. He will even hide his face from them at that time.

Why? They've been evil in their deeds. How many times have we quoted it? The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save. His ear is not heavy that it does not hear your iniquities have separated between you and your God.

Your sins hide his face. That's why he does not hear. Can God hear? Does he hear the prayers? Of course he is not responding.

He will not hear them. He will hide his face from them at that time because they've been evil in their deeds. Why do men love darkness rather than light? Because their deeds are evil.

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray, think preachers, think Bible ministries, think ostensible purveyors of Christianity, think authors up and down the aisles of Christian bookstores, self-interested, self-gratifying, emotional, shallow, unbiblical, counter-biblical, anti-biblical, friendly to perversity, friendly to division. Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray, who chant peace while they chew with their teeth. They're talking with their mouth full.

And what is their mouth full of? They are consuming the people. Look up these statistics sometime on the money that is raked in in the name of Christian ministry in this country and how much of it goes to the people who are performing the ministry, their lifestyles, their possessions, chant peace while they chew with their teeth, but who prepare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths. There is attack.

There is division. Look at the divisions. There are blogs.

There are interdenominational. There are intramural and fraternal wars within denominations that are heinous. There is attack.

There is abuse. There is shameful deprecation and insult and bitter hatred in the leadership realms of people who claim to be Christians who are supposed to be known by our love. Therefore, verse six of Micah three, you shall have night without vision.

You shall have darkness without divination, divination, darkness without discrimination, without discernment, without understanding what's out there. The sun shall go down on the prophets and the day shall be dark for them. The seers shall be ashamed and the diviners abashed.

Indeed, they shall all cover their lips for there is no answer from God. God who established covenant relationship with his people so that he could be their God and they could be his people in the old Testament day has divided himself from them. Why they have eschewed the good and embraced evil.

That is basis for division. Look at verse eight. Truly.

I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord and of justice and might to declare to Jacob, his transgression and to Israel, his sin. This is what Jesus did. We represent the Lord Jesus.

We are his body. What are we supposed to call out? Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites. You claim to be representatives of God.

This is what you are doing now. Hear this verse nine. You heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of this house of Israel who abhor justice and pervert all equity.

Isn't that interesting? There's such an argument for equity instead of equality. Now everybody distinguishes the two equity means if you're a short guy, I've got to put a big box under you so that you'll be just as tall as a tall guy. Equality means you've both got the same opportunity to earn or whatever equity says.

Well, if this guy's rich, I've got to take his money away and give it to this poor guy so that you'll be on an equal playing field economically. This is why they're fixing to hike the tax rates up to an unconscionable level on the quote-unquote wealthy. Well, the wealthy need to pay their fair share.

Why is it? Have you ever thought about that? Have you heard this over and over again? The wealthy need to pay their fair share. Fair in whose eyes? The wealthy are wealthy because they or somebody before them worked hard, created something, came up with a great idea or had a great establishment, found a way to make something profitable to employ hundreds, thousands, maybe tens of thousands of people and to reap that harvest and to partake of the fruit of their labors, right? And who says it is fair to say you have a lot, you need to give some of that to me or to those whom I designate. How is that fair? If they're driving the same roads, taking off and landing on the same airstrips, if as a person they have the same opportunities, the same provisions in terms of infrastructure, they travel the same bridges, they drink water out of a tap just like everybody else, there's electrical power, taxes go for infrastructure and for defense, they're defended by the same military, then why is it fair for them to pay huge percentages of what they make and earn? And the argument is, well, but you know, the freedom that is, freedom is provided to everybody.

It's what somebody does with it. So pay their fair share. These who pervert equity, there are areas where equity is a wonderful thing, equal opportunity, equal provision, equal freedom, equal protection under the law, equal protection by way of external defense.

These build up Zion by bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity. Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord and say, is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.

Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed like a field. Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest. And that happened and it is going to happen here.

As I've mentioned on numerous occasions before, when you go to the destruction in the latter chapters of Revelation of the Scarlet Harlot, the red, white and blue wearing lady and merchants and those who have availed themselves of products and goods and luxuries stand afar off in ships and look at the smoke rising from her destruction. I think that's us. Now turn to chapter six in Micah.

Look at verse three. Oh, my people, what have I done to you? And how have I worried you testify against me? I brought you up from the land of Egypt. I redeemed you from the house of bondage.

I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Oh, my people, remember now what Balaam, king of Moab counseled, what Balaam, the son of Baor answered him from Acacia Grove or Shittim to Gilgal. Shittim to Gilgal.

This is the crossing of the Jordan. Remember that that you may know the righteousness of the Lord. Look at verse six.

In the light of what God has done for his people, with what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, 10,000 rivers of oil? Remember the huge sacrifices that Solomon made on the days of the dedication of of the first temple. And now we're in the days in our study in Zechariah and Haggai of the trying to erect that second temple. And and the people completely misunderstand.

They're they're divided. They're they're full of discord and bitterness and infighting and attacks from the outside. And God says it's not the building and the rivers of oil and the thousands of sacrifices I'm looking for.

And we could never satisfy God with those things. Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, oh man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, perform justice, be genuinely fair.

This is looking out for the interest of others to love mercy. This is forgiveness. This is forgetting those things which are behind and looking forward and to walk in humility with your God humility.

You cannot have repentance without humility. You cannot have change of mind without humility. This is one of the reasons that political debate and arguments between whoever Democrats, Republicans, capitalists and socialists never get anywhere.

There is a phrase from a Bible story record that we listened to as kids where Satan is talking to his angelic minions and they're getting disgusted because they don't feel like he's progressing. This is in the days of Job. He's not winning any victories.

And Satan comes to them and he says, someday you will see that I am right. Someday I shall rule on a twin throne with God. Someday you'll see that I'm right.

Well, he's wrong. He's never going to rule on a twin throne with God, but he's so convinced that he will. And he's convinced that someday somehow others are going to acknowledge how right he is in his error.

No humility. The sin of pride is at the root of almost every other sin. It is at the root of self-interest, self-gratification, selfishness, lack of forgiveness, lack of the effort to live peaceably as much as it is possible with all, to restore and to heal breach and division.

It all depends on humility, to walk humbly with your God. Without humility, we don't walk with God. He who dwells in the secret place of the most high shall abide in the shadow of the almighty.

That's being with him. That's walking with him. You can't get to that secret place and that shelter without humility.

God resists the proud. God gives grace to those who practice, cultivate, exercise, humility. James 4.6. Look at chapter seven.

You remember the protestation that God makes to the people trying to build the second temple. And he says, do you see that that your efforts don't prosper? You plant crops and they barely come in. You put your proceeds in a bag and it's got holes in it and it leaks out.

Do you not understand that there's a message in this lack of prosperity, in this lack of blessing? Look around in our country today. There is a message in the lack of prosperity and lack of blessing in the difficulties and the intractable problems that surround us. It should wake people up if we have the humility to understand why this is happening and not be those who are the targets of judgment because of it.

Look at chapter seven. Now we're getting to the quote. Woe is me.

I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes, but there is no cluster to eat of the first ripe fruit, which my soul desires. I gather, I glean, I'm out there working. I'm not sitting at a table waiting for the servants to bring it.

I'm gathering, I'm gleaning, but there's no cluster to eat of the first ripe fruit, which my soul desires. I am one of those who is being consumed, who is suffering because of, of others. This is like being a eunuch because of men.

This is lacking some good thing, lacking what would be normal and, and a part of fruitfulness. And, uh, you know, children are a blessing from the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward. But because of men, you're a eunuch because of something else.

It isn't going to happen. Look at verse two, the faithful man has perished from the earth and there is no one upright among men. This is a broad categorization.

There is always a remnant. There are always a few, but in general, this is like, there is none that do with righteousness. No, not one.

They have all, you know, this is the fool who says in their heart, there is no God faithful has perished from the earth. No one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood every man hunts his brother with a net used to be difficult to understand why this would be the case.

Maybe somebody wants to rob me, but now there's this self-righteousness I'm coming after you because you're not practicing safety. Like I think you should, you haven't taken a shot. I think you should take, you haven't worn a thing on your face that I think you ought to wear.

You haven't, uh, distance yourself. You haven't closed something you've failed to inhibit yourself and, and stay away. And I've, I've got certain things that I believe are right.

And, and you're wrong because you're not doing what I think is right. Christianity has not always practiced this, but the biblical value, the proper scriptural attitude is live and let live to the extent that it is up to you live peaceably with all men. Don't go try to reform their morals.

Don't try to penalize them and judge them. Judge not lest you be judged. Uh, if people want to practice another religion in your country, let them religious freedom is a Christian value.

The reason that Buddhists and Muslims and confusions and people of every different stripe shape and color ought to be free to practice their religion is it is a Christian value. God will deal with you with your choices. We are to shine as a light, not pour like a bucket water on everybody else to the extent it is up to you live peaceably.

This has been the message in our recent chapters in Matthew, but to lie and wait for blood. Every man hunts his brother with a net. This is lack of humility.

This is arrogance. The arrogance that says, I'm right. There's something wrong with you.

I either need what you have, or I've got to stop you from doing what you're doing by my standards. Why are they hunting their brothers with a net? Look at verse three that they may successfully do evil with both hands. The Prince demands, you can scratch out for

gifts.

The Prince asks, this is demands. The, the, the leadership, the government makes demands. The judge seeks payment and the great utters his evil desire.

The idea here, if you look at it in Hebrew real quickly, you can check this in the Tanakh or elsewhere. But the idea is that the, the Prince has collaborated with the judge on behalf of the rich. So those who have influence who support the Prince and bribe the judge get their evil desire accomplished by the government and by the judiciary.

They do wrong and they're judged right because of a payoff. And because of this inside deal, there is cooperation. The best of them is like a sharp briar.

The most upright is like a thorny hedge. You get close to them. You're going to bleed the day of your watchman and your punishment comes now shall be their perplexity.

This is scrambled in Hebrew. We'll straighten it out some further time. That's not what it says, by the way.

But look at verse five, do not trust in a friend. Do not put your confidence in a companion. Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom.

You see this today. You say the wrong thing. It gets out on social media and it's over for you.

That's the context for Jesus quote for son dishonors, father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the men of his own household. What's the conclusion? Therefore, I will look to the Lord.

I will wait for the God of my deliverance. My God will hear me. This is a day when you have to watch what you say.

It reminds me of communist Russia, communist China, communist Cambodia, where if you say the wrong thing, you can be rounded up and made to disappear, tortured, imprisoned, your goods confiscated. Look at what Mao did by way of confiscation in his grand socialist plan. Well, the socialist taking over our government, this is what they want to do.

And they're following right in his footsteps. They're not ready to say that they will murder the landowner so that they can take his land. They're going to effectively murder him.

They're going to chew him up. They're going to chop him up and put him in the pot for consumption. And us.

So what is our hope? What should the godly remnant be doing in these times? Look to

the Lord, wait for the God of salvation. Notice God didn't stop this stuff in the days of Hezekiah, in the days of Jotham, in these declining days of Judah. God saw it and God allowed it.

But what did God also do? God guarded his faithful remnant. It's the principle of the Incarnation. It is the principle of the 144,000 sealed in their foreheads in Revelation.

God knows them that are his. Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice. I know them.

We do not need to have a spirit of fear. But notice, we've also got guidance. Do not trust in a friend.

Do not put your confidence in a companion. Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. If you're not united in Christ, you'd better be careful.

Son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother. There is division. It is inevitable.

He doesn't say, well, when these people in your household rise up, see if you can heal the breach. He says, look to the Lord, wait on the Lord, wait on the Lord, be of good cheer. He shall strengthen thy heart.

Well, this is background. This is context. Jesus quoted this even as he pleads for unity, for humility and for love.

Love for him is the dominant love, transcendent love. It is the priority love and it determines to what extent we are able to practice love toward others. It determines the extent to which we can preserve the spirit of unity and the bond of peace.

We endeavor that. We strive for it. We desire it.

We hope for it. But there is a time and these are times in which we live where God doesn't say, oh, say what you want, do what you want. It'll all be fine.

You're going to float above the storm. You're going to rise above it in a wonderful angelic pair of wings. He says, be careful who you trust, be careful what you say, wait on the Lord, look to the Lord, understand your times.

So it's very pertinent for us in these increasingly dark days. We have an increasingly bright hope and an increasingly clear message from God's word that we are inevitably going to separate from and be separated from a lot of things that ideally would not be characterized by division. But what do you love? What do you love most? What do we cling to? What do we separate from? These are the applications.

Well, we'll pick up our study here and move forward into the rich, young ruler. Uh, we need to look at all three gospels that tell this story to get all of the details. He's rich in

one gospel, he's young in another, and he's a ruler in another.

But we will see what the Lord Jesus has to say. What is the nature of good coming up as a preview of coming attraction? But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the strength that it imparts to us. The peace and the power that it puts into us. We pray that as we reflect on these things and the presence and power of your Holy Spirit, that we can discern, that we can decide, that we can think and act and speak in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that represents the Lord Jesus Christ, which we know is a large part of our purpose here, that we can grow in grace and knowledge and be fitted for every good work now and in the ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.