

Matthew 21-11-14a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We continue our study this morning in Matthew chapter 21, where we left off last time. We will take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and then we'll get started.

Father, we are grateful for your grace, for your faithfulness, for the many ways that you provide for us and bless us. And we pray this morning that you will bless us as we fellowship in the word, as we look at its truth and anticipate that in the hands of the Holy Spirit, it will be the power that guides us and sustains us and energizes us to bear that fruit that reflects your glory. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen. You'll remember that this is a symmetrical section and that it centers on this question of Jesus authority. And his authority is something that we also saw mentioned last time in John chapter seven.

So I'm going to read our passage real quickly here, and then we're going to go to John seven to refresh our minds on what Jesus said and why this is so pertinent. So in Matthew 21, 23, when he came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people, and you remember that in looking at the parallels in Mark and Luke, this is the chief priests, scribes and elders. It's all three components of the Sanhedrin, confronted him as he was teaching and said, by what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority? Jesus answered and said to them, I will ask you one thing, which if you tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things, the baptism of John, where was it from, from heaven or from men? And they reasoned among themselves saying, if we say from heaven, he will say to us, why then did you not believe him? But if we say from men, we fear the multitude for all count John as a prophet.

So they answered Jesus and said, we do not know. He said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. Then he is going to give the three parables that illustrate the depth of that answer.

So the issue is authority. These men believe that they hold authority. They questioned Jesus authority.

If you flip over to John chapter seven, there is a direct answer that was given much earlier to these same people. So John 7, 25, Jesus has been teaching and talking about the issue that has been raised in confronting people in Jerusalem. Remember his brothers were going up to the feast and he told them he wasn't going to go up, but then he did go later.

There was much complaining among the people about him. And in an earlier part of John

7, verse 16, Jesus answered them and said, how does this man know letters never having studied is the question? How can he speak if he hasn't studied? In these days, rabbis were ordained as it were, there was a sort of an ordination that would take place. And they would be vetted much as, as degrees and ordination are conferred today by those who already held the office or already had attained that status, they would get together and confer.

So you would sit at the feet of a rabbi. There would be a test, there would be a ceremony, and then you would be led into the club. And so this was sort of generational authority.

If you sat at the feet of Gamaliel, as Paul did, there would come a point at which Gamaliel himself would say, okay, you've graduated, you can stand on your own as a rabbi. You can read Edersheim on this. He's got a half a chapter on how rabbis and other religious authorities were ordained as it were.

So this is basically questioning Jesus credentials. Who are you to talk when you haven't got a degree, you haven't been ordained, you haven't been authorized, note the word, you haven't been authorized by those who hold these positions. So in verse 15, how does this man know letters never having studied? Jesus answered them and said, my doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me.

If anyone wills to do his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority. If anyone wills to do his will, this is a great revelational truth. How do I know if I can put confidence in what I'm hearing? Think about being in his day.

Is Jesus really the Messiah? Is he just a flash in the pan? Is he the real deal or is he just another one of these who have claimed to be the Messiah have come and gone? How will I know? Here is a promise and it is just as sure today. If anyone wills to do his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority. So if the religious leadership does not know by what authority Jesus is doing these things, what does John 7, 17 tell you? They do not will to do his will, which is what comes up in the parable of the two sons, right? That immediately follows.

If anyone wills to do his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or I speak on my own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true and no unrighteousness is in him. This is the characteristic of good Bible teaching.

It is the characteristic of truth in the social and political realm that there is a humility on the part of the communicator that points in the direction of truth, the application of that truth for the benefit of people reflecting the glory of God. Anybody can say, I'm doing this for the downtrodden. I'm doing this for an oppressed group.

I'm doing this for fill in the blank rights. I am a crusader to uplift some downtrodden segment. Anybody can say that, but notice this always implicates the glory of God.

Ultimately is God behind it? Does it reflect God's words, God's standards, God's direction to his people or not? That's a great discriminator. If anyone wills to do his will, he'll know concerning the doctrine that underlies whatever someone is presenting. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory.

He who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true and no unrighteousness is in him. Then he gives the example of Moses and the authority of the law and the example of circumcision. Verse 22, Moses gave you circumcision.

Actually it came from the fathers. You circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, judge with righteous judgment.

Do not judge according to appearance, judge with righteous judgment. They begin to make scriptural objections down in verse 26. He speaks boldly, they say nothing to him.

This of course ultimately is going to prompt them to say something to him as they're doing in our passage. We know where this man is from but when the Christ comes no one knows where he is from. Jesus cried out as he taught in the temple saying you both know me and you know where I am from.

I have not come of myself but he who sent me is true whom you do not know. But I know him, I am from him and he sent me. Therefore they sought to take him but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

And many of the people believed in him and said when the Christ comes will he do more signs than these which this one has done? Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning him and the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take him. So this opposition goes all the way back you know to earlier times but there is a time that Jesus can stand and teach and be impervious to the attacks and the plots of the religious leadership and there is a time where he allows himself to be taken which we're approaching. So back to Matthew chapter 21 the illustration is no accident when he asks the question about John what did you think of John? What was his authorization? Was he from God or was he just a man? Well they disqualify themselves as religious leaders when they say I don't know.

I don't know if John was from God. If there's a possibility that he's from God wouldn't you think as a religious leader it would be your job to find out? How many years ago has it been that John ministered? How many years has it been since John was slain? It's been at least two years. In all of this time they have not figured out if John was actually a prophet

or not.

It's one of the biggest issues of their day. We don't know. What they're actually saying is we refuse to believe that he's from God.

We refuse and they're pleading of ignorance. This is why agnosticism isn't a valid position. If you refuse to believe in God saying I don't know is the same as saying I reject that idea.

You don't get any credit for claiming to be agnostic. We don't know. Well why don't you know? There's ample evidence to figure it out.

So then the parable of the two sons. What do you think? A man had two sons and he came to the first and said son go to work today in my vineyard. He answered and said I will not but afterward he regretted it and went.

This is an interesting word. Regret or remorse. We have often repentance.

We've talked about the Greek word metanoia or metaneo in the verb form where you know the noose and the noia and noeo part of that is change meta. Meta to change and noeo is your mind and change your noose. So metanoia is a change of mind.

Metamelemini is a different thing. Metamelemini is more in the realm of regret, remorse. You rethink it and you are sort of self convicted that you've made a mistake.

And that's the verb that is used here. He regretted it. He metamelemined it.

It would be the difference I would say in English between a change of mind and a change of heart. He had a change of heart. Easiest way to summarize it.

He regretted it and went. So the father comes to the second and said likewise and he said I go sir. Actually go is in italics there.

This is just it just says sort of here am I like Samuel in the days of Eli. It just says here am I. He evades making the commitment. The father says well you go work in the field.

He says here I am. But he doesn't he's got a loophole. And of course the scribes and the doctors of the law and Judaistic scholarship ever since has been famous for finding loopholes and cracks and crannies where you can force your viewpoint into simple truth.

So he he says here am I leaving the impression that he's going to go. But he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father.

They said to him the first and they indict themselves at this point without realizing it. It's it is a very well structured question and answer as usual from the Lord Jesus because they walk right into this. The truth seems so clear looking at this example.

Well obviously the father wanted someone to work in the field. The first son went and worked in the field. He did the will of the father.

It's inescapable. But the application to themselves also becomes inescapable as soon as they say the first. Jesus said to them assuredly I say to you tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

Harlots is an interesting choice here. Matthew only uses the word which is a derivative of porne and pornia. And we have studied that word in detail when we have found it in Paul's epistles and earlier in Matthew.

Basis for adultery and for divorce assuming adultery or some other breach of the marriage. But it encompasses a rejection of required commitment. So obviously a prostitute has trampled the bounds of marriage.

She herself has not gotten married nor do her customers respect marriage or they wouldn't be her customers. And it isn't so much the act of fornication or whatever is involved there as it is the obliterating of the lines that define the divine institution of marriage specifically. Pornia corrupts attacks undermines the normal covenant nature of the marriage bonds specifically.

And this can happen in all different kinds of ways. But it is fundamentally not the physical act. It is the harm that it does to covenant commitment to divine structure.

Marriage family and nation are the institutions by which God has organized human life and human society for ever ever since Adam and Eve walked out of the garden. And to attack those is to attack the fabric of what God designed to hold people together and to enable us to live at close quarters without the overflow of the sinful natures that we aggregate when we do that. So it is rightly translated harlots.

It's talking about ladies of ill repute. But the word itself the term itself and the harm itself is not in the action. And it's helpful to remember this because there are people who say well and Christian ministers and even pastors have gone awry in seeking to comfort say a woman who has had a bad patch of circumstance or who has been rejected or who has is in need of comfort who has low self-esteem who has been abused in some way.

And there is the desire to comfort and build up and assure someone that they have value that yes you are attractive you do have worth. You are a meaningful human being. And guys who ought to know better have justified crossing the line into physically comforting a woman or women justifying it on this basis.

Well it's okay because my intentions are good. Well you haven't thought very far into the future if you actually think this is going to be a good thing because you know there is aftermath. There is expectation.

There are all kinds of things that come out of that. But it is not primarily the physical act that is the sin. It is what it does to the fabric and the principle by which God has said for this reason shall a man leave father and mother and cling to his wife.

They too shall be one flesh. That's the divine authority that guides marriage. People say well what is marriage? You stand in front of some people you say some words you sign a paper down at the courthouse.

Well that's the human side of it. In God's eyes it is the covenant commitment that is made. And whatever form it may take whatever society at whatever part of the world at whatever stage of history constitutes marriage that's the human side of it.

God looks at it as the union of two people in a covenant relationship. And to breach a covenant in God's eyes is the sin. It is the evil.

And if you breach it yourself whether in prospect or in retrospect you can breach that covenant before you ever make it because you do it in advance. This is the problem with young people shacking up and fornicating and the rest of it is the future becomes impossible. You can't make that commitment when you've already broken it.

Without restoration without God's divine power entering into that situation you've destroyed it before it ever got started. It's like an abortion. You've stopped the baby's life before it ever got a chance to take its first breath.

And on that analogy you can see why both abortion and fornication prior to marriage are evil. Sin and evil. Well this is the nature of the the two son parable.

There is a commitment that is made or there is a commitment that is refused at the outset. So the first son he said I will not. And this was considered grave misbehavior in ancient Israel.

It's a patriarchal society if a son and by the way this is this is not the word huyas for son which is an adult son. This is tekna which is a son that is he's old enough to work but he's not old enough to leave the house and establish his own. This is a tekna.

And so children obey your parents. It goes well before the New Testament. And when the this is a this is sort of a rebellious act to say I will not go.

The father didn't really give an option. He says to his son go work in the vineyard and he says I won't. And this is heinous.

And so initially if Jesus stopped right there and said has he done the will of the father they'd say no he needs to be given the rod of correction. But afterward he has a change of heart and he goes. So Jesus is going to connect that first son to the tax collectors and harlots.

Now being a tax collector choosing to be a loose woman is the equivalent of rejecting the initial request of God for obedience. Right. Not supposed to be a prostitute.

You're not supposed to charge usury to your fellow Israelites. This is in the law. Both of these are forbidden in the law.

So these people are growing up and they hear the law. They're taught the law. They know what the law says.

And when they grow up and are able to make their own decisions they choose a path that violates the law of Moses. They do it consciously. They do it willingly.

And this becomes a pattern. It's a lifestyle that they engage in. However at the preaching of John the Baptist something changes.

Jesus says verse 32 John came to you in the way of righteousness. You religious leaders did not believe in him but tax collectors and harlots believed him. And when you saw it you did not afterward relent metamelomai.

You did not have a change of heart and believe. The tax collectors and sinners harlots here in other contexts we've seen it earlier in Matthew tax collectors and sinners. Remember Jesus was accused of eating with tax collectors and sinners.

But they heard the preaching of John and had a change of heart. And they have now come and they are listening to the Lord Jesus. They are coming to hear his teaching.

So they're like that first son. Tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. Even when you realize that there could be something to John's message coming in the way of righteousness where all of the people account him as a prophet.

You have not revisited the idea that maybe I was wrong in rejecting his message and I should account him the way the people do. And maybe he's a prophet. How can they say I don't know when they heard John themselves and they have seen the response of the people who recognize him as a prophet.

But they refuse to decide. This is emblematic in Herod locking John up in prison but not making a decision to either free him or execute him. He just wants to sit the fence and ultimately he is forced to choose by Salome and the dance at the birthday party.

And his choice is kill him. That is going to be the choice that is forced here. And Jesus is forcing the choice.

Jesus comes on purpose. Jesus is pressing the issue at the temple as we've seen. And they're going to make the same choice that's foreshadowed in the choice of Herod with this very John the Baptist.

When you saw it you did not have to relent and believe him. What is the application for us? We have heard the word of God taught many of us for years and years and years. Have we reached the point where there is some of it in terms of its application and we just hold it at arm's length and we say well I don't know.

I'm just not I'm not going to make a decision. I'm not going to reject that. But I'm not going to have a change of heart in the area where that truth pertains either.

I'm just going to put it in the prison and I'll visit it from time to time the way Herod did John. I'm just going to say I don't know the way these religious people who knew the law of Moses and knew all about John and all about the response of the people. But to their harm and fatally in the spiritual sense they do not respond.

They do not metamelomai. They do not have a change of heart and because of that they are ultimately going to lose everything they're trying to hang on to. There will be no Sanhedrin in a few years.

There will be no Jerusalem in a few years. There will be no temple. There will be no system.

All of this houses and barns are going to be inconsequential when their soul is required of them. So Jesus to emphasize this point says here another parable in verse 33. There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it.

Once again the figure of the vineyard. We've already seen the vineyard in the Old Testament with the land that is leased and so on. Let me sing you a song of my beloved.

I planted a vineyard. I put a hedge around it. You remember that.

And it didn't bear the fruit that it was supposed to bear. Now the vineyard transfers from being a picture of opportunity for Old Testament Israel to the kingdom itself. A certain landowner planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it and built a tower.

He leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive its fruit. Vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one and stoned another.

Again he sent other servants more than the first and they did likewise to them. Last of all, he sent his son to them saying they will respect my son. But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? Not having made any connection, not having stopped and

thought about any correspondence between the elements in this parable and themselves, the religious leaders say, oh, I've got this.

I know the answer to this. He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. You would think having walked into the first parable face first and gotten a bloody nose, they would have been careful about answering this question.

But it's just so bleeding obvious. What would any landowner do whose servants had been abused and killed? And then he sends his son and they kill the son. What would anybody do? It's impossible to escape what the right answer is.

He will destroy those wicked men miserably, lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus said to them, have you never read the scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

We saw the source of this last time. It's in Psalm 118. Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you.

Very straightforward correspondence. The vineyard is the kingdom and the fruit of the kingdom. Notice that the kingdom is not just a reward.

It's not a place for the vinedressers to dwell and have their own vine in their fig tree and live comfortably. What is the purpose of the vineyard? What's the purpose? To bear fruit for the guy that owns it, set it up and hired the vinedressers. The vinedressers get a good deal.

They're working for a wonderful master and they've got worthy work, but there's a wine press in the vineyard. Why? Grapes should be harvested. They should be pressed.

There should be new wine coming out that is going to age and become wonderful wine. And this is the will of the one who built the vineyard. Set up the wine press.

It's for his benefit. They get blessing by association as it were. But think about this.

We tend to unconsciously in many cases think, well, my relationship with God, he's going to help me now. And when I quote, get to heaven, when we move into the kingdom age, get my resurrection body, everybody will be happy over there. I'm going to have such a great time.

It's going to be wonderful for me. I want to walk the streets of gold. I hopefully can have some of the overcomer blessings and dwell in the new Jerusalem and eat the hidden manna and walk with Jesus in white and sit with him on his throne and all of that.

Look at the purpose of the kingdom. The purpose of the kingdom isn't just to be a

wonderful, beneficent utopia for those who dwell there. It has a purpose.

It's the purpose that the king has in having his kingdom and it's his glory. What did Jesus say in John seven? How do you know if the authority is legitimate? Whose glory is on the line? I would submit, I would suggest that a lot of the problem in modern day Christianity, post modern day Christianity is losing this perspective. I think the problems in a lot of individual Christian lives is we have lost this perspective.

We are not our own. We are bought with a price. Remember that memory verse? You're not your own.

You're bought with a price. Therefore what? What's the rest of that verse? You're not your own. You are bought with a price.

Therefore glorify God in your body. Our purpose is to glorify God, not verbally glory, glory, glory, Hosanna. We are here to reflect the glory of God, to embody the glory of God, to carry around with us the glory of God, the presence of God, the father, the son, and the spirit can potentially be within us when we are faithful and obedient.

But we get the idea that, well, this was supposed to be the formula for me to have a happy life. This was supposed to be the formula for me to have a happy eternal future. And Jesus says, look at the vineyard.

When the vine dressers say, come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance, the benefits that are supposed to accrue to the owner and his son, I want them for myself. Self-interest rationalizes abuse of the servants and killing the son. It's incredible that you can reject the servants that are sent with a message of righteousness.

They come in the way of righteousness and they are stoned and murdered for their trouble. The son is sent. Surely they will respect my son.

Why should they respect the son? Because he's the son. What does sonship imply? Authority. He has the authority of the father when he comes as the son.

What's Jesus going to say the very last verses of this book, Matthew 28, the great commission. I mentioned this before, Matthew 28, 19 and 20. Go ye into all the world.

What's 27 say? Matthew 28, 27. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Given.

Who gives authority to Jesus Christ? Who's the only one high enough to grant authority to Jesus? God, the father, the father and the son. All authority has been given to me. The son comes and he's killed for his trouble.

He will destroy those wicked men miserably. What is their essential problem? Why don't they faithfully tend the vineyard? Why don't they respond to the servants and why don't

they honor the son when he comes? What's their inherent problem? Self-interest. What are they going to do with the vineyard? If they don't want to send the vineyard, well, they're still at the vineyard.

Vintage time has come. They have been cultivating the vineyard. It's got vines.

It doesn't say, and they abandoned it and went down to the tavern and hoisted a few. They've been working the vineyard, but what is their intention with the vineyard? They're going to sell the proceeds for themselves. They are going to make the wine for themselves.

They are going to gain the inheritance and take control of the vineyard for themselves. It's self-interest. This is so dangerous because we can rationalize self-interest a hundred different ways.

Look around at what's going on in the world today. There are so many self-interested people, self-interested groups, self-interested leadership that is invested in maintaining and increasing their power over things that don't rightfully belong to them. But now that they have gained a position, they are willing to do all kinds of nefarious things to hold on to it, just like these guys.

But this same sinful nature is in every one of us. And we can unwittingly in some cases, if we do not appeal to truth and if we do not appeal to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, if we do not ask and seek and knock, we can be as blind as these guys. There is a way that seems right to a man, ends up in death.

We have got to think about this vineyard. What is the purpose of the kingdom? It's the glory of God. Does it involve me having to endure? Does it involve me needing to suffer? Does it involve me experiencing tribulation for a time? Yes.

Every one of those is guaranteed in the Bible. In this world, you shall have tribulation. You have need of patience so that after you have suffered a while, you receive the promises you inherit.

Over and over and over again, we're told this. And yet when hard times come, we're ready to go the self-interested route. And that is the way of death.

It is the broad way that leads to destruction. The straight gate that leads to life is an uphill climb. Few there be that find it because we are so easily, self-interest is the biggest thing going.

Everybody loves it. I like what I like. I like feeling good.

I like my own satisfaction. I like my short-term gratification. This is the root of all kinds of evil.

The reason money is the root of all kinds of evil is you can buy stuff to entertain yourself. Well, think about the vineyard and the vine dressers, not just how heinous it is. Why did these religious leaders walk into this parable? Again, they walked into the two sons parable and they walked into this one.

Why did they walk into it? Why were they so quick to answer? Because they did not see themselves in it. We should not be quick to answer until we can assure ourselves that we are not in it, that we are not a part of the problem. This unwillingness to metamelomai, to change our hearts.

Our minds tell us that we're on board. We're gung-ho, love the Lord, can't wait for the kingdom. Even so come Lord Jesus.

That's in the mind. It's in the area of the heart. That's this is not metanoeo, it's metamelomai.

So we need to examine ourselves. We need to cultivate humility and be teachable. John came in the way of righteousness.

Tax collectors and harlots and sinners said, I'm doing wrong. I need to fix this. Matthew, the disciple, used to be a tax collector, but he's not anymore.

There are rumors, nothing biblical, that Mary Magdalene had been a harlot. Not in the Bible, but early church tradition says she was. And to the extent, you know, the woman that bathed Jesus' feet with her hair, and there were many who came.

The woman taken in adultery, the pericope, that they're not sure where it fits in the gospel of John. But we know for a fact, Jesus says here, tax collectors and harlots have seen the way of righteousness and had a change of heart. You have seen that same way of righteousness.

You have seen their response, and you still have not had a change of heart. How tragic would it be for you and me if we look at this and we don't look for ourselves and we don't have change of heart where it is needed? Well, much more to say here. We're going to pause and take our break.

We're going to enjoy our wonderful special music, and then we'll return to Matthew chapter 21 right at the end.