

Matthew 21-11-14b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 21, looking at these three parables that Jesus tells and the significance. It's easy to see that he really stuffs the opposition, he silences them, he embarrasses them, he shows them for what they are. But to observe that and move on would be to miss the value that it holds for me personally and for all of us.

And that is that there is a real danger of becoming complacent when it comes to the truth of the word of God and holding it at arm's length and just saying, well, I don't know. I don't want to respond positively or negatively to some revelation of the way of righteousness that John the Baptist represented, that the Lord Jesus represented, and that for us, all of the witness of scripture represents. What are we going to do with the witness of the word and the witness of the spirit when it confronts us in an area that requires change of heart? And the tricky thing is, our heart is complex, our life is complex, and there are areas where we are doing well.

We like to think about those. If I'm going to examine myself and see if I'm in the faith, I can say, you know, I'm really consistent about coming to Bible class. I'm really good about whatever it might be.

Maybe we're very faithful in our prayer life. Maybe we're regular in our review or our reflections or whatever else, but it is hard to see when we are blind and it is hard to break up rocks in our soul that only the word of God can hammer into powder. So what we need is the supernatural power of God, and it comes to us by request.

There are some things that don't come by request. We've reviewed this many times. There are things that come to us by faithfulness.

There are things that come by obedience. There are things that come by enduring, but there are things that come by request, and insight into where we need change of heart comes by request. Ask, and it shall be given.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened. Turn with me.

We've seen it many, many times, but it's time to look at it on the page. Turn with me back to Psalm 51. This is why Jesus tells these parables.

It is a last opportunity. This week before his crucifixion is the last chance for people to have a change of mind. Psalm 51.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done evil in your sight, that you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when you judge. This is comparing ourselves to the revealed way of righteousness.

Verse 5. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones you have broken may rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me by your generous spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise.

For you did not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it. You did not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.

These, O God, you will not despise. Do good in your good pleasure to Zion. Build the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering. Then they shall offer bulls on your altar." For us, that last verse, you think about the walls of the New Jerusalem and the opportunity to dwell therein. And you remember the significance of the burnt offering and the whole burnt offering, especially that whole burnt offering in Leviticus chapter one.

It was never mandated in the law to offer sacrifice for personal sin. The law does not say, if you realize that you have sinned, go and offer a sacrifice. It's a common misconception in the church.

We've covered it before when we did the Levitical offerings, but Leviticus chapter one, the whole burnt offering, this is an expression of commitment. It's an expression of dedication, of putting our whole selves on the line in the service of God for his glory, looking to his kingdom. And that's what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 21.

This is what is lacking in those who thought they represented that very concept. They are professional religious types. They are professional leaders for the people of God, and

they are the furthest from the kingdom.

Tax collectors and harlots go in before they do. So when Jesus finishes the parable of the wicked vine dressers and makes the point that the builders rejected a stone that ends up being the chief cornerstone, this is the foundation stone that is essential for all of the rest of the building to be plumb and square, solid and indestructible. I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

It's common and popular and not necessarily wrong to see a reference to the church here, but the church is not a nation. We are not a nation. We are the body of Christ.

We are pictured in some cases as the bride of Christ. We are the white-robed saints who accompany the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes back at the end of the tribulation. We can be those who experience the overcomer blessings, but we are not a nation.

We are made up of people from every nation and kindred and tongue, as you find out in the revelation explicitly. How can the kingdom be taken from the people of Jesus day and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it? It's the millennial kingdom. When Old Testament saints are raised from the dead, resuscitated and pass under the rod, those who are allowed into the kingdom proper, those who inhabit the twelve tribe allotments with the Levites serving in Jerusalem.

We saw the geographical borders of those in Ezekiel. There is the temple in Ezekiel 40 through 47. We've seen all of this in great detail.

That nation, that great army that is dry bones at present, but is going to have sinews and flesh and skin cover them and stand up on their feet with the spirit of God imbuing them with life and power. The spirit poured out on all of that flesh. Those are going to be the nation that will bear the fruits of it.

It is the millennial Israel. It is the capital city of the sons of David rule. There is, of course, an application for the church.

We should be bearing the fruits, but it is primarily looking ahead to that nation of Israel that bears the fruits of it. Whoever falls on this stone will be broken. Whoever the stone falls on will be crushed.

And we can either choose to fall on the stone and recognize our, this is where they get the term, brokenness, which I use very hesitantly because in Christ, we're a new creation and we're not a broken creation. We could have been broken in terms of dysfunctional before our salvation, but we are not broken now. We should not be.

There is healing in his wings and the new creation is not broken, but when we come and fall on the rock of our salvation, we leave behind whatever we thought made us strong, whatever we relied upon, that is broken, that is taken away. And we look for strength, for

provision, for our future hope to the rock of our salvation. If we do not do that, if we do not fall on the rock, the rock is going to fall on those who reject him.

And the builders that rejected the cornerstone are in big trouble. When the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking of them belatedly. They perceived that he was speaking of them.

Now you have a choice when you perceive that truth, the word of God is speaking to you. It is either response or rejection. It is either repentance or reaction.

They perceived that he was speaking of them, but when they sought to lay hands on him, so what is their, what is their answer? When they perceive that this applies to them, they want to seize him, but they feared the multitudes because they took him for a prophet. The people listen to Jesus as a prophet. They respond to his teaching and think about what he says because they regard him as a source of divine truth.

That's what a prophet is. A source of divine truth, the people respond, the leadership react. So Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables, parables, plural spoke again by parables.

He's all three of these are comprehended in that plural and said, this is chapter 22. Now the kingdom of heaven is like a certain King who arranged a marriage for his son, sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding. They were not willing to come again.

He sent out other servants saying, tell those who are invited, see, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fatted cattle are killed. All things are ready.

Come to the wedding, but they made light of it and went their ways. One to his own farm and other to his business and the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully and killed them. You know, this parable, I'm going to stop right here.

So many parables, Jesus told, we did a parable study and there were three dozen parables that we looked at, but look at these two parables, the one we just studied and the one we're looking at now, what is the common element? Servants are sent and they are killed. There is death in the story. What week are we looking at? This is no accident.

Jesus is confronting those who are about to sentence him to death among themselves and engineer his death using the Romans. And death is in the parables. These parables are specifically delivered to the scribes, the chief priests, and the elders.

The Sanhedrin, the governing judicial body that the Romans allowed the Jews to maintain under their authority. Death. The servants are slain.

The son is slain. Here, those invited to the kingdom, and you think, how unjust is this?

There's a king putting on a for his son and he invites people to come and partake of free food and a celebratory atmosphere and they're too busy. We don't know from this story, Jesus doesn't allude to their motives.

Did they think he was an unjust king? Is he too harsh? Did they get a bad deal in court? But one goes to his farm, maybe he had a border dispute with a neighbor and the king's government didn't give him the result that he wanted. Another goes to his business, maybe he thinks the governmental policy is harsh under this king. It doesn't say why they won't come, but you scratch your head.

I scratch my head. Who wouldn't come to a feast put on by the king? There is no better food. There is no better entertainment.

There's no better environment. There's no better occasion. If you're for the king, you would only not go because there's implicit personal benefit in going.

You would only not go if you had something against the king and to celebrate the wedding of his son would be to say, I like this dynasty and I wanted to continue because the son is the heir. The son is the continuation. The son is going to be the face of the government, right? So you would only say, I've got something that means more to me.

If you had something against the king, you got to think about why would they not go? Who in their right mind would not go? Somebody that's holding a grudge, somebody that their self-interest has been curbed or hedged or suppressed or limited by this king. And through extension, they don't want to celebrate the wedding of his son because they don't like the king. They don't like the government of the king.

They don't like the kingdom of the king. How do you think Gog Magog is going to happen at the end of 10 centuries of divinely sponsored righteous rule out of Jerusalem? Some people just hate the king and hate his kingdom. And there's no changing their hearts.

There's no metanoia. There's no metamelomi. Their hearts are hard.

They just will not change their hearts. They will not change their minds. Is there some line of testing that they have to go through before they come into this divine feast? Do they have to go down a line? You see these martial arts guys and guys with bamboo canes will line up on each side and to get his next belt or his little next status as a Kung Fu guy, he's got to walk the line and be batted by these guys.

And once you get to the end, you get what you want, but you've got to undergo hardship. You get to prove that you're tough and that you can take the blows and walk the gauntlet. There's no gauntlet here.

This is nothing but benefit. How could they reject it except that they reject the king first? So they reject the banquet he's putting on. They reject the son.

They reject the wedding, reject everything about it. So they're too busy. And this is why they don't just mock the servants.

They don't just say no to the servants. What do they do to the servants who represent this king? This is really the clue. They seize his servants, treat them spitefully and kill them.

You kill the servants who have come to give you an invitation to a wonderful celebratory banquet. You shoot the messenger. You have to hate the king.

There's no other explanation for this. They hate the king. So when the king heard about it, he was furious.

He sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. And all of the Pharisees and scribes and elders are saying, well, rightfully so. If we felt ourselves abused in this manner, we would do the very same thing.

They are on board. This is righteous to slay these people and burn their city to the ground. I'd sow it with salt.

I'd put a post in the middle of it and say, if you ever rebuild this, your first son's going to die and your last son's going to die, which God did. So he said to his servants, the wedding is ready. But those who were invited were not worthy.

Why are they not worthy? Animosity to the king expressed in actions. Therefore, go into the highways and as many as you find invite to the wedding. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found both bad and good.

Tax collectors, harlots, sinners, Pharisees, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Matthew the tax collector, whoever it might be, bad and good as judged by society. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. They didn't mock, spite and slay the invitation bearing servants.

They responded. They came when they were asked bad or good. They didn't let their badness.

I'm not worthy to come to the king. They didn't let their goodness. Why? You know, I don't need to go because I've got enough goodness to go around bad or good.

They responded. The key is their response. They hear what the servants have to say.

There's a wedding. It's the king. I'll go.

It's not about me. It's not whether I'm bad or good. It's the king, the son, the wedding.

I will go. So when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not

have on a wedding garment. I asked myself this question and I ask you this question.

Have you ever been invited to a thing and you think, well, this is probably kind of a formal do. Maybe it's, I mean, we've lost a lot of this in modern casual society, but used to be, is this formal? Do I need to wear a tux? Is a suit okay? Maybe just a sport jacket or can I get away with just a shirt and tie? Can I wear an open collar shirt and a jacket? I'm talking about guys here, but you know, women, do I need to wear a formal to, can I wear a, a, uh, what do they call it? Party dresses. There's another name for them.

Cocktail, cocktail gown. You know, when you're going to used to be for prom, they would get prom dresses that are of a particular type. And, uh, if you get asked out on a date by somebody, well, where are we going? Are we going to Arby's? Are we going to, you know, a, a fancy restaurant where the cheapest thing on the menu is a couple hundred dollars.

I will dress accordingly. You dress in accordance with the occasion. Why do we do this? Why do we dress up when it's time to dress up? If you're going to be a pallbearer at a funeral, you're going to be wearing a suit as a guy.

You're not going to come in. Well, I mean, they do now, but in normal thinking society, if you're going to be a pallbearer, you're going to wear a suit and you're going to check that your, your suit is not lime green and everybody else is wearing a dark suit. Morning is customarily reflected in dark, somber colors.

And you don't come there in your Elton John suit and be a pallbearer. It's, it's not appropriate. Why, why do we not wear goofy clothes to serious occasions? Can you sum it up in one word? Respect.

It's respect. Respect for the family of the deceased. Respect for the groom and the bride.

Go to church, respect for the word of God, which there is a societal norm here. I'm not saying everybody ought to dress up for church per se, but if you see somebody schlepping in, in gym shorts and a t-shirt that hasn't been, looks like they slept in it and flicks, are you respecting what you hope is the presence of God and the presentation of the word of God and the company of fellow believers who have a heart for God? The way we dress boils down to respect. Sometimes it's just self-respect.

I don't want to go out looking like a witch or a warlock. I don't want to go out looking like a bum that I just crawled out from under a highway bridge. I, it is a matter of respect.

Sometimes it's self-respect. Sometimes mostly it's respect for the occasion. In this case, it's respect for the occasion.

Why would you go to a royal wedding and be a guest in the banquet hall? Most famous royal wedding in recent decades was Princess Diana. And Patty's saying Prince Philip. I

think that was, that was his father.

Yeah. But the, the Diana wedding, do you think the people that were allowed to go inside didn't dress up? Even people like Elton John who go to formal occasions, like when they get knighted and given a CBE or something and, and meet the queen, don't wear crazy clothes. I've seen a picture of Elton John getting knighted and he wasn't wearing his performance costume.

He was dressed appropriately. So what does it say when you don't dress appropriately? If, if dressing for the occasion connotes respect, then not dressing for the occasion is disrespect. Not assigning value to the occasion and the people represented at the occasion.

So the King comes in to see the guests and he sees a man there who does not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. I've told you before that my particular copy of the Bible has errors in it.

Most, most Bibles, they go through them and through and through and through and there are no errors in the text. This Bible in two or three places that I've been teaching out of has missing words. And this is one of them.

My Bible says, he said to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And as speechless. And then AS and then speechless. So something dropped out in the typesetting there.

Then the King said to the servants, this is the cost of disrespecting the King and his son, which the scribes and chief priests and elders spoke out loud in the preceding parable about the wicked vine dressers. What should happen to those wicked vine dressers? They said, he will destroy those wicked men miserably and give the vineyard to others. That came out of their mouths.

So what happens here? Bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Many are called, but few are chosen.

Many were called in the parable. What is the basis of their choosing and choosing here represents acceptance. The King walks around the banquet hall.

There are bad people and there are good people. He doesn't kick any of the bad people out. He doesn't, he's not pictured as taking any of the good people and saying, come up here and sit on the dais with my son and his bride.

And he doesn't make any issue out of their personal badness or goodness. What is the issue when many are called? How are they acceptable in the eyes of the King? There's

two things here, right? First of all, they respond to the invitation. They are affirmative when they hear the message.

Secondly, having heard and responded to the message, they respect the King and they respect his son and they do that which is appropriate. They put on the garment that is appropriate. What is our garment? What are we clothed with in spiritual terms? Righteousness.

We hear and respond. Doesn't matter if we used to be a tax collector, a sinner or a harlot. What does matter is when we come to the banquet and respond, do we put off our filthy robes? Remember in Zechariah, Joshua the high priest standing there, he had the dirty robes.

He said, take those robes off, put on clean robes because for his function to stand there as the high priest, it's not dirty robes time, it's clean robes time. This individual didn't think that was important to be clothed appropriately for the presence of the King, the presence of the Son and for the dignity of this celebratory occasion. He didn't consider it important enough.

He responded, that was A, he did come, but having come, he didn't go anywhere. Remember the first son who said, here I am. He said, I won't go, the first son.

Actually, the reason I'm a little bit confused on this is depending on which gospel you look at, one of them, the order of the sons is reversed. But the second son says, I go, but he did not go. And you have that pictured in this poorly clothed wedding guest.

He says, I go, he responds initially, but when it comes to participation and respectful presence, he's not there. Any number of figures in Jesus' teaching make a similar point, seed in shallow soil and so on. And what happens? It is worse for him than if he had not gone.

Why? If he, if they went into the highways and byways and he still said, well, no, I won't go. But he didn't abuse the servants. He's just not at the feast, right? But he comes to the feast, but then he's outed as someone who doesn't respect the King and his son.

And now he is bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. You'll notice in your new King James, take him away is probably a marginal addition. It's not in the text.

There's just two actions here, bind him hand and foot, cast him into outer darkness. This is somebody who responded and is a friend, friend. How did you get in here without a garment? And then he is cast out.

Scary, scary stuff to look back and say, well, I didn't abuse the servants who brought the message. I have, I have responded to the invitation. I have come.

So I'm, I'm in good shape. And yet there is something missing. It's a two stage process respond and respect the wishes of the King participate in the proceedings in an appropriate way, a respectful way, a humble way.

Maybe you don't like your suit because the collar is scratchy. Maybe you don't like the dress because it's not your style, but you wear it because the occasion is more important than your personal interest. Putting the interests of others ahead of ourselves is a Christlike attitude, but putting the interests of the father and his glory ahead of everything has to be our first concern.

It goes back to this issue of authority. The original question, the one who speaks on his own authority, glorifies himself. The one who speaks the truth of God is respecting and glorifying God.

Doesn't speak of himself. Doesn't promote himself. It's in John chapter seven.

Many are called, but few are chosen. Few pass inspection. It's two steps.

So we look at ourselves and we say, well, I wouldn't be in church today if I had not responded to the opportunity. If I wasn't for the truth, if I didn't want to be in the glorious kingdom of the son and later the kingdom of the father, I wouldn't be wasting my time studying the Bible and pursuing my Christian life if I wasn't a responder to the invitation. So we've passed the first test.

It remains to see if we pass the second test and that is, have we got the wedding garment on? Now you can look at Israel and say, this is Jesus and the bride is the church and she's in and secure. There's no issue made of what the bride is wearing. But remember, as goes old Testament Israel, so goes the individual new Testament believer.

And the picture here by way of interpretation and application does apply to us in real terms. The millennial kingdom is the wedding feast. And only those who were faithful and obedient are going to pass under the rod and be in there and be those who produce the fruits of that vineyard, who operate the wine press and it benefits the owner.

In the same way, these guests are those who are allowed in to the millennial kingdom and enjoy its benefits and its protections and its opportunities for a thousand years when Jesus returns and sets up that kingdom. And we are truly in the figure of the bride. However, if you read this parable and say, oh, that's Israel and blow right on, we've really missed the benefit in the same way that the people listening to Jesus parables said, well, that's not me.

Uh, they realized that he was speaking of them and they sought to destroy him. They sought to do to him what they had done to the other messengers. Don't like the message, shoot the messenger.

Well, we can't let that happen. And one of the ways to shoot the messenger is to dismiss portions of scripture and say, well, that doesn't apply to me when it does. And there are increasing chunks of scripture in our day that are being dismissed as not pertinent, not applicable.

They're too old. It was a different time. It was another culture.

So all kinds of things are okay. I refuse to let these portions of the word of God have any traction and have any application to my lifestyle of perversion or my version of Christianity. I read to you a week or two back about the new, uh, generation of Christians who are progressive.

They are the new white Protestants and they've chosen to dismiss portions of scripture. That's not me. That's not us.

That's not, we, we shouldn't enforce that, that I don't know what that is, but I'm not going to follow that. Well, you could ask the question, who do you think you are to dismiss the authority? By what authority does this word come? As soon as you recognize the authority, you recognize the truth. Without recognizing that authority and without submitting ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we are never going to be exalted in due time.

To the contrary, rejecting that authority, not respecting the source is going to result in being bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness. And this is someone who was not destroyed in their city was burned. This is not unbelievers without right rejection.

This is believers. This is a old Testament saints in the millennial kingdom. And by application, it is those of us who do not seriously question ourselves and allow the truth to penetrate and to apply and to respond to its exhortations.

We may be a tax collector. We may be a harlot or a sinner, but they did not keep on collecting taxes. Matthew wasn't a tax collector when he was writing this gospel.

The harlots and sinners did not persist in those patterns. Once they responded, they put on the wedding garment. They were ready to enter in and enjoy the benefits and blessings and reflect the glory that is a part of that kingdom.

We have got to be honest with ourselves. Heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can understand it? We can't understand our own heart.

I was telling Patty earlier this week, I was talking about one of our newer viewers for class and his father taught me how to fly a small plane. And I had many, many hours learning how to fly. I can take off and I can land because of this gentleman who taught me.

He was a pilot himself. But one of the things I discovered up in the air is I could not trust my feeling about where I was and what was happening with the aircraft. Because of inertia, because of all kinds of things, your senses don't work in an airplane.

You have to use your intelligence. You have to look at the artificial horizon. You have to look at airspeed.

You have to look at RPMs in the engine. If you're on visual, you've got to look and let your brain tell you that you are slipping in altitude. If you're going to make a turn, you can't just kick the rudder over and spin the tail of the plane around.

You've got to bank. You've got to use lift. You've got to use the properties of the wings and the tail and the air to make a proper turn.

And all of your senses that you honed in driving a car don't work in flying a plane. And you have to learn to distrust what your body is telling you in many ways and learn to trust what your eyes and what the instruments are telling you. Otherwise, in the dark, and if your instruments are haywire or you don't refer to them, you'll pancake into a mountainside.

You will be in places you never thought you were. Spiritually speaking, we have got to listen to the authority of the instrument panel, regardless of how we feel or what we think. These are perfect instruments.

And if they tell us we are losing altitude, if they tell us we are out of fuel, if they tell us that there is a mountain fast approaching, we have to take action. We can't just say, well, I don't see a mountain. I don't feel like I'm falling.

Well, the engines sound fine to me. It's destruction. It's ultimate loss.

That's what happens here. These religious leaders, with all of their vast knowledge of Scripture, with the witness of John the Baptist, with the response of the people, with the confrontation of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, did not have a change of heart. And that is scary.

We're built out of the same stuff. It can happen to us. We have to respond and we have to respect.

That's the heart of this third parable that Jesus tells. Well, we'll pick this up and see what happens as a result beginning in verse 15 next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the power of your word, the presence of your word, the access that we have to your word, and the presence and power of your Holy Spirit to make it real to us, to overcome our human limitations and enable us to see its pertinence and its application.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that it will result in our being fully qualified to serve, to function, to endure, to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, both now and in the ages to come. We pray it in his name. Amen.