

Matthew 22-07-31a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 31st day of July 2022.

We're in the Gospel of Matthew at the threshold of verse 1 of chapter 25. Matthew chapter 25 beginning at verse 1. We will be reviewing a very brief portion of chapter 24 mainly as introduction to this chapter and moving forward. Let's ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, and we'll begin.

Father, how grateful we are for another opportunity to spend this time together dining at the table of manna from your word. We're grateful for your watch care over us, your provision, the setting in our path of challenges and opportunities for growth and service. We pray that as we look at your word together that the Holy Spirit will give us clarity and understanding and insight not only to grasp what the Lord Jesus is saying but to see its pertinence and how it applies in our own lives.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's begin by reading the last few verses of chapter 24.

Beginning at verse 45 and going through verse 51. Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his master made ruler over his household to give them food in due season? We saw this last time. Blessed is that servant whom the master finds so doing.

Because this servant has been set before the other servants, has been made ruler over them, his job is to feed them, to provide for them. So this is specifically aimed at those who have been given a leadership or teaching function. We understand this, the food here that is going to be provided in due season in verse 45.

Metaphorically speaking, this is the word of God. Jesus didn't establish a grocery store chain or some other big box store. You might think that that's a facetious remark, but Jesus did not establish an organization for social action with his disciples, nor did he commission the apostles to so do.

This has been forgotten. It has been ignored in the modern day to our detriment. This is spiritual.

It is not physical. This is a metaphor. It is not literal in that sense.

So his master made ruler over his household. This is a servant. These are your apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, those with a communication gift.

We know the food represents the word. Keep your finger here and turn back to Matthew chapter four, verse four. As soon as I say Matthew four, you are probably familiar enough with the geography of Matthew to know that this is the temptation in the wilderness

passage.

The sermon on the hill, go to chapter five, chapter six, chapter seven. But in chapter four, Jesus is led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. When he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.

The tempter came to him and said, if you are the son of God, command that these stones become bread. He answered and said, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Once again, there is an emphasis here.

If you are going to literalize love, love for neighbor, love for enemies, love for the brethren, and decide that you can implement love, and this is going to be the way to please God directly, it is going to fail every time. This is the old social gospel. This is another gospel, as Paul puts it.

This is not the path to growth. It is not the path to maturity. It is not the path to genuine fruitfulness.

When we have grown, when we are mature, when we have availed ourselves of the power of God that comes into the life of the believer by the spirit of God and the word of God, we will produce fruit that often includes the caring for the physical needs of others. Keep two fingers in, one in Matthew 4, one in Matthew 24, and turn to James chapter 2. Or you can just wait in Matthew and I will read you what is in James chapter 2. But James makes this abundantly clear. My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with partiality.

You choose to think about it and apply it in some cases and not in others when it comes to individuals. If there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, fine apparel, there should also come a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, you sit here in a good place, and say to the poor man, you stand there or sit here at my footstool. Have you not shown partiality among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? You have decided the worth of someone based on externalities.

You have decided that this one is blessed and this one is under some sort of judgment from God, let's say. Listen, my beloved brethren, has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? It is not by meeting social needs, it is not by gratifying personal desires on our part in behalf of others that we prepare for God's kingdom, that we bless others. This is not the way to focus on that which is material, the meeting of material needs directly, or to ignore those who have material needs.

Neither one of those is correct. It is either turning to the right hand or to the left. It is not

the straight path in the center.

You can neither favor people, and this was so common when I was growing up in denominational church where if a well-known individual, if an athlete or a celebrity got saved, immediately they got invited to the chair on the platform to speak and to testify and, well, this will be a great draw for the church and they can give their testimony and they can witness and this will get people saved. And not looking to the gifting of God and the provision of God, which is the way communication is accomplished. The servants don't get together and say, you know, this one servant among us is more handsome and more talented and more well-known.

Let's have this servant be ruler over us to provide the food and to do the functions that a servant should do. Let's vote and pick them based on how they look and how they sound and how they act. The master of the household chooses who is going to provide the food.

And this food includes the gospel of salvation. It's primarily looking at the sustenance for those who are already servants. He has been appointed over the servants to provide for the servants.

And in our parable, at the end of Matthew 24, this is spiritual food and it requires faithfulness. But the bread is spiritual. This is what sustains us.

This is what fuels us and our faithfulness to consume it and to operate in its power is going to be the measure, not specifically what we do. Any unbeliever can feed the poor. Any unbeliever can pursue social justice, can create an organization or a foundation and try to meet a particular need.

There are any number of these organizations to address a particular disease or syndrome or shortfall or inadequacy. And there is nothing intrinsically evil about doing that. But because an unbeliever can do it, this is not the measure of fruitfulness in the Christian life.

Our fruitfulness is not measured by the effect or impact we have on society. It is measured by the standards of the master who gives us our assignments. If he gives us the assignment of creating an organization, great.

But unless we are doing that service in the spirit and power from God, instead of altruism or the measure of righteousness that the world assigns, it is a waste of time. These things will come and go. If God is not in it and God's glory does not emanate from it and reflect off of it, it is a waste of time.

Human good does not partake of eternity. However good it may seem, however noble, these things are always shot through with the failings of humanity when God's power is not in them. There is corruption.

There is skimming of the money. There is misdirection. There is misunderstanding, misapplication, trying to address a problem and actually making it worse because you really don't know what you're doing.

God is not in it. There is not the insight and the understanding of the roots of the problem. You're addressing surface issues.

You're enabling and facilitating this in its egregious form. You can see where they're handing out sterile syringes and needles to drug addicts so that they won't get infected. They're helping them with their addiction and their do-goodism as well.

Don't share needles because you'll spread infectious diseases. So if you're going to shoot up, let us help you do it cleanly. This is typical of the syndrome.

Look at what James says. Verse 5, Listen, my beloved brethren, has God not chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love him? God has not chosen the poor to become better off by the action of fellow believers. God has not chosen them to be objects of ministry and service.

That's not what they are chosen for. They may end up being beneficiaries of ministry and service, but that's not why God chose them to be poor. The poor are chosen to be poor by God according to James.

Look at the verse. So, has God not chosen the poor of this world? If I was a Calvinist, I would spend a lot of time on this verse. Not just chosen to salvation, but chosen to poverty.

Your poverty is foreordained by God. Interesting idea. But he has chosen them to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

Poverty now is an opportunity for wealth in the kingdom to come. This also helps us distinguish what and when the kingdom is and what and when the kingdom is not. A lot of your kingdom now, if we build it, he will come.

We're citizens of the kingdom. We're kingdom people. We're the kingdom is all about right now.

Sorry, no. Because you have the poor now that God has chosen to be rich in the kingdom later. If this was the kingdom now, the poor would be rich.

And this is the mistake they make because they try to make the poor rich. And this is not something that comes from us. It comes from God.

So, verse six. You have dishonored the poor man because you don't recognize his spiritual value. We should look at each other in spiritual terms.

When you see someone who is poor, you don't become an SJW and say, well, I've got to end and fix and ameliorate this poverty. Our first thought when we see someone who is not well off in our midst is what an opportunity God has given this person. If we ourselves are not well off, if we are limited in our resources, the first thought we should have of ourselves is God has chosen me and others to this not well off status in order that we can become rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

Do you want to be better off now or do you want to inherit in the kingdom? It's an easy question to answer when we think about it, right? Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts. There is a lot of injustice perpetrated by those who are well off. And again, the Lord Jesus and his apostles, disciples, and the authors of New Testament scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not say you need to address social inequality.

You need to address inequity. You need to fix. You need to crawl down from your supposed pedestal of privilege or well offness and abnegate yourself and give away.

Funny, the people who preach this, you don't see them giving away to the point that it hurts. If they've got a huge large S in excess, they'll donate to causes. But you don't see them moving out of their mansion in Malibu or sacrificing their beachfront property.

They'll give as long as it doesn't hurt. But it's neither here nor there. The issue is spiritual according to the Lord Jesus, according to James here.

Look at what the rich actually do. They leverage their wealth to oppress others. And how much do we need to say about what the elites are currently doing in this country and to this country because of their leverage, because of their power, because of their funding? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? It is even worse when these social do-goodism, self-glorifying, self-gratifying actions are taken in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity so-called.

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, to love your neighbor as yourself, you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point is guilty of all.

So, in verse 12, speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of freedom. Judged by the law of freedom. This is an intangible, isn't it? It's not a codification.

It's not the detailed description of tassels and threads and how to wear your hair and what food to eat and not eat. This is a law of liberty. It requires discernment.

It requires discretion. It requires personal good judgment that you can't write down on paper. Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.

It is going to be measured back to us as we measure out. If there is discrimination and inequity on our part, there is going to be discrimination and inequity expressed back to us at God's judgment and the consequences for us are eternal. So, verse 14, what does it profit my brethren if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, this is to our Lord's point in Matthew 24, there are servants who need food, who need provision.

Food is put for all of their material needs in the parable and the parable speaks to spiritual needs. Many times we can aid spiritually by putting a shoulder under the load in the material world, but we don't start with the material and hope it's going to work its way into the spirit. We concentrate on the spiritual and the material outworking happens by God's grace and in God's power and with God's good judgment knowing when to provide and when not.

When are you helping and when are you enabling evil? We don't have the wisdom often to know the difference. So, a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food. Remember in the when I was hungry, you did or did not feed me.

One of you says to them, depart in peace, be warmed and filled. You've heard me quote this hundreds of times, go be warmed, be fed. You have a brother, notice a brother or sister is in material need and you wish them well.

You give them an aphorism or a verse. You tell them that you're you're working on it. We're going to have a meeting and think about starting an organization to help this kind of need.

You know, there's a support group for that. Let me give you the website and so on. Go find a way to be warmed, find a way to be filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body.

What profit? What profit? It's just the two words. What profit? Thus also faith by itself if it does not have works is dead. Notice James is not encouraging a direct path to the meeting of each other's material needs.

He is using it as an illustration. If someone is in need and someone expresses sympathy and encouragement but doesn't actually do anything, this is similar to faith that doesn't express itself in doing anything. One is material, one is spiritual.

One is an illustration of the other. Jesus' parables are not an encouragement to do the actions of the parable. It is to catch the point of the parable and be edified by that.

And the point of this comparison is not to run around and try to meet the needs of the needy. That will happen if we get the point of the illustration, which is that faith will work itself out and be demonstrated in genuine love. Genuine love is much more than simply handing someone a sandwich or a sweater.

You can't hand someone food or clothing and claim to be spiritual. We have to get to the point of the illustration first. Faith will work itself out in love.

Love with wisdom, with discernment, with divine enablement, divine insight, divine gifting will work out in the material world. This was the mistake Israel made, assuming that if I just ape the actions that are described in the law, that will make me spiritual, instead of operating out of love. Jesus said you'll fulfill all of the material requirements of the law if you focus on loving God and loving your neighbor.

The starting point is love. The starting point is not meeting needs. If we focus on love, meeting needs will be a result.

And it will glorify God because it is coming from a transformed heart, something only God can create, only God can produce. And these actions will be in the power of God. And unlike secular charities, unlike money sent off into the void, hoping that somebody's going to be benefited, God's glory is intrinsic to the result.

So back to Matthew chapter 24, making someone ruler over the other servants to give them their food. And this is primarily spiritual sustenance. Spiritual sustenance, this is what is implied in the picture.

What is the other thing here in verse 45? Give them food in due season. In due season. What a pregnant phrase.

Sometimes the season is daily. Remember in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6, verse 11, give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day our daily food.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Sufficient unto the day is the provision thereof. Take no thought.

Your Father in heaven knows what you have need of. Look at the lilies of the field who do not toil or spin. The Father provides.

Once again, we're going to see in these parables that there is the need to plan ahead. Jesus is not saying just live in the moment and take no thought in any sense. He is saying take no thought for the spiritual sustenance that you are going to need.

Concentrate on what you need to apply and think of today. Concentrate on today when it comes to faith, hope, and love. Obviously, we have to plan ahead.

Obviously, we have a long view so that we don't overcommit ourselves and wind up in debt, owe no man anything. You can't fulfill that command without planning ahead, without making an assessment. Jesus tells another parable about the man who is planning to build houses and barns and doesn't realize that this night his soul will be required of him.

It all drives back to the spiritual. This ruler-servant has been charged with giving these servants their sustenance in due season. There is a time for everything and a season for everything under heaven.

You remember in Ecclesiastes, there's a time for every purpose and a season. In due season, turn back to Psalm 104. This is a beautiful psalm.

It's somewhat lengthy. We're going to start in verse 19. Psalm 104, 19.

God has appointed the moon for seasons. The sun knows its going down. There's a time for the sun to shine.

There's a time for the sun to not shine. The moon knows its seasons. Addressing God, you make darkness, and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest creep about.

The young lions roar after their prey and seek their food from God. You see the conjunction here of food and the season. You're not eating all the time.

The animals do not eat all the time. Even cows, even grazing animals, have a time of rest. They graze at one season.

They rest. They drink. They cool off.

They shelter at other times. When the sun rises, in verse 22, they gather together and lie down in their dens. Notice there's a time to eat.

There's a time to rest. And knowing the season is critical. Jesus charges the Pharisees with understanding physical seasons, but not knowing the signs of the times, not understanding spiritual seasons.

Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening. And at evening, it's no longer the season, no longer the time for labor. Oh Lord, how manifold are your works.

In wisdom, you have made them all. The earth is full of your possessions, the great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things, both small and great. The ships sail about.

Leviathan, you've made to play there. Verse 27, these all wait for you, that you may give them their food in due season. God is the example of providing food in due season.

What you give them, they gather in. You open your hand, they are filled with good. They are filled.

Remember James, go be warmed, be filled, when you're not actually a part of that process. You hide your face, they are troubled. You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

You send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. There is a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a season.

There's a time to be born. There's a time to die. There's a time to scatter.

There's a time to gather. There's a time to sow. There's a time to reap.

You remember the passage from Solomon. May the glory, verse 31, may the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in his works.

When things happen according to their season and in their time, this is God's glory reflected. I was talking to my sister about Yanni. He's got a song called In My Time.

I don't know if it has any lyrics, but there is a time. And to observe the times, to understand the times is critically important for us to be spiritually productive. Look at verse 33.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. This is a season for appreciating and celebrating God.

May my meditation be sweet to him. I will be glad in the Lord. May sinners be consumed from the earth and the wicked be no more.

Right now, God has a season where the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. But we look forward to the season when they will be removed. And this is a valid prayer to pray.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord. So the exhortation to provide food in due season is a reflection of God's own character and God's own example, God's own purpose in so doing in nature.

And recognizing that there is a season for food, there is a season to digest, and there is a season to be operating in the energy that food provides. Seasons. Observing the seasons.

This is the part of wisdom. So back in Matthew chapter 24, notice how verse 45 begins. Who then is a faithful and wise servant? Two completely different but complementary characteristics.

Faithful and wise. You can be wise without being faithful. You can be faithful without being particularly wise.

This servant is both faithful and wise. The reason I'm dwelling on this again this morning is this is what sets up the next two parables in Matthew chapter 25. Because the wise and foolish virgins, look at verse 2 of chapter 25.

Five of them were what? Wise. The very same word used in verse 45. Who is a wise servant? This is a great question.

You want a little air freshener aphorism to hang on the car mirror? Do you want to put a little sticker on the dressing mirror or the bathroom mirror or a little something on the refrigerator as a reminder? This is a great question to ask. Who then is a faithful and wise servant? Can I write my name in the blank for the answer? Is Sam a faithful and a wise servant? He starts out giving the example of those who have been given oversight to provide food for the other servants. But he's going to continue to illustrate the wisdom portion of it with the virgins.

The faithfulness is going to be the parable of the talents. We're familiar with these parables. We have studied them in detail.

And I would encourage you because I am not going to re-present the details of these parables because we did a very in-depth study nine years ago. For the details of these parables, I would refer you to July of 2013. If you go to the website, go to the archives, go to the parables study that is listed under topical studies.

We did the parables, the 12 parables that are unique to the Gospel of Matthew back in 2013. And in July, start in July, you will find the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. I think it's like July the 7th or thereabouts.

And there are four sessions on this parable. It is as good as I can do. I can't really improve on it.

Um, so for the details and, uh, pertinence and application, uh, I would refer you to those studies followed by the parable, um, of the talents, which we'll cover in a bit more detail because it's not in that study. Uh, and it's been longer since we covered it, but in overview, we want to understand because Jesus shifts gears from being watchful and encouraging watchfulness in the, in the middle and latter portion of chapter 24. Watchfulness is that characteristic.

He says several times, watch therefore. So verse 42, watch therefore, you do not know what day your Lord is coming verse 44. You also be ready.

The son of man is coming at an hour. You did not expect. So look ahead.

It's not enough to concentrate on the daily bread and the daily task, be ready for the future return, because you don't know when it will take place. So watchfulness and readiness were two things that we saw earlier on. Now it is faithfulness and wisdom that Jesus turns his attention to who is that faithful and wise servant who his master gives an assignment.

And when he comes finds so doing, you know, your assignment, you are watchful and

ready for the return. How are you ready by being wise and faithful? This sets up our two parables now in chapter 25, which focus first on wisdom. It's kind of a, almost a chiasm.

He says, who is, who is a faithful and wise. He's going to illustrate wise. Then he's going to illustrate faithful with these next two parables, doing that, which is asked of us that, which is our specific assignment in due season.

It requires wisdom and faithfulness to recognize the season and do what is appropriate for that season. So this gives us a wonderful opportunity to examine ourselves and examine our lives and decide what season am I in? What is the appropriate discharge of that which God has assigned me in this season? People want to change the season. They want to pretend it's a different season.

They want to change the assignment and pretend that it's a different assignment. What is my assignment? What is the season? How can I be wise and faithful today and tomorrow so that when he comes, he finds me so doing? Blessed is the servant. And blessed, talk about an understatement, the privileges and opportunities and just wonderful promise fulfillments that come to those whom he finds so doing are, we've seen them in other studies and other passages just beyond imagination.

It's not that hard to be found so doing. We just have to remember how. Be wise.

That's Bible class. Be faithful. That's application of what we learn in Bible class.

Be watchful. Be aware of the season and be ready to do what is called on, called for in our season, in our circumstance, with our assignment and be found so doing when he comes. It's pretty straightforward.

He's going to illustrate it now and when we come back from the break, we'll start chapter 25 and get an overview of these next two parables and get the qualities and the characteristics of wisdom and faithfulness. Let's pause here and take our break.