

Matthew 23-04-30a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 30th of April, another month expired in the year 2023. And we are continuing our study this morning in Matthew chapter 27.

We are looking at the details of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus as it is detailed by Matthew with the parallels in the other three gospels. The central event of history, the focus and foundation of our faith. There is nothing more pertinent and more important for us to understand than this moment in the plan and purpose of God.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study and we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful for another time of fellowship and of encouragement, of appreciating the assembling of ourselves together in this manner to pray for one another, to support and encourage not only our path through life and the circumstances that we face and the challenges that cause us to express our faith, but also to remember that which unites us, which is the spirit of unity and the bond of peace that we have through the Holy Spirit in the Lord Jesus. We thank you for Him.

We thank you for His example of faithfulness and dedication to your plan in His humanity and the steps in which we can follow to similarly dedicate ourselves to remembering who we are and why we're here as your children, as representatives of the Lord Jesus and as those who are destined to move forward into the kingdoms which are to come. We pray that our study this morning and our fellowship will help prepare us for service and function both now and in those kingdoms to come. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We looked last time at the concept of dedication, at the Nazirite vow and the example of Nazirites. Everything in the Bible pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ in some way.

And I was interested to determine whether or not the Lord Jesus was Himself a Nazirite and it occurred to me that there is a passage in Luke that illuminates whether Jesus was at least a lifelong Nazirite. And that is found in the discussion of John the Baptist, who was very much a Nazirite from birth. You remember the instructions from Gabriel that he would be given neither wine or strong drink.

And his diet, as we know, was locusts and wild honey. And Jesus addresses this in Luke chapter 7. And if you'd like to turn there quickly, something Jesus says here is helpful in our investigation. In verse 30 of Luke 7, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

Jesus has said a couple of verses earlier, among those born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist, but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And when all of the people heard him, even the tax collectors justified

God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves.

Notice that the will of God for them would have been to recognize the significance of John's ministry and to undergo his water baptism. As preparation for the coming kingdom of God and its incipient king. But they rejected it.

They rejected the will of God. How many times have we seen in scripture the exercise of free will contrary to and against the wishes of God, against the will of God. These are people who rejected the will of God.

It was not the will of God that they fail to accept the proclamation of John and that they then accept the son of God himself as he comes to be the Messiah of Israel. The expression here is very clear. They rejected the will of God for themselves.

This is what unbelievers do. I was reviewing Romans chapter one within the last few days and thinking themselves to be wise, they became fools. And it is overestimating our wisdom that creates this kind of decision.

And we are not impervious having been saved, having grown in grace and knowledge of the Savior. We can still be tripped up because as Jeremiah says in chapter 17 verse 9, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Our heart is deceitful.

How many times? Be not deceived. Let no man deceive you. Jesus said it in chapter 24 a couple of times.

Be not deceived. Let no one deceive you. Be not deceived.

God is not mocked. What a man sows, he is going to reap. If you sow to your flesh, you will of the flesh reap corruption.

Don't be deceived. The Pharisees and lawyers. Why specifically are these mentioned? You've got Sadducees, you've got Sanhedrin members, you've got high priests, you've got scribes, all kinds of people floating around.

You've got Essenes, you've got various groups and extremists floating around, zealots and such. Why are these two called out? What is the application for you and for me? The will of God can be apparent. It can be clear.

It can be known. And yet we can, in our wisdom, these are experts in the law and Pharisees who pride themselves on their fidelity. The word Pharisee comes from a Hebrew verb that means those who are faithfully committed.

Pharos in Hebrew, that's what it means. We're, we are the ones who are fully in. We're 110% gung-ho and yet it is these.

They are them who reject the will of God for themselves. And it's the exercise of choice. This is why we're still on the earth after our salvation.

What is the exercise of our choice? We have options. The will of God is expressed in His word. That's why we're here this morning, seeking to understand it better and particularly as it pertains to our individual journey through life.

The decisions, the attitudes, the conversations, the interactions that we have with each other are all subject to the will of God. It is scary to me. It is sobering.

I can't quit thinking about it that somebody who spent their life studying the scriptures and becoming expert in it, textual experts, the lawyers, religious experts steeped in their Bible, the law of Moses. Nobody knew more about the Bible than the Pharisees and they rejected the will of God. Why? It is a challenge when something new arrives.

You can't judge the validity of something by whether or not it is new. John's message was new. There had been no prophet in Israel for centuries, something on the order of 300 to 400 years.

What was the date 400 years ago? 1623. Haven't heard anything from God in four centuries. Suddenly John comes on the scene and he is a figure.

He's dressed in camel hair. He's eating bugs and wild honey, which is healthy food. Jesus is going to address that here.

The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him, not seeing that the plan of God had revealed itself in a new chapter. We, because your pastor is so persuaded, are dispensationalists. And most of you come from a background where others before me have laid out the understanding of the word of God, that it becomes so clear when we recognize in these latter days, how God's plan has unfolded across the ages.

And there is the age of Israel, the dispensation of Israel, which here is about to come to a close. The Pharisees couldn't see it. As Peter says, well, all things go on as they have from the beginning.

Any innovation, any change, that's got to be bad because it is a change, because it is different, because it is new. Well, if something is new, we have to test it against the revelation of God in scripture, prayerfully appealing to the ministry of God's spirit to determine whether God is moving forward in his plan. Dispensationalism has been roundly criticized, judged, dismissed, vilified, rejected, en masse by what is now most of quote unquote mainstream Christianity.

Dispensationalism came to the fore as an understanding, as a helpful way of interpreting scripture, maybe 150, 200 years ago in this country, in the 1800s with John Nelson

Darby, later with C.I. Schofield, with Lewis Barry Jaffer at Dallas Seminary, with Charles Ryrie, and other great exponents, Dr. Walvard, many other, Dr. Pentecost, many great scholars and expositors of scripture came to this understanding. But it has been rejected because it is new, supposedly. You can do some research and find that there are articles where the understanding of God working differently in different dispensations goes back to the early church.

It has been an understanding, but it has been a minority understanding, in the same way that the Lord Jesus himself was believed by only a minority in his own generation. So, don't lightly gloss over verse 30 here. Just because something is an innovation, or seems new, seems different, doesn't travel the old rutted road, it doesn't mean that it's bad, it doesn't mean that it's good.

How do we figure out? There are all kinds of cross-currents of theology blowing today. We've talked about progressive dispensationalism, we've talked about progressive Christianity, we've talked about deconstructing and reconstructing, and people who are zoned in on the Sermon on the Mount as the be-all and the end-all of Christian life and ethics. We have seen people who have thrown out the Old Testament, we've seen others who still believe that we're under the law and should worship on Saturdays and not eat pork.

How do you know? How do you know? And when you turn the corner into personal application, and it is time for us to learn something new, to embrace or at least examine a fresh approach in Scripture, how do we know if we're on the right track? You can find somebody who can convince people of almost anything. Snake oil sales are booming in every different area of life. How many weight loss programs have there been? How many diets have come in? It's Pritikin, it's Keto, it's Gundry, it's Perlmutter, it's this guy, it's that guy.

How do you know, in the realm of biblical understanding, what is true so that we do not make this mistake? Ask and it shall be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened. I can't enter into the hearts and minds and souls of people who have come to different conclusions and are going down different paths in their Christian faith, in what they believe and in how they apply it to their own lives, the way they vote, the way they view, the world and politics and issues. I can't say that person is a bad Christian because they vote this way or support this issue or reject this issue or make these comments.

That is not for me to judge. It is incumbent upon a servant that he look to his master and be found faithful. Who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

I cannot comment on the spiritual health of somebody who embraces some particular flavor of denominational creed or theological understanding. It's not for me to say. And I

don't think God is, as I've said many times, going to administer a 100 question theology test at the judgment.

If we believe a certain way, if we believe that the gifts that were present at Pentecost are still available today and you're going to speak in tongues and interpret tongues and get the ghost and do various things, the question of the judgment is not going to be, how did you possibly come to that conclusion? Didn't you listen to the arguments of the cessationists who say that when that which is complete is come, that which is in part will be done away? What is the question going to be? If that was your faith, how well did you practice it? How diligent and dedicated were you? How faithful were you to your understanding? If you want to be a covenant theologian, if you want to believe in reformed theology, okay, you may or may not be correct on any given passage of Scripture and what it means, but how did you live it out? Did you end up bearing the fruit of the Spirit? Did you glorify the Lord Jesus in your body, in your life? Were you asking and seeking and knocking? Did you cultivate the active and powerful ministry of God's Holy Spirit in conjunction with His Word so that that dynamic power of God would be active? Did it work itself out in blessing to others? Did you have self-control? Were you able to bridle your tongue? Did you spend your time vilifying and putting down other believers because they don't agree with your understanding? Or did you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called? These Pharisees who rejected the baptism of John, you could say, well, they missed that, that was a wrong theological understanding. What is the problem? Do you remember the woes that Jesus pronounces on the Pharisees? Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites. And then He details the hypocrisy.

This is one expression of many of their failure to get the form of the law and not its spirit. To leave it written on tables of stone and not on the fleshy tables of the heart. To have a zeal for God with all kinds of knowledge and yet not having knowledge.

This is Paul's accusation. They have a zeal for God. My brethren, the Pharisees, a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

And a Pharisee would say, I know 10 times as much as any of y'all. That's not the kind of knowledge God is looking for. And it is not the kind of knowledge that you and I should be cultivating.

Examine yourself. If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. Judge ourselves.

Ask, seek, knock. It takes humility to receive correction, rebuke and instruction in righteousness. We have to be willing to consider that we might be wrong.

That is verse 30. That's not the verse I'm aiming for, but it is context for what Jesus is about to say. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

And the Lord said to what then shall I liken the men of this generation? What are they like? How can I get you to understand what this mindset is and does? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another. This is a clique. This is an in club.

There are the ins and the outs. There are the accepted ones and those who are excluded and derided and attacked. Anytime we start to feel like we are in a clique or a club that is a mutual admiration society.

And well, we're the ones who know. We're the ones who are right. We're the ones we accept each other in the same way that we do not have the authority pilot tried to arrogate to himself by washing his hands and forgiving himself.

This message in the modern day, you've got to forgive yourself. You've got to love yourself. Self-love is dangerous.

Self-love is only useful as that which guides us in loving our neighbor, which is basically the golden rule. Do to others as you would have others do unto you. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Would I want to be harassed? Would I want to be sued? Would I want to be disparaged? Would I want to be talked about behind my back? Would I want to be criticized? Would I want to be held up for ridicule? I wouldn't. Well, then don't perpetrate those actions against someone in your periphery who is your neighbor. So self-love is dangerous.

Love that is sacrificial to self and beneficial to others is our goal. They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another. This is always the salve for the call of conscience that says, this is really kind of ugly behavior.

But when other people are doing it, you say, well, I'm in company here. We're all doing it, so it must be okay. Calling to one another saying, we played the flute for you and you did not dance.

We mourned to you and you did not weep. You're not responding like we want you to. When we think it's time to dance, we expect you to dance.

When we think it's time for you to mourn, you should mourn. And we want you to mourn over what we mourn over. And we want you to dance about what we dance about.

Do you see this in our society today where cancel culture says, you'd better be on board and approve what we approve and celebrate what we celebrate. You'd better have your multicolored flag out on Gay Pride Day. You'd better be extremely unhappy by anybody who brings up the old traditional values.

Somebody who calls out the wrongness of men competing in women's sports and such

as an example, as one of an infinitude of examples of things for which you can get called out by others because you're not dancing to the tune. You're not mourning to the woe song. You're not with the crowd.

And then he gives an explicit example. Verse 33, for John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine. Neither eating bread nor drinking wine.

This is a special kind of exceptionalism. We've seen that John is very evidently a Nazirite from birth. And so he has never touched any fruit of the grape from the skin to the seed.

New wine or wine that has sat in the skins across the winter and is fermented. He's never touched any such thing, but it says he doesn't eat bread either. Some of us lay off of bread for purely practical reasons.

I don't want to have to buy new clothes. And it seems to convert into misshapeness that I was counting my jeans. It's shameful.

I've got like 14 pairs of jeans and they are all exactly the same waist size. And I think if I let my weight get out of control, if I let my shape get out of control, I got nothing. I got nothing I can wear.

They're all exactly the same size. So there are reasons to abstain for health or for your body sends off a dashboard light if you eat certain things and you say, wow, that made me feel bad. Too much salt, too much sugar, too much of whatever it might be.

John didn't eat bread. Why? It's not the Nazirite vow. It's not what the angel told his parents.

Why did he not eat bread? There were specific vows that one could take that exceed the minimum guidance in Numbers chapter six that we saw last time. We can dedicate an area of our life to God then and now. And this is personal.

Personal. It's not required. It is not mandated.

It is something that we choose to do as a part of our honoring our father in heaven, representing our Lord Jesus Christ. And it can be specific to our circumstance. John the Baptist is an example.

Nothing in the Old Testament says eat locusts and wild honey. He was instructed. His parents were instructed on his behalf that he would not partake of the fruit of the vine.

It doesn't say anything about whether or not he cut his hair. The Nazirite vow was not generally lifelong. Samson is the exception.

And he's such an interesting case when you look at him in Judges. And once his hair was cut, which violated his Nazirite status, his divine gift of strength departed. And it did not

return until his hair regrew.

As you know, you know well. John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine. And you say he has a demon.

He doesn't do what we do. He's got his own weird form of dedication to God. There is something wrong with him, something satanic, something anti-God, something intrinsically evil.

Can you imagine John the Baptist? Jesus says, there's no one greater than John, man born of woman, none greater than John. And the judgment of the experts, the religious leadership, those who are in the know and the in-crowd say he is entirely indwelt by evil. Because we don't understand his behavior.

And they could go to Scripture, they could go to Numbers chapter 6 and say, what weird kind of a Nazirite is this? And vilify him and tear him apart and criticize him and dismiss him and tell other people, don't be going out there to that. John, he's a crazy man. He's demon possessed.

Satan's got a hold of him. It is tragic that someone so dedicated to God was treated as the opposite and labeled the opposite and vilified as the opposite by those who were supposed to be God's representatives and leaders for the people of Israel. Notice verse 34 here, this gets to our subject.

The son of man has come eating and drinking. And you say, look, a glutton and a wine bibber. Bibbing in old English and Shakespearean English was simply drinking.

A glutton and a wine drinker. It would be difficult to make this stick if Jesus was noted for not drinking wine. And I think this is the strongest case.

It's funny, I read, oh, six or eight different commentaries and articles about was Jesus a Nazirite from birth? And over and over again, they said he couldn't have been a Nazirite because look at the upper room. Look at the wedding feast of Cana. Every single article without exception went to John 2, wedding feast of Cana and the upper room where Jesus instructs his disciples to partake of the cup.

This is the new covenant in my blood. I will not drink it with you again until we drink it new in the kingdom. But this is far more powerful testimony that Jesus evidently partook of wine.

So the son of man has come eating and drinking. You say, look, a glutton and a wine drinker, a wine bibber, a wine drunkard. The implication is that he does these things to excess.

And they were critical of him. Why? Everybody eats meals. Why would they call Jesus a

glutton? It isn't what he ate or how much he ate.

And it isn't what he drank or how much he drank. It is with whom. He eats with tax collectors and sinners.

Tax collectors and sinners, tax collectors are rich. They set a fine table. This is the rich man who fares sumptuously while Lazarus is out at the gate.

And so because Jesus was invited to eat with the rich and with those who the Pharisees, they themselves, of course, being wealthy, but well, I've dedicated all of my goods to God and they will go to God when I die. I'm not even going to give them to my parents to support them. I'm going to leave it all to God, but I'm enjoying it in the meantime myself.

And this is the hypocrisy that Jesus calls out in the seven great woes. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking. You say, look, a glutton and a wine bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

This is the real problem. The other is implied. If you're a friend of tax collectors and sinners, well, because they don't do obeisance to the pharisaical leadership, because they don't give enough to the temple, they're sinners, because they are tax collectors and they're doing a job that the Romans are requiring them to do.

There's something wrong with them. Why did Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners? Remember verse 30, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves. Very few Pharisees invited Jesus to dinner, but tax collectors and quote unquote sinners invited him.

Why? They did not reject the will of God for themselves. What did Jesus have to say when these accusations were brought up on other occasions? It is not the well who need a physician, but those who are sick and those who recognize that they need a change, that God has sent deliverance. God has sent salvation.

Jesus has something important that he is bearing witness to, why he came into the world, the reason he was born, to bear witness to the truth. And these people are interested in hearing the truth. It isn't where they are, it isn't what they are currently up to, but what they do once they hear the truth.

The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God. Many, and you think of Zacchaeus, you think of Joseph of Arimathea, you think of Nicodemus, who come to Jesus and who accept the truth, even though it is an innovation, even though it is something that doesn't have the hoary gray head of tradition to support it. If it's true, it's true.

God told Daniel through Gabriel that much of Old Testament truth would be sealed up until the time of the end, seal up the book until the time of the end. These times that are determined upon your people, this won't make too much sense until the time of the end.

We are now in the time of the end, and things that have heretofore not been necessary to understand.

They spent 400 years arguing over what kind of hypostatic union Jesus represents, how human, how divine. They spent 150 years arguing over what is the source of the Holy Spirit? Did the Father send him or did the Son send him? What is the doctrine of procession? Was he *posi non peccari* and *non posi peccari*? Was he able not to sin and not able to sin? The first thousand years of the church, they had to argue over the very basic truths. There was no time to talk about, well, what's the difference in this dispensation and that, and did the diet change, and what was the role of the Holy Spirit, and where was the Word of God, and was it given in prophetic utterance, or was it written down, and was it represented in ritual, or did it come through men speaking as they're carried along by the Holy Spirit? At what point did that which is complete come and that which is in part get done away? If you don't even know who the Lord Jesus is, you can't move on to more advanced questions.

Those questions haven't largely been settled. Over time, we were able to refine and get greater granularity in our understanding, just because people want to say your dispensational understanding is recent and therefore heretical. That's not the test.

John the Baptist was recent. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, you have heard it said, but I say. Well, you're not allowed to say we've got stony tradition going back hundreds of years.

You can't say something different than what we say. We represent tradition, and you can hear the fiddler on the roof singing about tradition, and its iron grip, and the safety that people feel in the numbers. You're like children in the marketplace calling to one another.

We know when it's time to dance. We know when it's time to mourn. You don't.

You're out. We're in. It's a danger.

Ask, seek, knock. We have been given the Holy Spirit for a reason. We have access as never before.

In the last 30 years, we have been given access to the Word of God, and well within our lifetimes, we have been given access to the Word of God that is unbelievably greater than anything ever in the past. You don't have to buy a book. You don't have to research the shelves.

You pull out your phone. You tap it about half a dozen times. You're reading the Word of God.

You're reading commentary. You're getting viewpoint. You're getting interpretation.

You're getting application. You're getting 87 different translations, 125 different English translations I think are popular now. Why? The time is at hand, and just prior to any new change in dispensation, there is an abundance of revelation.

There are signs and wonders. Jesus said there will be signs and wonders in the heavens. Have you ever looked at the sky? Do you ever not see a contrail at night? Do you ever not see blinking lights and aircraft overhead? Do you not see? You can sit on a good clear night and see the space station go across the sky with the naked eye or with a good pair of binoculars.

There are wonders in the heaven. There are aircraft. There are drones.

There are things flying through the air like you can't believe, just in living memory. So what's the point? There is a dedication that guides us. There is provision and instruction that guides us.

If we dedicate ourselves the way John did, the way the Lord Jesus did, our lives will be marked by exceptional dedication to God and His Word. It's not bibliolatry. It's not, I love the text and lost the Savior somewhere.

This is the only way to grow. We'll have more to say about this after the break, but it is the only way to be fruitful. It is the seed of the Word that is planted in our souls and nothing else that enables us to be 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold fields.

There is an egregious attack on that in our day, and we'll have more to say when we come back from the break.