

Matthew 23-06-25b

We're ready now to resume our study here in Matthew chapter 28, looking at the closing section here. We have seen the eleven disciples respond to the command of the Lord Jesus, go to Galilee, find the appointed mountain, meet Him there, and they worshipped Him, but some doubted. And evidently, there is worship going on even among the doubtful.

And when we have doubts, what can we do? Remember the father who brought his son to Jesus for healing, and Jesus said, Do you believe? And he said, Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief. And we can ask and seek and knock for the kind of spiritual assurance that isn't evidence of the eyes or evidence of the ears, but is the ministry of the Holy Spirit leading us into truth, reminding us of the things of the Lord Jesus, weaving those things together into strength and peace and comfort and those fruits of the Spirit that we know so well, patience, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.

Faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and when we are struggling with our faith, we go to God, just like when we're struggling with anything else, and ask God to give us the strength that we lack, and that is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. And in the same way that in the Old Testament, Jesus said, If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? This is before the universal dispensation of the Holy Spirit, dispensing to indwell and fill and gift and seal and so on, baptize, and yet it was available by request. And what is God looking for? He is looking for those who are looking for Him.

There is rarely a Bible class that goes by that I don't quote, You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. And the things of God, the things that please God, the service and the stewardship and the faithfulness that we desire to have before God are susceptible to request, increase our faith, teach us to pray. These were requests the disciples made, and Jesus answered them.

So, it is in a way, they talk about a backhanded compliment, it is a form of assurance when we see that even the eleven disciples seeing the resurrected Lord Jesus and the profound power of God and truth of God on display in the resurrected Lord, some of them struggled to understand it, to comprehend it, and to believe it. And what do we do with that struggle? Some doubted. So Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

This, as we noted in the first session, is in keeping with Matthew's theme, Christ the King, the Messiah, the Anointed One. He is the Lord of Glory. He is the Son of David.

He is the rightful heir to David's throne, to be the monarch in the promised and coming kingdom. All authority. The authority is reflected in imperatives.

The authority is reflected in appointments. That authority is reflected in assignments. How do you think you were given your spiritual gift? This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, but does the Holy Spirit act on His own authority? Jesus said, He does not.

He takes of the things of me and grants them to you. The Lord Jesus assigns our function within His body, and the Holy Spirit implements that assignment. We have an appointment.

We have a gifting. We have a set of circumstances where we function, where we have opportunities for stewardship, for service, for speaking the truth in love, for demonstrating love to one another and fulfilling those commandments. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

In heaven and on earth. Why would Jesus mention heaven in this context? A, that is where He is about to go. B, when you think back to the Lord Jesus' teaching about the kingdom and about the implementation and exercise of His authority, this authority is from heaven.

It has been given to Him by the Father. He wields that authority. He exercises that authority, and these disciples are under authority.

They were called. They were named. They responded to the call, and they now have a responsibility as disciples, soon to be apostles in the church age.

This is the threshold of the house that we're about to enter with verses 19 and 20. What He is about to say is introduced and preceded by a recitation, the establishing of Jesus' authority. This might seem like an odd thing to do, but keep your finger here and turn back to Matthew chapter 13.

Matthew chapter 13. What we are looking for here is that clue that I mentioned in the first session. How do I know what pertains to Jesus' individual disciples and what pertains universally to us all? Some of the commands that Jesus gave to His disciples are unique to them.

Go forth and heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the gospel of the kingdom. Go before me, or actually go to Galilee. I will go there before you and meet you at the appointed mountain.

Remain here while I pray. There are things that are pertinent and particular to the individual disciples that are not pertinent or particular to us. We cannot stand in the sandals of a disciple and internalize and personalize everything that Jesus said to Peter, or to John, or to Paul.

So how do we know which is which? Matthew 13 is going to help us with this answer. By way of review, Matthew chapter 13 contains eight parables related to the kingdom. The

theme of Matthew is Jesus as the king.

This is the kingdom. Four of these parables are delivered to the multitudes and the people who are outside. The first four.

The second four are delivered to the disciples privately. So notice, and this is going to be our key, what does Jesus say to the multitudes and what does He say to His disciples in private? Notice in chapter 13, on that same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. The house is a place of private communication, private fellowship, association with His disciples.

Going out of the house and sitting by the sea is a place where great multitudes gather together to Him so that He gets into a boat and the whole multitude stands on the shore. So what Jesus is about to say is for the multitudes. He spoke many things to them, the multitudes, in parables.

There is the parable of the sower. There are four kinds of ground. Do you remember? If you look up from your page, what are the four kinds of ground in the parable of the sower? There is the hard-packed ground, right? That's by the road and the birds come and pick the seed up and it's not even there.

There is the stony ground, falls among stones, very difficult for it to grow. There is some that falls in the shallow soil and when the sun comes up, it burns in a day. Choked by thorns is the third kind.

And then the fourth kind is what? The fruitful soil. And in the fruitful soil, there are three levels of fruitfulness, 30, 60, and 100-fold, right? So a total of six outcomes. What is the number of life in this earth? Six.

Seven is the number of perfection. The idealistic model of history is 6,000 years followed by the Sabbath, six days of the week followed by the Sabbath, the seventh day. So in the days of labor, the six days, you have six possible outcomes, six potential kinds of soil.

You have three that are bad and three that are good, right? But that is to the multitudes. Jesus does not explain the significance of the parable of the sower to the multitudes, does he? The disciples came and said to him in verse 10, why do you speak to them in parables? And he answers and he says, because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them, it has not been given. Calvinists love this kind of thing.

See, God throws a dart at the phone book and says, I'm going to give knowledge of the mysteries to that guy and not to this one. I'm going to give it to some and not to others. I'm just going to, in the inscrutable, mysterious, ineffable choices of my divine nature, my ways are higher, my thoughts are higher.

I'm going to give it to some and not to others, and you don't need to know why. That is not true. It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them, it has not been given.

Why? The next verse, for whoever has to him, more will be given. What is it the disciples have that the multitudes do not have? They have a seeking heart at the level of abandoning their normal life and following Jesus, laying aside their fishing nets, leaving their tax collection table, going and following the Lord Jesus, leaving Galilee to go down to the Jordan River and listen to John preach. These men have a seeking heart.

To him who has, more will be given. It has been given to you to know the mysteries because you already have something. Whoever has, more will be given and he will have abundance.

He will have abundance, but whoever does not have even what he has will be taken away from him. And that is the opportunity, the accessibility, the availability. It is presented for a time.

You only get so long to reject and to disregard and to be apathetic and indifferent. And pretty soon that opportunity is going to leave. You see, Noah, with the ark, a building, you can either inquire and say, why are you creating this extraordinary structure? Well, the Lord God in heaven says there is a flood coming.

Yeah, I don't believe that. I've never seen one. Goodbye.

Well, once God shuts the door, there is no longer an opportunity to enter the ark to believe the prophetic word of God. There is a time and a season. And if like Paul before Felix, I will hear you again at a more convenient time.

And that time never comes. So verse 13 of Matthew 13. If 13 is an unlucky number, this is about the most unlucky thing you could imagine.

Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see. Unlike you hearing, they do not hear unlike you, nor do they understand in them. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, hearing you will hear and shall not understand.

Seeing you will see and not perceive why the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed. What is true of the eyes is true of the ears and true of the hearts.

They have closed. They have chosen. It is personal individual responsibility to respond.

Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of deliverance, says in Hebrews, quoting the Old Testament. If they had not shut their eyes, stopped their ears and hardened their hearts, they would see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their

hearts and turn so that I should heal them.

God doesn't say, turn you at my reproof to people who have no ability or possibility of turning. Turn you at my reproof. Why will you die, O house of Israel? It is by your own choice.

When he came to his own, it doesn't say he came into his own, but God did not give them the ability to receive. He came into his own and his own received him not. That was a choice.

But as many as did receive him, they receive power. They have authority, the authority to be called sons of God. Now, we're going to read a passage from John chapter one.

Those who believe on his name, even to those who believe. John chapter one, blessed are your eyes for they see. This sounds like, oh, you know, I just want to pronounce something blessed.

The disciples are receiving the blessing of explanation and understanding and depth of, Their eyes are blessed. They receive the blessing of Jesus interpreting and applying the parable for them, because their eyes see. Why do the disciples' eyes see? Because they didn't shut them.

Unlike the people in verse 15, their eyes, they have closed. Your eyes are open. Reminds you of the prophecy of Balaam? Do you go back and read the story of Balaam? When he delivers the oracle that God plants upon him, despite the king of Moab, he says, the one whose eyes are open.

He describes himself. The one whose eyes are open. The reason God used Balaam is, at that time, his eyes were open.

He's gonna die the sin of the death later, but at that time, he says, the one whose eyes are open. Blessed are your eyes, for they see. The reason you receive the blessing of explanation and interpretation, the reason you have comfort and encouragement and help is because you keep your eyes open.

Therefore, your eyes are blessed. Your eyes are blessed because they see. Your ears are blessed because they hear.

These disciples, they've got many flaws, many faults, and in a way, it's a comfort to us. We know our failures. We know our shortcomings.

We know our things that are necessary to confess, but week by week, Bible class by Bible class, devotional time by devotional time, prayer by prayer, day by day, hour by hour, we are trying to keep our eyes open. We are trying to keep our ears open. We are trying to keep our hearts pliant and malleable and teachable, and that characteristic

puts us in line for blessing, the blessing of understanding, the blessing of encouragement, the blessing of direct help and deliverance from God, and how much of an effort is it? How much work are we doing to keep our eyes and ears open to not harden our hearts? It's not works.

It is just good common sense, but it is an act of will to shut your eyes, to stop your ears, and to harden your heart. That is an act of will, and that willful disobedience, willful rejection removes blessing. Blessed are your eyes because they see.

Blessed are your ears because they hear, and your faithfulness in thinking about the word of God on a daily basis puts us in line for blessing, for understanding, for enlightenment. Those who are outside do not. That is the difference between a disciple and somebody in the multitude.

Did they come out and assemble and hear Jesus speak? Did they see the incarnate Lord Jesus? Wouldn't you expect if the incarnate, visible, physical Lord Jesus came to your town and you went out and heard him, you would have the experience of the guys on the road to Emmaus, your heart would burn within you. His teaching is so profound. His illustrations are so pungent and concise and straight to the heart, and every word he says is powerful, and he doesn't teach like any pastor I've ever heard, and that would compel you to believe? That would compel you to understand? It didn't work that way, did it? It is not the elegance or the power of the presentation.

It is the willingness of the heart. God can use the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of this world to defeat the strong. And many of us as communicators are limited and inadequate in so many ways to the truth of Scripture.

We all feel insufficient. Paul the apostle said, who is sufficient for these things? Who could be qualified enough other than the Lord Jesus himself to deliver these truths? But even when Jesus, who was adequate to the task and so beautifully expressed these truths, people heard it and did not believe. His own disciples can see him on the mountain and doubt, because it's not the power of the presentation.

It is the receptivity of the heart. If we cultivate faith, we cultivate a seeking heart. If we go to God and say, Lord, help thou mine unbelief.

This is the path to receiving blessing. Assuredly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see and did not see it. Desired to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

You are privileged. And if they were privileged in that day, what do you think we are in this day? Therefore hear the parable of the sower. And so Jesus gives the explanation in verses 18 through 23, which we're well familiar with.

Now in verse 24, this is another parable to the multitude. You would say he put forth to

them and you would say, well, isn't he talking to the disciples privately skip down to verse 34, right quick. All these things, Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables and without a parable, he did not speak to them.

So verse 24, this is another parable given to the multitudes and this is the wheat and the tares. In verse 31, another parable, he put forth to them, the multitudes. This is the mustard seed.

Verse 33, another parable, he spoke to them. The leaven hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened. All these things, Jesus spoke to them.

Verse 34, the multitudes without a parable, he didn't speak to them that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Then Jesus sent the multitudes away, verse 36, and went into the house. Now we have four more parables inside the house. So the parable of the sower, wheat and the tares, the mustard seed and the leaven, those are given to the multitudes.

And when you think about the distinction, what happens when evil has its sway, what happens when good seed has its way, that contrast, it's all about decision. These all emphasize choice. Are you going to come down on the good side or the bad side? What do you choose, wheat or tares? Good soil, faulty soil? Are you going to be leavened or unleavened? Are you going to be a part of the great tree or are you going to be the birds roosting in its branches? Jesus emphasizes choice.

When he comes to the second set of four parables that he gives inside the house to his disciples, this is about commitment. It is about dedication. It is about what we seek.

Having decided for the good, having decided for the plan and purpose of God, you have the hidden treasure, the man who finds a treasure hidden in a field. And when he finds it, joy over it goes and sells all that he has to purchase it. This is not just a simple decision.

This is commitment, sells all that he has. This is the sold out nature of the disciples who have left all to follow Jesus. Same thing in the parable in verse 45, the pearl of great price, the merchant seeking beautiful pearls.

He is on a mission to find these beautiful pearls. And when he finds one pearl of great price, likewise, he sells all that he has for that pearl. Parable of the dragnet, the bringing in of both clean and unclean fish in the net.

They draw this net to shore. They sit down and gather the good into vessels, but throw the bad away. This is dedication to fishing.

This is not being a good fish or an unclean fish, edible or inedible, clean or unclean. This

is the fishing process to carefully weed out what is unclean, what is not aligned with the plan and purpose of God, finding the good fish and keeping those and taking the bad away. This is touch not the unclean thing.

This is purge the leaven out of your house. This is eschewing evil and holding fast to what is good. It is a dedication process.

It is an expression of commitment. And then the final parable in that set of four that are given to the disciples who have already chosen to follow Christ. What is your level of commitment? What is your level of dedication? This is the scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven.

Instructed, it is about the teaching. It is about being inculcated with truth and pursuing that truth, committed to, dedicated to that truth. The scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

We hold on to those good things that we have come across in the past, that we've learned in the past. And then we continue to find new treasures. We are continually wanting to improve our understanding and our dedication.

So these two sets of parables, those that are given to the multitudes outside, this confronts them with choice. If they want to understand those parables better, will they come and ask? Will they seek? Will they knock? The disciples instructed inside the house have already made that choice. And to those who have, more is given.

If you go back to Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20, we're ready now to conclude by looking at these verses. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. You remember verse 19, as you are going.

This is a present participle. It is not an imperative. As you are going, you are going to be moving through life.

Who is he speaking to, verse 16? Is this the multitudes? This is the disciples. These are the disciples. They are going to be apostles.

This instruction is given to 11 men. It is going to be repeated in a slightly different form to the apostle Paul. He will be commissioned to do these same things.

As you are going, therefore make disciples. This is the verbal form of mathetes, M-A-T-H-E-T-E-S. It's mathetuo, M-A-T-H-E-T-E-U-O.

A disciple, the root meaning of mathetes and mathetuo is to be a learner. You are a student. As you are going, make learners from all the nations.

This is no longer their commission to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When he

sent out the 12 and sent out the 70, 72, he said, go only to Israel. Now it is all nations.

As you go, make disciples, make learners of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things that I have commanded you. This is where the great mistake is made. The notion is that Jesus is telling the disciples to teach these learners from all the nations to observe everything that Jesus commanded his own disciples.

That is not what it means. Should they teach disciples from all nations to go to Galilee and wait to see Jesus? To wait for power from on high, that they will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria? Not at all. Teaching them to observe what I have commanded you to teach them to observe.

Follow the Lord Jesus example. There are things that are said to the multitudes. There are things that are said to those who would be disciples.

You remember all of the scriptures that Jesus uses to describe those who are disciples? Unless a man is willing to leave father and mother, if he loves father and mother more than me, he cannot be my disciple. Cannot be my disciple, cannot be my disciple. There is an authority structure.

It is the Lord Jesus. It is the apostles and it is disciples. Go and make disciples.

You, my apostles. The 12 apostles are commissioned to make disciples. Disciples are not commissioned to make other disciples.

Nowhere in the New Testament we are going to be starting after a brief interruption. Our new Sunday morning study is gonna be Timothy. Wouldn't you expect in the pastoral epistles that if the great commission is to include not only the content of the teaching on the hill, the sermon on the mount, when you pray, this is how you should pray.

Love your enemies, love one another. All of the things that are covered in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, those were given to Jesus' disciples. These are things you should do.

Go be reconciled with your brother. Take two or three witnesses with you. All of those things, these are imperatives given to the disciples that they are to teach.

This is part of the gospel of the kingdom, which they are to teach and to make disciples. But the disciples are never told to make other disciples. Who makes disciples? Who does Jesus tell to make disciples? The one imperative in these verses is make disciples.

To whom is it given? The 11. And Paul is gonna get it as one born out of time. The apostles are disciple makers.

Disciples do not make other disciples. How do I know this? Turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter two. This is our closing thought, 2 Timothy chapter two.

We'll get here eventually in our study of the pastoral epistle, 2 Timothy chapter two. You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

In this verse, the word commit means entrust. Entrust these truths to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Entrust them to faithful men.

If you keep your finger in 2 Timothy chapter two and turn to 1 Timothy chapter one, verse 18, just a few pages previous, Paul says, this charge I commit to you, son, Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare. This charge I entrust. It is the very same word.

Paul says, Timothy, I am entrusting you with these prophetic truths so that by them you can wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected. You are different. I am entrusting you with these truths.

In 2 Timothy chapter two, the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Timothy, you can, as a teacher, prepare other men to teach. You can teach and others can teach.

Nowhere in the pastoral epistles, not in 1 Timothy, not in 2 Timothy, not in Titus, does Paul ever tell these pastors, go and make disciples. Who makes disciples? The Lord Jesus Christ in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and through His word makes disciples. We are not disciple makers.

Where do our New Testament scriptures come from? How do we know the words of the Lord Jesus? Jesus gave them to the apostles. The apostolic witness makes disciples. Paul says, Timothy, I have entrusted these prophetic truths to you.

What I have taught you and what you have heard me teach, entrust to other teachers so that they can teach what you have heard me say. Teach the apostolic witness, teach the biblical truth. It is the biblical truth in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that makes disciples, not people.

It would have been so easy for Paul to give a version of the traditional understanding of the Great Commission to Timothy. This is the pastoral guidance for all pastors from now till Jesus returns. Timothy, two books, and Titus.

Paul talking to the Ephesian elders in Acts. Nowhere does Peter, Paul, John, James, any of the initial apostolic witnesses tell disciples to go and make other disciples. It is a misunderstanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 28, 19, and 20.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I've commanded you. I'm commanding you to go make disciples, so you should teach them to go make disciples. That's like

saying you should teach them to go to Galilee and wait for me on a mountain.

These are specific instructions to apostles and they are never repeated in any epistle anywhere else in the New Testament to believers to go forth and make other disciples. Scripture makes disciples. The apostolic witness is sufficient.

Think about it, pray about it. My final thought here, just as a bonus in concluding, is when you look at Matthew 28, 19, and 20, Jesus says, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. The teaching is what does the discipling.

And teachers can teach others who can become teachers. Teach people, they can be parents who teach their children. We can speak the truth to one another in love.

There is no commission for believers to try to disciple each other. It's not in the book. It is the power of God that makes disciples.

It is the inspired witness of the apostles recorded in the New Testament that makes New Testament disciples. It is the words of the Lord Jesus in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that makes each one of us a disciple. We don't disciple or make disciples.

The apostles make disciples because they are the ones to whom Jesus specifically entrusted the witness. He named them. He called them to the mountain at the beginning.

He calls them back to the mountain at the end. He addresses the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus and commissions him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul says, what I have taught you, teach others.

It is the teaching that will make them disciples. Not mentoring, not discipling, not following people around. The final thought here, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always.

How long? Even to the end of the age. Now, is this a geographical extent? Is Jesus with them even to the ends of the world? Or is this a time reference? Is this how far Jesus will go with them? Or is it how long he will be with them? What would you say? Lo, I am with you always is always a time word or a distance word? It's a time word, right? I am with you always unto the end of the age. That word unto is heos, H-E-O-S.

It is always a time word. Jesus says, I am with you always to the end of the age. To the end, heos, and then there's a word that means end.

Until the end of this period of time. If you flip forward to Acts chapter one, verse eight, I've pointed this out before, but I will point out again. Jesus says, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

You shall be witnesses to me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the

end, heos, the word for time. The very same word that's used in Matthew 28, 20 is used in Acts 1, 8. It is not unto the extent of the world. This is until the end of the world.

Same thing he says in 28, 20. He's basically repeating in 1, 8. This is a time word, heos, until. Until the end of the earth, until the end of the world.

Until, until. These men were commissioned to be witnesses. They are unique witnesses.

We are not witnesses. These words are spoken to whom? Verse two, he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen. You need to put Acts 1, 2 with Acts 1, 8. The apostles whom he had chosen, he speaks these words to them.

They are witnesses to him until the end of the world. They are the witnesses. We can speak the truth, but we share the apostolic witness, the divinely inspired scriptural witness.

We speak the truth in love. That is the great commission. It is not an evangelistic witness.

It is to be a disciple, not to make a disciple. To let the word of God and the spirit of God make us into disciples. And to have fellowship with other disciples and to fulfill the 60 plus one another commands with fellow disciples.

We cannot make a disciple. We can't mentor a disciple. We can, by speaking the truth in love, let the truth make disciples.

And that happens as a result of each individual person's response, choice, seeking, asking, knocking with eyes that are open and ears that are open and a heart that is receptive. I can't do that for another person. I can only do it for me.

The opportunity is there. The word is near. It's not up in heaven or down in Sheol.

It is near. It is in our hearts. It is on our lips, but each individual person responds on their own.

Well, that concludes our study of the gospel of Matthew. I've enjoyed it very much. I've learned a tremendous amount.

I hope you have as well. And after a brief vacational interruption, we will start the books of Timothy. In the meantime, we'll close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for its clarity. Thank you for the presence and the witness of your Holy Spirit that leads us into all truth, helps us to understand it, see its pertinence and application in our own lives.

We ask your blessing on us as we seek to make that application and live the life that reflects your glory and causes others to glorify you and to seek their own personal relationship with you. We pray that we can represent the Lord Jesus as his body on this earth and maintain that witness until he returns. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.