



# ~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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## Worship Music

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## Prayer

Lord, I want You to be so real in my life. I know that You are willing to make Yourself known and felt in any part of my life that I will surrender to You. So I choose right now to surrender more of me so I can experience more of You in every sphere of my existence. Jesus, please have Your way in my life. Do whatever You deem necessary to make me the kind of person I need to be to know and experience You better, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

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Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

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## Matthew 19:1-30 (AMP)

1 NOW WHEN Jesus had finished saying these things, He left Galilee and went into the part of Judea that is beyond the Jordan; 2 And great throngs accompanied Him, and He cured them there. 3 And Pharisees came to Him and put Him to the test by asking, Is it lawful and right to dismiss and repudiate and divorce one's wife for any and every cause? 4 He replied, Have you never read that He Who made them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be united firmly (joined inseparably) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder (separate). 7 They said to Him, Why then did Moses command [us] to give a certificate of divorce and thus to dismiss and repudiate a wife? 8 He said to them, Because of the hardness (stubbornness and perversity) of your hearts Moses permitted you to dismiss and repudiate and divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been so [ordained]. 9 I say to you: whoever dismisses (repudiates, divorces) his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. 10 The disciples said to Him, If the case of a man with his wife is like this, it is neither profitable nor advisable to marry. 11 But He said to them, Not all men can accept this saying, but it is for those to whom [the capacity to receive] it has been given. 12 For there are eunuchs who have been born incapable of marriage; and there are eunuchs who have been made so by men; and there are eunuchs who have made themselves incapable of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who is able to accept this accept it. 13 Then little children were brought to Jesus, that He might put His hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But He said, Leave the children alone! Allow the little ones to come to Me, and do not forbid or restrain or hinder them, for of such [as these] is the kingdom of heaven composed. 15 And He put His hands upon them, and then went on His way. 16 And behold, there came a man up to Him, saying, Teacher, what excellent and perfectly and essentially good deed must I do to possess eternal life? 17 And He said to him, Why do you ask Me about the perfectly and essentially good? There is only One Who is good [perfectly and essentially]—God. If you would enter into the Life, you must continually keep the commandments. 18 He said to Him, What sort of commandments? [Or, which ones?] And Jesus answered, You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, 19 Honor your father and your mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. 20 The young man said, I have observed all these from my youth; what still do I lack? 21 Jesus answered him, If you would be perfect [that is, have that spiritual maturity which accompanies self-sacrificing character], go and sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, be My disciple [side with My party and follow Me]. 22 But when the young man heard this, he went away sad (grieved and in much distress), for he had great possessions. 23 And Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you, it will be difficult for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go into the kingdom of heaven. 25 When the disciples heard this, they were utterly puzzled (astonished, bewildered), saying, Who then can be saved [from eternal death]? 26 But Jesus looked at them and said, With men this is impossible, but all things are possible with God. 27 Then Peter answered Him, saying, Behold, we have left [our] all and have become Your disciples [sided with Your party and followed You]. What then shall we receive? 28 Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, in the new age [the Messianic rebirth of the world], when the Son of Man shall sit down on the throne of His glory, you who have [become My disciples, sided with My party and] followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And anyone and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for My name's sake will receive many [even a hundred] times more and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who [now] are first will be last [then], and many who [now] are last will be first [then].

## Chapter 19

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and he came to the coast of Judea (Mat 19:1);

Now that is the border of Judea, so He is moving south towards Jerusalem, for Jerusalem lies in the area of Judea, which is in the southern kingdom. So He has left the area of Naphtali and Psycar in the north, and has come down now to the area of Judea, there beyond Jordan.

And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. Then the Pharisees came unto him, [and notice this] they were tempting him (Mat 19:2-3),

This is a test question; it is a leading question. It is a question of entrapment. They are trying to trap Jesus in His words. And it is important that you realize that this is a trap question by the Pharisees. So they came unto Him, tempting Him, or trapping Him,

and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? (Mat 19:3)

Now under the Mosaic law it says, if a man finds an uncleanness in his wife, and he is not content to remain with her, let him give her a writing of a bill of divorcement.

Now what is meant by finding an "uncleanness" in her? According to the liberal theologians of those days, an uncleanness could be her not fixing the kind of breakfast you enjoy. So if she boiled the egg too long, and the yoke was too hard, you could say, "That's it, I've had it. I divorce you". And you could hand her the paper and she had to leave. I mean she had no recourse. She was just out. And so they had applied a very liberal interpretation to this finding an uncleanness in her.

Other of the rabbis said that the uncleanness was a moral uncleanness. You discovered she was not a virgin when you married her, or if she would break the marriage vow, it was a moral uncleanness. And so there was the division among the Scribes and Pharisees, to which of the two schools they subscribed, whether Hallel, who took the very, narrow, moral uncleanness, or the other school that took a very much broader view.

So they were questioning Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

And he answered and said unto them, Have you not read, that he which made them in the beginning [now notice, Jesus is going back not to the law, but He is going back to the beginning] he who made them in the beginning made them male and female (Mat 19:4),

Now there is quite a move on foot today to change what God has done. They'll never be successful. God help poor, sick humanity. I don't know if there is any transvestites here, but I cannot for the life of me understand that kind of a sickness, really.

God made them male and female,

And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but they are one (Mat 19:5-6).

There is a unity that is brought about by marriage where the two become one flesh. Of course, that is literally true in your offspring. The two of you have become one flesh in your offspring. There is twenty-three of the chromosomes that come from each of you to begin that new life. How beautiful! You dads can't say, "That 's your kid, take care of him," because he is half yours too, twenty-three chromosomes from you. And so it is a perfect combination, the two shall become one flesh.

Wherefore they are no more two, but they are one. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man [by writing of divorcement or whatever] put asunder (Mat 19:6). Now in those days women didn't have the power of divorce. And that's why God said, don't let man put it asunder, don't let man break it. God has made the two of you one, now don't let a man break that by writing out a divorcement for his wife. Now, They said unto Him (Mat 19:7), Now picture the trap closing, ha, ha. He's fallen into it, because it was a trap question and He fell right into it. All right we've got Him now. And they said unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? (Mat 19:7) Now all of them recognized that the law that Moses gave came from God. If anything was inspired in the Bible, it was the law of Moses. And there were many of them that only believed that that part, and today still many only believe that the first five books of the Bible are inspired, but they all hold that that is the inspired Word. God gave us the law by Moses.

Now you are contradicting God. You see, this is the whole idea to put Him in contradicting what God said, and God said, "let him put her away." And you're saying, "you can't, you shouldn't if God has joined you together, you shouldn't break it by writing out an divorcement". So you're against God is the whole idea.

And Jesus said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts allowed you to put away your wives: [but again he is going back before Moses ever came on the scene] from the beginning it was not so (Mat 19:8). You noticed in the first part He said, "in the beginning God made male and female." Now He is saying, "in the beginning it wasn't so. Moses, because of the hardness of your heart, gave the law for divorcing, but in the beginning this was not God's intention". In the beginning this is not what God desired or planned.

And I say unto you, [not Moses said, but I say] Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, [and notice He does make the exception] and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away does commit adultery. His disciples said, Lord if that's the case, better that a guy not marry (Mat 19:9-10).

Now Jesus is being very straight. He is telling you what is God's original plan for man, one marriage of life. In the beginning this is what God intended when He made them male and female, that the two become one; so that the children will always have both parents and the security of a home, and a home environment in which to grow up. And wherever that breaks down, we find its effects throughout our entire social structure. And we see it today, the tremendous breakdown in our society, and the social order, because of the divided families and the children are always hurt, as a byproduct of this division.

Now Jesus did give the one cause, and that one cause is fornication. And in that case, the innocent party would be free to remarry, very plainly declares that if they put away their wife, except for fornication, and marry another, but the exception is there.

Now Jesus said unto His disciples when they were shocked at the straightness of His declaration.

All men cannot receive this saying, except to those to whom it is given (Mat 19:11).

Now this is the next saying that He is talking about.

For there are some who are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: there are others who are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be some eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. If you're able to receive it, let him receive it (Mat 19:12).

Am not able, so I just let it go. I am not an eunuch, nor do I desire to be.

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray for them: and his disciples rebuked them. [That is the parents that were bringing them.] But Jesus said, Allow the little children, don't forbid them to come to me: for as such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and he departed from there (Mat 19:13-15).

Oh, I can get just such a beautiful picture of Jesus and the little children thronging around Him, and the love and the interest that He had in these little ones. And here the disciples thinking they were protecting Him, said, "Oh, don't bother the Lord with your little kids." Jesus said, "Wait a minute. Get out of the way, Peter, let that little one come to me. Don't forbid him, of such is the kingdom of heaven." He laid His hands on them and blessed them. Oh, I love it.

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (Mat 19:16)

Well, here is the moralist; we see them today, people who are looking for some work whereby they might obtain the gift of eternal life. There are always those who are wanting to work their way into God's favor, work their way into God's blessings. If you'll just pray, then God will bless you. If you'll just fast, then God will bless you. If you'll just give, then God will bless you.

How many want a blessing? Then dig deep and give tonight, you know. And there are always those who want to do some work to obtain God's blessing upon their lives. What good work must I do that I may inherit eternal life? There is not a single work that you can do. Jesus later said, "With man it's impossible, there is no way that you can do any kind of a work that will save you. Salvation, eternal life is the gift of God, and it's not of works, lest any man should boast. We are His workmanship"(Ephesians 2:8-10).

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, and that is God (Mat 19:17):

Now here he said, "good master," Jesus said, "Why did you call me good? There is only one that is good, and that is God". Now obviously Jesus is saying one of two things. He is saying, "I am no good, or He is saying, I am God." Which do you think He is saying? What He is doing is trying to awaken the consciousness of this man to the fact that he has received a divine revelation. He is getting close. "Why did you call me good?" The reason why you called me good, is because you, though you don't realize it, have recognized something about me. "Why did you call me good?"

You remember when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God". Jesus said, "Blessed art you Simon Barjona. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you"(Mat 16:16-17). Jesus is saying much the same, "Hey, why did you call me good? Flesh and blood did not reveal this". There is a divine revelation here. "You called me good, but there is only one that is good, and that is God. You called me good, because I am God. You have recognized something here". "What must I do to have this eternal life, this age-abiding life, this quality of life that you have, this quality that I am observing and I am drawn to?" And Jesus is beginning to point out the way. First of all, the recognition of "who I am. Why did you call me good? There is none good but God".

And Jesus said,

But if you will enter into life, keep the commandments. And he said unto him, Which? and Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Mat 19:17-19). Notice now, nothing is said of the first table of the law. Nothing is said of man's relationship to God. He did not give him the first four commandments: Thou shalt have no other God's before me. Thou shalt not make any graven images, to bow down to them, to worship them. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. And remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. He didn't bring out any of the first four, man's relationship with God. He only dealt with man's relationship with man because this man was a moralist. He was that typical man, who was looking for a good work that he might do in order to inherit eternal life. He was used to doing good works. His life was spent in doing good works. And so Jesus gave to him those commandments that dealt with his relationship with fellow man. And as Jesus flashed these before his eyes,

He answered and said unto him, All of these have I kept from my youth: but what lack I yet? (Mat 19:20)

Now here is a man who is rich, he is a moralist. He's kept his relationship with his fellow men all that it should be. Throughout his life he's tried to do the good thing, the right thing to his fellow man. And yet he is conscious that there is a lack in his life. "I don't yet have what you have. What lack I yet?" He was conscious that there was still a lack in his own life, that there must be something more than just living a good life and being wealthy.

"What lack I yet?"

And Jesus said unto him, If you will be complete [totally complete, perfect], then go and sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me (Mat 19:21)

Now I'd like to read to you what Jesus is essentially saying to him." If you will be perfect, or complete, come follow me. The rest is only incidental." With the rest there is no universal application. That was the individual commandment to that man. It is not a universal application. This was not a requirement to any person who is going to be complete, or to have eternal life. It doesn't mean that you've got to sell everything you have and distribute it to the poor.

Now in the early church there was a movement of this sort. It ended in financial disaster; it also ended in some personal calamities. When the church first started, people were very excited about what was happening. And they were anticipating the Lord to return immediately, and a lot of them began to sell their properties and bring the price and lay it at the apostles' feet.

And there was one couple Ananias and Sapphira, who sold their property and they brought in part of the money and put it at Peter's feet. And Peter said, "Hey, wait a minute. Why have you conspired in your heart to lie against the Holy Spirit? You've not lied against men, you've lied against God. As long as the property was yours, did anyone require you to sell it? And even after you sold it, no one required that you bring everything in. But yet, you are making this pretense of bringing everything. You're trying to deceive God"(Acts 5:1-4)

And there was swift judgment upon Ananias and his wife Sapphira, not because they didn't bring everything, but Peter makes it very clear, that they weren't required to sell their possessions. They weren't required to bring the money in. It was something that people did out of their own volition and free will.

And so Jesus when He says, "Go and sell what you have and distribute to the poor", is not a making a universal demand for those who would have eternal life. What the universal demand is, "come and follow me". You cannot have eternal life apart from following Jesus Christ, but He will always put the finger on whatever it is in your life that's keeping you from following Him. And with the case of this rich young ruler, the thing that was keeping him from following Jesus Christ was his riches. That was his god.

Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and mammon, you can't have two masters"(Mat 6:24). If you have a false god that is controlling your life, then you've got to go and get rid of it, whatever it be. And you've got to have the true God on the throne of your life. Jesus said, "Come follow me. Why did you call me good? There is only one good, that's God. You called me good because you recognized that I am God. Now follow me; get rid of the false gods. Get rid of the empty gods; follow me, the true and living God."

And it's important that you observe this, because a lot of people make a big deal over, well, you got to go and sell everything you have and distribute it to the poor and all; not so. That is not a universal application. The universal application is, "Come follow me". He is the way to completeness. He is the way to eternal life; there is not any real life apart from Him.

Now when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. [Sorry, because he was so rich.] Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say, It is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And when his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? And Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men it's impossible; but with God all things are possible (Mat 19:22-26).

Now when you go over to Israel today, the guides when you get to the Church of the Nativity, they will show you a little sub-gate under the gate into the church. And they tell you that that little sub-gate was called the eye of the needle, and that in the gates of the cities they always had this little sub-gate, which was called the eye of the needle. And in order to get the camel through it, they had to take all of the burden of the camel's back, and it had to get down on the ground. And a couple guys behind him pushing, and one guy in front of it pulling, to get it to squeeze through this eye of the needle in the gate. And they say that's what Jesus was talking about.

Isn't that interesting? They make it a possibility if you struggle hard enough, and if you grunt and groan enough you can actually save yourself. A lot of people would like to have you think that. But Jesus points out that that is entirely false. He is talking not about some little gate that you can, by a lot of effort, and grunts and groans squeeze and get through. He is talking about an eye of a needle, that a woman is sewing with, and you trying to get a camel through that? And that's why the disciples said, "Lord, who then can be saved?" and note, Jesus said what, "With man it is impossible." Remember that.

He didn't say, "You got to strain. You got to struggle. You got to grunt and groan, give it your best." He is saying, "It's impossible." Man cannot save himself. The moralist cannot save himself. No man by good works can save himself. No man by a good work can inherit age-abiding, eternal life. It is a gift of God, and it is only wrought by a miracle of God in our hearts and lives. For though it is impossible with men, with God all things are possible. It's even possible to save you.

And God has done the impossible in saving us tonight. And remember that. With man it is impossible. That eliminates the moralist

completely. You cannot by your good works obtain for yourself a place in the kingdom of God. You've got to come as a little child and be converted and just simply trust in Jesus.

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lord, we've forsaken all, and followed you; what are we going to have therefore? (Mat 19:27)

Always looking for that, what do I got coming Lord? Am I going to be the greatest?

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That you which have followed me, in the regeneration [the re-creation, in making this new order] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat 19:28).

Now in heaven John saw the throne of God, and there were twenty-four thrones around the throne of God, upon which were seated twenty-four elders. There are many who believe that those twenty-four elders are actually representative of the church. And of course if so, then twelve of them would be the apostles. There are some problems with that interpretation, but it is one of the interpretations that has been suggested for those twenty-four thrones, lesser thrones, about the throne of God. But nonetheless, Jesus said, "that they will be sitting upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel".

And everyone that hath forsaken, [now you've said you've forsaken all to follow me, but everyone who has forsaken,] his house, or his brothers, or sisters, or his father, or his mother, or his wife, or his children, or lands, for my name's sake (Mat 19:29),

If you have done it for His name's sake, that is, your wife will not follow you in your total commitment to Jesus Christ. And as Paul said, "if the unbelieving husband is not content to remain, let him depart"(1 Corinthians 7:14). No one has left these things, forsaken these things for my sake,

but what he shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Mat 19:29).

So not only does He give you a hundredfold now, but then eternal life.

But many that are first, shall be last (Mat 19:30);

I think that He is here referring actually to the Jewish nation to whom the gospel was to be preached first. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, upon our God of Salvation, to all that believe, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"(Romans 1:16). But it was to go to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles. Now they are going to be judging the twelve tribes. Why? Because the twelve tribes basically rejected the Messiah. "So those that were first shall be last."

and they that are last [that is the Gentiles] shall be first (Mat 19:30).

So in that kingdom that Jesus establishes, we shall be one with Him, joint heirs with the Son of the glorious kingdom of God throughout eternity. The gospel came to us last, but we have the first privileges in His glorious kingdom, who have believed on Jesus Christ. Were we who believe in Jesus Christ, are neither Jews nor Greeks, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but Christ is everything.

We are a whole new nationality. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We are a new creation, a new race of people. So you really can't say, "Well, I am an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a Scotchman." You must say, "I am a Christian." You are a new race, you see, we're not related anymore to the whatever ethnic group we came from. We are all one in Jesus Christ. We now relate to a new source. "Well, that's my old Irish temper." Oh, no, no, that old Irish temper died when the old man died and you became a Christian. You can't pass it off now on the old Irish temper anymore. You're a new creature in Christ. You are a new creation. You are a new race of people in our Lord Jesus Christ. And so the last, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first".

Next week we'll continue in the next three chapters of Matthew's gospel. Shall we pray?

Father, again we thank you for your Word. Truly it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. May we walk in its light, be obedient unto its truth that we, Lord, would not seek to mold and shape your Word to our concepts but that we would have our concepts molded and shaped by Your Word. Help us, Father, that we might bend our necks to the authority of your truth rather than trying to bend the truth to fit our lose lifestyles. Jesus, let thy Word penetrate our hearts and give us O God a spirit of obedience and a spirit of forgiveness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Matthew 20:1-34 (AMP)**

**1** FOR THE kingdom of heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out in the morning along with the dawn to hire workmen for his vineyard. **2** After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. **3** And going out about the third hour (nine o'clock), he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; **4** And he said to them, You go also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will pay you. And they went. **5** He went out again about the sixth hour (noon), and the ninth hour (three o'clock) he did the same. **6** And about the eleventh hour (five o'clock) he went out and found still others standing around, and said to them, Why do you stand here idle all day? **7** They answered him, Because nobody has hired us. He told them, You go out into the vineyard also and you will get whatever is just and fair. **8** When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, Call the workmen and pay them their wages, beginning with the last and ending with the first. **9** And those who had been hired at the eleventh hour (five o'clock) came and received a denarius each. **10** Now when the first came, they supposed they would get more, but each of them also received a denarius. **11** And when they received it, they grumbled at the owner of the estate, **12** Saying, These [men] who came last worked no more than an hour, and yet you have made them rank with us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day. **13** But he answered one of them, Friend, I am doing you no injustice. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? **14** Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this man hired last the same as I give to you. **15** Am I not permitted to do what I choose with what is mine? [Or do you begrudge my being generous?] Is your eye evil because I am good? **16** So those who [now] are last will be first [then], and those who [now] are first will be last [then]. For many are called, but few chosen. **17** And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside along the way and said to them, **18** Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes; and they will sentence Him to death **19** And deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and whipped and crucified, and He will be raised [to life] on the third day. **20** Then the mother of Zebedee's children came up to Him with her sons and, kneeling, worshiped Him and asked a favor of Him. **21** And He asked her, What do you wish? She answered Him, Give orders that these two sons of mine may sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left in Your kingdom. **22** But Jesus replied, You do not realize what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? They answered, We are able. **23** He said to them, You will drink My cup, but seats at My right hand and at My left are not Mine to give, but they are for those for whom they have been ordained and prepared by My Father. **24** But when the ten [other disciples] heard this, they were indignant at the two brothers. **25** And Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men hold them in subjection [tyrannizing over them]. **26** Not so shall it be among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, **27** And whoever desires to be first among you must be your slave— **28** Just as the Son of Man came not to be waited on but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many [the price paid to set them free]. **29** And as they were going out of Jericho, a great throng accompanied Him. **30** And behold, two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, Lord, have pity and mercy on us, [You] Son of David! **31** The crowds reproved them and told them to keep still; but they cried out all the more, Lord, have pity and mercy on us, [You] Son of David! **32** And Jesus stopped and called them, and asked, What do you want Me to do for you? **33** They answered Him, Lord, we want our eyes to be opened! **34** And Jesus, in pity, touched their eyes; and instantly they received their sight and followed Him.

Shall we turn to Matthew's gospel chapter twenty, and continue our book-by-book study through the Word of God? Matthew chapter twenty opens with the parable of the laborers going out into the vineyard.

And Jesus said,

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard (Mat 20:1-2). Now a penny was a denarius and it was just a day's wage, the average day's wage. So translated into our present day, an average day's wage for a laborer maybe twenty-five dollars or so. And he went out about the third hour (Mat 20:3), Now he started out at about six o'clock in the morning, and hired these men who were standing in the marketplace to go out and work in his vineyard.

About the third hour, [nine o'clock in the morning], he saw others standing idle in the market place, and he said unto them; Go into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, [noon and three in the afternoon], he did likewise. And about the eleventh hour, [five in the evening] he went out, and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why do you stand here idle all day? And they said unto him, Because no man has hired us. He said unto them, Go also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that is what you shall receive. So when the evening was come, and the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. When they came they that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man [the denarius] a penny. But when he came to the first, they supposed that they should have received more; but they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and you've made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the heat of the day. But he answered, and said unto them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: did you not agree to work for a penny? Take that which is yours, and go your way: and I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with what is my own? Is not your eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last: for many are called, but few are chosen (Mat 20:5-16).

Now if you go back to the last verse of the previous chapter, you'll find this same statement. "They that are first shall be last, and they that are last shall be first"(Mat 19:30). And then he repeats this again. So this seems to be the words that couch this particular parable. Going back just a little bit further, Peter had said to Jesus, "Lord, we have left all to follow thee"(Mat 19:27). And Jesus tells him, "Look no one has left anything, but what in this life he get a hundredfold, and in the life to come, eternal life"(Mat 19:29).

Now what is Jesus seeking to teach by this parable of sending forth the laborers into the vineyard? Basically what He is teaching is that as we serve the Lord in His vineyard, that what really counts is the fact the Lord sent me. Notice that these people didn't go in on their own accord, the Lord sent them into the vineyard. And because they were sent of God, they each one received from the Lord that same portion.

Sometimes we see people who on their deathbed receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and they enter into eternal life. And we who have served the Lord all of our lives and we enter into eternal life. It's God's to give, however, to whomever He pleases. And if those who in the last moment come into the kingdom of God, God rewards them, and they receive the reward for their place in the kingdom. Unfortunately, they have missed the blessing of knowing God, and serving God all their lives. They've missed the joy of what it is to serve the Lord. But I do believe that in this parable, He is teaching that a person at the end of the road can turn, in the eleventh hour and come to God, and receive a share of the kingdom, equal share, as far as eternal life is concerned.

Another thing that it teaches, I believe, is that we all will be rewarded for our faithfulness in our service to God. If I am faithful for an hour, if I am faithful for twelve hours, it is my faithfulness to the service to which the Lord has sent me.

Now a lot of times we think that men like Billy Graham will surely receive the greatest rewards in heaven, because look at the tremendous fruit of his ministry. But I am convinced that there are others who will receive either as great or even greater honor than will Billy Graham who you have never heard of. You've never known them. They never did make front page or even back page. But yet people who have been faithful to that service, to which God has employed them, whether it be intercessory closet prayer that nobody knows anything about, and I think when we get to heaven we are going to be surprised when we see those who are sitting on the front row. Where did they come from? Never heard of them before. And yet the true faithful saints of God, who have been obedient to the bidding of the Lord to go into the vineyard, and no matter what place, what time, it is their faithfulness to the call of God in going for which God makes the reward.

In fact, I do believe that many times those who have been called to a more prominent ministry will actually receive a much lesser reward because we get so much reward now. There is such tremendous reward just in being able to minister to people, the feedback that comes from it is so rewarding. And yet the Lord says, we get the penny, and so that's good enough for me.

Now the Lord does here point out, "look if I want to be good, if I want to extend grace, you shouldn't really complain about the grace that I extend. What is mine, is mine to do with as I please." And so they were actually thinking evil, because of His good.

Then Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and he said unto them, [now He is on the way, there is probably great multitudes, but He takes the twelve apart] He said, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him and the third day he shall rise again (Mat 20:17-19).

Now this is their final trip to Jerusalem. When they get to Jerusalem, those culminating events of the life of Jesus are going to take place. He's been with them now for almost three years, and He feels it necessary to draw them now into that more intimate fellowship with His suffering, as He has set His face to go to Jerusalem, knowing exactly what awaits Him there. And He prophesied so accurately the things.

First of all, He is going to be betrayed. Judas one of the twelve, who is listening to Him, will be the one who betrays Him. He is first of all betrayed by Judas to the chief priests, because Judas made a bargain with the priests to turn Jesus over to them. But they in turn will deliver Him to the Gentiles, who will first of all mock Him. They put upon Him a scarlet robe, and they begin to say unto Him, "Hail king of the Jews," and they mocked Him. And then Pilate delivered Him unto them to be scourged. Jesus said, "They will scourge me."

I am certain that there is much about the scourging about Jesus that we do not fully understand. It is not an accident that Jesus was scourged. He here is predicting the fact that He is going to be scourged. The scourging was an extremely painful experience. The prisoner would be tied to a post in such a way, as your back would be stretched. And then they would take a leather whip, with little bits of lead and glass, embedded in it. And they would lay this leather whip across the back, and it was so designed, that when they pulled it back up to rip up pieces of flesh.

The purpose of the scourging was the third-degree Roman style. The idea was you were to confess the crimes that you had committed against Rome, and as you confessed your crimes, the man who was administering that scourging would go easier and easier on you. But if you were silent and refused to confess your crimes, then each time he would lay the whip on heavier, and heavier, until you'd be forced to cry out your crime against the Roman government.

Herein is where the prophecy of Isaiah really stands out: "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Which means that each lash that was laid upon Him, was laid with greater ferocity, as they were seeking to elicit from Him some confession of wrong, but He had done no wrong. Isaiah prophesied the fact that He would be scourged, but in prophesying the fact, Isaiah tells us the reason.

Now do you think that God the Father would allow His Son to suffer unnecessarily? If you do, you have a different concept of God than I do. I do not believe that God would just allow His Son to take all of that suffering, if there were not some value to be received from that suffering. And thus as Isaiah predicts the scourging, the stripes, he declares, "by His stripes ye are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

In the eighth chapter of Matthew as it tells of them bringing all of their sick and those who were diseased to Jesus, and He healed them, every one, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, "He in His own body bore our sufferings." And Peter quoting Isaiah looking back at that scourging said, "by His stripes, ye were, past tense, healed" (1Peter 2:24). Now Paul the apostle as he is talking to the Corinthian Church about their abuse of the Love feast, where they were remembering the broken body of Jesus and His blood that was shed for our sins, Paul said, "that which I received from the Lord, I delivered also unto you. That the same night that in which Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, and when He had broken it, He said, take eat this is my body which is broken for you. And after the supper He took the cup, likewise and said, this cup is a new covenant in my blood, which is shed

for the remission of sins, and as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death, until He comes"(1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

And then Paul warned the Corinthians about the manner in which they did partake of the Lord's supper. Warning them against that casual, careless attitudes in which many of them were receiving it. Warning those who were using this Love feast as an excuse just to sort of gorge themselves, and they were not really realizing the spiritual significance of these things.

And he said, "If a person eats or drinks in an unworthy manner, he is eating and drinking damnation to his own soul"(1Corinthians 11:26). And then he said interesting things for this cause; "There are many who are weak and sick among you, because they do not understand the Lord's body"(1Corinthians 11:30).

Now what did Jesus mean when He broke the bread and said, "This is my body, broken for you"? He is talking about, no doubt, the scourging that He was going to receive, because it could not be that any of His bones should be broken. First of all, because the sacrifice that was offered to God could not have any blemish, any broken bones. Secondly, the prophecy of Psalms declared, "not a bone of Him shall be broken"(Psalms 34:20). Therefore He could not have any broken bones. Therefore when He said, "this is my body broken for you", He could not refer to some bones being broken, but His body was broken open by this scourging that He received.

Now according to the historians, this scourging was such an awful taxing thing upon the person that many people never made it to the cross. There were many who died right there as the result of the scourging itself. Many of them bleed to death. Jesus was no doubt very weakened by it. For they needed someone to help Him bear the cross. That scourging was for you. "That by His stripes you may be healed." Now Paul said if you understand this, when you partake of the broken bread, you can receive from God a work of His Spirit in your body.

Now many who do not understand this, are weak and sick, because they do not understand the Lord's body. They don't understand all of the provision that the Lord has made for them. By His stripes ye are healed, spiritually, yes, but I do not think that it can be limited to spiritual only, the whole context, and especially Matthew eight would extend it also to physical healing. And I believe that we can believe and trust Jesus Christ for physical healing, as well as spiritual healing. And I do believe that in communion there should always be healing services, where people as they take the broken bread and remember the suffering of Jesus Christ, by faith receive the result of that suffering; the purpose for which God allowed Him to be suffered, and receive healing and strength in your body. How many times during communion has God touched me physically, and ministered to me physically, as I received that work of Christ for my own physical need?

So Jesus predicts His crucifixion finally, and then rising again. So He is telling the disciples this was going to happen. We are going to Jerusalem. I am going to be betrayed. I'll be turned over to the chief priests. They in turn will give me to the Gentiles, the Romans. That they might mock me, scourge me, and crucify me, but I will rise again on the third day.

Now again whenever Jesus talked to His disciples about His death, this thought was so repulsive to them, their minds just turned off, and they never heard, "I am going to rise again on the third day." Just the idea of Him being crucified was so shocking, that their minds in trying to absorb that, lost everything else He said after that. And so they didn't really remember that He said He was going to rise the third day, until after the resurrection. Then they remembered, oh, yeah, He said He was going to rise on the third day.

Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children [now James and John were the sons of Zebedee and she came to Him] with her sons (Mat 20:20).

So little old Jewish mama coming to Jesus with her two sons. And every Jewish mother wants the best for her son. They are beautiful people. I love that family strength among them.

And she came worshiping him, and desiring a favor from him. And he said unto her, What is it that you want? And she said unto him, Grant that these my two boys may sit, the one your right hand, and the other on your left, in your kingdom (Mat 20:20-21).

Oh, you have to love the mothers, don't you?

But Jesus answered and said, You don't know what you are asking. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am going to be baptized with? And they said unto him, We're able (Mat 20:22).

Now notice, the mother is the one doing the speaking, but the boys are right there behind her. And who knows, but what they may have put her up to it, because when Jesus asked the question, they're ready to respond. "Oh, you bet you, we're able." Jesus of course was talking about His crucifixion and His death. He's being despised and rejected. Drinking of that cup.

And he said unto them, You shall indeed drink of my cup (Mat 20:23),

We read in the book of Acts that Herod stretched forth his hands against the church and had James beheaded. That's one of the two. You shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers. But Jesus called them unto him, and he said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [or servant]; And whosoever will be the chief among you, let him be the bondsman (Mat 20:23-27):

Jesus here is teaching the servanthood of the ministry and the path to greatness. It is tragic that we have gotten so far away from the concepts that Jesus taught. It is tragic that we have a professional ministry that so often seeks people to cater to it, rather than to realize that they are the servants of all. Jesus said that among the Gentiles there is this desire to exercise lordship and dominion over people. It is tragic that in church circles there is also that endeavor many times to exercise lordship and dominion over people.

One of the weird doctrines of the seventies was the shepherding doctrine, where so many men sought to establish themselves as the lords over the flock of God and causing people to submit to their authority. To where they exercised such dominion and authority and lordship over people, that they inserted themselves between the people and God. Rather than seeking God as to whether or not you should buy a new car, you had to seek your elder or your shepherd. And it really was a heavy bondage trip. And so anti what Jesus has declared.

"If you really want to be great in the kingdom of God, learn to be the servant of all. He that would be great among you, let him be your servant and if you want to be chief, then become the bondsman." And that's exactly what the word, "minister" means, servant. It doesn't mean someone who is to be looked up to, and someone who is to be catered to, and someone who is to be bowed to, and all of this kind of stuff, and do special favors because he is the minister. To take on the position of the minister is to take on the position of the servant to the flock of God. And I pray to God that we will never lose this concept of the ministry, that we are the servants of all.

It is so important that we maintain, because Jesus said,

I didn't come to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give my life as a ransom for many (Mat 20:28).

He didn't come that people might cater to Him and minister to Him, He came to minister to the people's needs.

And as they departed from Jericho (Mat 20:29),

They're on the way to Jerusalem; they've come down the Jordan Valley. They've come to Jericho. And now as they depart from Jericho,

a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, there were two blind men who were sitting by the way side, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, saying, Have mercy upon us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried out all the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and he called them, and said, What do you want me to do for you? And they said unto him, Lord, we want our eyes opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Mat 20:29-34).

Now we see Jesus leaving Jericho, a great multitude of people thronging around Him, and these two blind men hearing the multitude passing by, and observing all of the bustle and activities saying, "what's going on, what's happening?" And someone said, "Jesus is going by." Now they no doubt had heard of the fame of Jesus. I am certain that everyone that was afflicted had heard of the fame of Jesus. They had heard of the miracles that He had wrought, up in the area of Galilee, around Capernaum. And to these men who were blind, they saw this as their one opportunity for a whole new life. And so they began to cry out to Jesus. They couldn't see Him. They could probably tell the direction in the flow, the crowd, which direction He was, but they began to cry out to Jesus. And the multitude around them said, "Shut up, hold your peace." Try to discourage them from seeking Jesus. But they were so desperate, they weren't discouraged, they even cried louder, "Jesus, thou son of David have mercy on us."

And Jesus heard their cry and stood still. He said, "Call those fellows to me." And they no doubt led these two blind men to Jesus. And as they stood there with those clouds over their eyes, Jesus said, "What do you want?" They said, "Lord, if we could just see." And He had compassion upon them, and healed them. And they joined the crowd following Him on up to Jerusalem.

Remember at this point the heart of Jesus is very heavy, because He knows that He soon is going to be betrayed, mocked, scourged, crucified. And yet He takes time still to minister to the needs of others. He was never too busy to minister to individual needs. When a person's ministry gets so great, and they become so prominent that they lose touch with people, and they can no longer minister to people's individual needs, their ministry has become greater than their Lord. When it gets to where I have to sneak in the back door at the last minute, and sneak out before things are over, then I need to find something else to do, when you can no longer take time to minister to individuals.

Now these men of course do give to us a very beautiful picture of people who are blind in sin, and there is the spiritualizing of the text, crying out for Jesus. And everybody will always try to discourage you, but persist, for there is a whole new life.

**Matthew 21:1-46 (AMP)**

**1 AND WHEN** they came near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples on ahead, **2** Saying to them, Go into the village that is opposite you, and at once you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie [them] and bring [them] to Me. **3** If anyone says anything to you, you shall reply, The Lord needs them, and he will let them go without delay. **4** This happened that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, **5** Say to the Daughter of Zion [inhabitants of Jerusalem], Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey [a beast of burden]. **6** Then the disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. **7** They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their coats upon them, and He seated Himself on them [the clothing]. **8** And most of the crowd kept spreading their garments on the road, and others kept cutting branches from the trees and scattering them on the road. **9** And the crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed Him kept shouting, Hosanna (O be propitious, graciously inclined) to the Son of David, [the Messiah]! Blessed (praised, glorified) is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna (O be favorably disposed) in the highest [heaven]! **10** And when He entered Jerusalem, all the city became agitated and [trembling with excitement] said, Who is This? **11** And the crowds replied, This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. **12** And Jesus went into the temple (whole temple enclosure) and drove out all who bought and sold in the sacred place, and He turned over the four-footed tables of the money changers and the chairs of those who sold doves. **13** He said to them, The Scripture says, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers. **14** And the blind and the lame came to Him in the porches and courts of the temple, and He cured them. **15** But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did and the boys and the girls and the youths and the maidens crying out in the porches and courts of the temple, Hosanna (O be propitious, graciously inclined) to the Son of David! they were indignant. **16** And they said to Him, Do You hear what these are saying? And Jesus replied to them, Yes; have you never read, Out of the mouths of babes and unweaned infants You have made (provided) perfect praise? **17** And leaving them, He departed from the city and went out to Bethany and lodged there. **18** In the early dawn the next morning, as He was coming back to the city, He was hungry. **19** And as He saw one single leafy fig tree above the roadside, He went to it but He found nothing but leaves on it [seeing that in the fig tree the fruit appears at the same time as the leaves]. And He said to it, Never again shall fruit grow on you! And the fig tree withered up at once. **20** When the disciples saw it, they marveled greatly and asked, How is it that the fig tree has withered away all at once? **21** And Jesus answered them, Truly I say to you, if you have faith (a firm relying trust) and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, it will be done. **22** And whatever you ask for in prayer, having faith and [really] believing, you will receive. **23** And when He entered the sacred enclosure of the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came up to Him as He was teaching and said, By what power of authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this power of authority? **24** Jesus answered them, I also will ask you a question, and if you give Me the answer, then I also will tell you by what power of authority I do these things. **25** The baptism of John—from where was it? From heaven or from men? And they reasoned and argued with one another, If we say, From heaven, He will ask us, Why then did you not believe him? **26** But if we say, From men—we are afraid of and must reckon with the multitude, for they all regard John as a prophet. **27** So they answered Jesus, We do not know. And He said to them, Neither will I tell you by what power of authority I do these things. **28** What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He came to the first and said, Son, go and work today in the vineyard. **29** And he answered, I will not; but afterward he changed his mind and went. **30** Then the man came to the second and said the same [thing]. And he replied, I will [go], sir; but he did not go. **31** Which of the two did the will of the father? They replied, The first one. Jesus said to them, Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the harlots will get into the kingdom of heaven before you. **32** For John came to you walking in the way of an upright man in right standing with God, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots did believe him; and you, even when you saw that, did not afterward change your minds and believe him [adhere to, trust in, and rely on what he told you]. **33** Listen to another parable: There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a hedge around it and dug a wine vat in it and built a watchtower. Then he let it out [for rent] to tenants and went into another country. **34** When the fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his [share of the] fruit. **35** But the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. **36** Again he sent other servants, more than the first time, and they treated them the same way. **37** Finally he sent his own son to them, saying, They will respect and give heed to my son. **38** But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, This is the heir; come on, let us kill him and have his inheritance. **39** And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. **40** Now when the owner of the vineyard comes back, what will he do to those tenants? **41** They said to Him, He will put those wretches to a miserable death and rent the vineyard to other tenants of such a character that they will give him the fruits promptly in their season. **42** Jesus asked them, Have you never read in the Scriptures: The very Stone which the builders rejected and threw away has become the Cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? **43** I tell you, for this reason the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce the fruits of it. **44** And whoever falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom It falls will be crushed to powder [and It will winnow him, scattering him like dust]. **45** And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables (comparisons, stories used to illustrate and explain), they perceived that He was talking about them. **46** And although they were trying to arrest Him, they feared the throngs because they regarded Him as a prophet.

**Chapter 21**

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, they were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, and then Jesus sent two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and immediately you're going to find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any men say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord has need of them; and immediately he will send them. Now all of this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put their clothes, and they sat him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches from the trees, and placed them in the path. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee (Mat 21:1-11).

The triumphant entry of Jesus on what is traditionally known as Palm Sunday. So we are moving into the final week; for it is during this week that Jesus will be betrayed, scourged, crucified. Luke gives us a fuller account of this particular day, and inasmuch as we'll be moving through to Luke, we'll save much of the comments on the triumphant entry of Christ, until we get to Luke's gospel.

I would like to point out that the disciples, the multitudes that are crying after Jesus are actually crying forth a messianic psalm, Psalm 118, where David there in prophecy concerning the Messiah talks about the stone that would be set, of not by the builders, but the same becoming the chief cornerstone, "this is the work of God. It's marvelous in our eyes"(Psalms 118:23). And then he declares, "This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it"(Psalms 118:24). What day? The day that God has made for man's deliverance. The day that God has set for the Messiah to come. This is that day.

And then as you go in to verse twenty-five of Psalms 118, the Hebrew is Hosanna, "Save now, I beseech thee O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We have blessed thee out of the house of the Lord". So they are crying out this, "save now", from the Psalms 118, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Save now in the highest." And they are crying for the Messiah to save. An appropriate cry. It's an appropriate psalm for the occasion. This is the day that God had ordained to bring the kingdom of God to man.

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and he cast out all of them that sold and bought in the temple, and he overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and he said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you've made it a den of thieves (Mat 21:12-13).

He cast all of the merchandisers out of the temple grounds. Now these merchandisers were crooked. The moneychangers were there to exchange the Roman currency into the temple shekels, because you could not give Roman currency to God. They had a tradition against that. The only offering that you could give to God would be the temple shekel. So these moneychangers were conveniently there in the temple to change your Roman currency for the temple shekel. The only thing is that they were gouging the people. The people knowing that they had to have the temple shekel, these men were charging them absorbent prices for the temple shekel; and thus, they themselves were racking of a part of the profit which they split with the priest, with whom they were in cahoots.

Also, out on the street you could buy a dove for just a few cents, really, they were about twenty-five cents for a dove out on the street. But these who were selling doves in the temple precincts had the seal, the priest's seal on the dove, and they were going for five dollars apiece because they were kosher. They had been approved by the priest. So if you bought one out on the street, because you could not offer to God anything that was blemished, if it didn't have the little seal on it, when you brought it to the priest, he would look carefully over it until he would find some blemish and say, "I can't offer this to God; take it." And he had this thing going, a kickback. You know, you got the seal, you got the little imprint, yeah, this one is fine. You've paid the five bucks for it. We'll offer this one. Men who designed to make profit off of the desire of people to worship God; those who would profit off of religion, those who design schemes by which they might profit off of the people's desire to worship God. And Jesus was upset with this. He said, "You've made my Father's house a den of thieves." He drove them out. The Bible said, "My Father's house shall be a house of prayer, you've changed it, you've perverted it, you've made it a den of thieves." And then once it was cleansed of this merchandising we see the temple as God intended it to be.

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them (Mat 21:14).

Where people really begin to experience the work of God in their lives, that's what the temple was intended, for people to come and receive God's work in their lives. Not to be bothered by a lot of hucksters, calling out their wares, and making it a big marketplace, merchandise, rip-offs, but a place where people can come and receive the touch of God upon their lives. And it was fulfilled, as the blind and the lame came to Him, and He healed them.

Now when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children were crying in the temple, saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were very displeased, and they said unto him, Do you hear what they are saying? And Jesus said unto them, of course; have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he left them, and went out of the city to Bethany; and he stayed there (Mat 21:15-17).

Jesus did not spend His time in Jerusalem during His last week, but spent it there in Bethany and came into Jerusalem each day. But here to me it is so beautiful, the children, who were always attracted to Jesus, crying out, "Hosanna," and as the scribes and Pharisees would get upset with this, Jesus just quoted them the psalms, "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, God's perfected praise"(Psalms 8:2).

Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he was hungry. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and he found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and he said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee, henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, Did you see how quick that fig tree withered away! And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if you have faith, and doubt not, you shall not only say to this which is done to the fig tree, but also if you shall say unto the mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Mat 21:18-22).

A very broad promise for prayer. You must note that it was made to the disciples and what constitutes discipleship. "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me"(Mat 16:24). Prayer is never to be used for our own lust or desires, to enrich ourselves. James said, "you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you might consume it upon your own lust"(James 4:3). The purpose of prayer isn't really to get my will done; the purpose of prayer is to get God's will done. And that person who is a disciple, the person who has denied himself to take up his cross to follow Jesus Christ, is more concerned in God's will, than he is his own will. And that man has power in prayer and this promise is for that man. It's not a general promise to anybody.

Whatever things you desire, you know, you desire a new Cadillac, or whatever, maybe you want a Mercedes, all things, whatever; no, it isn't a broad promise to just fulfill any whim or wish or fleshly desire that you have. This promise is made to those men who have denied self, the self-life, and taken up their cross to follow Jesus.

Now this parable of the fig tree; it's the first time Jesus used His power in judgement. Up until now He's always used His power to bless, to help, to heal. First time it's used in judgement. It is interesting when Jesus was quoting the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Himself when He was in the Synagogue in Nazareth.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to mend the brokenhearted, to set the captive at liberty, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And then He closed the book and didn't go any further. The rest of that prophesy the next phrase is, and to declare the day of the judgement of our God. But that was not yet, that would come. But this is the first time Jesus used His miraculous powers and judgement and it sort of surprised the disciples. Not that He cursed the fig tree, but how quickly the curse was fulfilled. It withered so rapidly.

Now if there were leaves on the tree, now you say it was, well, it was April the time of the Passover; it's too early for figs. It isn't far that He would curse the fig tree for not having any figs in April, over there in Israel certain of the fig trees have what they call the first ripe fruit.

When we are there, and we usually go in February, you will see large figs. Usually there are no leaves. These figs come out first. They are called the first ripe figs. And even by late February, early March, these figs are quite well developed, and it is actually not until April or so, or middle of March, where the leaves really begin to come out on the fig trees. But if you notice a fig tree, the figs always come out before the leaves. So if there were leaves on the tree, there should have been some of these first ripe figs. And of course, there would have been the forming new, little figs of the regular fig crop. There were no figs, only leaves. It was not fulfilling the purpose for which God has created a fig tree; it wasn't bringing forth fruit, and thus, it was cursed.

Now, the nation of Israel in the Bible has been typified as a fig tree. In Jeremiah chapter twenty-three, God speaks of the basket of good and evil figs. And He likens it unto the nation of Israel. The basket of evil figs, so evil they could not be eaten, were to be cast out. In Joel and in Hosea also there is that figure of the fig tree for the nation of Israel. And this, no doubt, is symbolic as well as actual. But the symbolism was of the nation Israel, failing to bring forth fruit for the Master, was to be cursed, withered. And that of course is exactly what did happen, so quickly after the death of Jesus. Their rejection of Him, so quickly the nation withered and died.

Now when he was come to the temple, the chief priest and the elders came unto him as he was teaching, and they said, By what authority do you do these things? and who gave you the authority? (Mat 21:23)

You see, He was coming now the next day, the day before He had gotten rid of all the moneychangers, and those who were selling doves, and all. And so now the chief priests and all are challenging Him, "by what authority, and who gave you the authority to do these things?"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I'll ask you one thing, which of you tell me, I will likewise tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? was it from heaven or men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we will say, From heaven; then he will say unto us, Why didn't you believe him? But if we say, Of men; we fear the people; for they all believed that John was a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We can not tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things (Mat 21:24-27).

The baptism of John. The people counted John as a prophet, but John was not the Light. But he was sent to bear witness of the Light, that was the true Light, "that lightest every man that cometh in the world". And John said, "this is He," and he pointed to Christ. Now if they accepted the authority of John, then they would also have to accept that of Jesus.

If they would accept that John's authority was from heaven, because John bore witness of Jesus and said, "Behold the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, this is it, whom I spake, who came before me, because He was preferred before me, and I am not worthy to untie His shoes"(John 1:29). John's witness of Christ; if they accepted that his authority was from heaven, then they would find the place where Jesus had His authority, John bore witness of Jesus. So in asking them, of course they were in an impossible position, because they had rejected John, and yet the people, the popular opinion was that John was indeed a prophet. So they were stuck.

Now Jesus said,

What do you think? (Mat 21:28)

And this whole question of authority and John, and so forth is in this next part here. He is now going to give to parables, and He is asking them in the parables to give Him the answer. He is creating a situation. He says, "Now what's right?" And He is letting them answer it. And it's not until they've answered the two; that suddenly, whop, they realize, "Hey, that was us. He got us. He was directing that at us".

What do you think? There was a certain man who had two sons; and he came to the first, and he said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I'll go, sir: but he did not. Now whether of the two did the will of the father? They said unto him,

The first. Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, [He is coming back to John] and you believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and you, when you had seen it, did not afterward repent, that you might believe him (Mat 21:28-32).

Now the parable, of course, is directed against them. The publicans and the harlots were the son who said, "no" to the kingdom of God. They were the ones who were living in sin and turned their backs upon God, but they were the ones who later repented, and went out, and served. Whereas the Pharisees are those who render to God lip service, "Oh, I'll go; yes sir" and they render to God only lip service, but did not really serve God, only lip service.

And so which one really does the will of God, the one that repents and goes, or the one who just says he will go, but doesn't? God doesn't really count lip service. The Bible says to rend your heart, not your garments unto the Lord. There is a lot of outward religion. God is interested in your heart.

A lot of people go through outward motions of religion. The rending of their garments, the tearing of their garments was a sign of tremendous emotional feelings, and all, that a person may have. Rip my clothes, you know, oh, I am moved with emotions. God says, "Look, I don't want your emotional outbursts, I want your heart; I want really to be a matter of the changed life, that comes from the heart. Not just an outward observance, not just an outward show, not an outward form, I want it to be done in the heart." So when they answered Him, you know, "The one who went out". Jesus said "Yes, and the publicans and harlots are going to go in the kingdom of God before you do."

He is easy on them right now. When we get to chapter twenty-three, He is going to really lay them low. He is building up to it. And then He points back to John, how that the publicans and harlots went out and repented, and were baptized; but how they, even after they saw it and realized, would not even afterward repent.

Now hear another parable: [He is going to hit them again.] There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it (Mat 21:33)

Now He is referring to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah five, which they all knew so very well. The minute He announces this vineyard, which was hedged, and the winepress and all, this is exactly what Isaiah describes of the nation of Israel. How God planted the vineyard, and He came at time to gather the fruit, and all there was, was wild grapes. And how He just let the vineyard go. And they knew that this vineyard was representative of the nation Israel.

Now another parable: this householder which planted a vineyard, hedged it round about, digged a winepress in it, built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruit of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let's kill him, and we will seize the inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. Now when the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those husbandmen?" And they said unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons (Mat 21:34-41).

They again trapped themselves.

For Jesus said, Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected (Mat 21:42),

Now He is taking them back actually to the "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," same psalm.

the same has become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, it's marvelous in our eyes. Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God (Mat 21:42-43)

And this is the prophecy against the nation Israel, the religious leaders.

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall upon this stone [the stone which was set of naught of the builders or Jesus Christ] shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they then perceived that he was speaking of them. And they sought to lay hands on him, but they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet (Mat 21:43-46).

So Jesus is predicting to them that the kingdom will be taken from them, and so quickly it was. And the gospel was preached first to the Jews, but with their rejection, the gospel came to the Gentiles. And of course the main thing that God is seeking, is fruit.

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, my Father is the husbandman, every branch in me that bringeth forth fruit, He purges it, that it might bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word. Abide in Me, that my words abide in you, that ye may bring forth much fruit, for herein is my Father glorified"(John 15:1-4). So the Lord's desire is that we bring forth fruit unto Him. The natural vine did not do it. So those husbandmen were cast forth from the vineyard, and He gives the vineyard, the kingdom to others, who will bring forth fruit for Him.

And then that, and there is so much to be said concerning the stone which was set up, not of the builders. If you fall on it, you will be broken. But if He falls on you, then He'll grind you to powder. You're going to have one of two relationships to Jesus Christ, either as your Lord and Savior, or as your Judge. If you fall upon Him in repentance, you will be broken, true, but you'll come into a new, full, rich life. If He is your Judge, you'll be ground to powder. The two aspects, the two faces of Christ, by which people will face Him.

(Through The Bible c 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible commentaries,1979-1986)

The Lord bless you and watch, guard, and keep you;

The Lord make His face to shine upon and enlighten you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His {approving} countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

( Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 1399-1402)

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