

Matthew 21:28-32 | Mark Minnella

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's not spring yet, but I guess we fell back. Is that what we did? Yeah, so it's daylight savings now. We get more sunshine. Hopefully. Well, we lost an hour. That's a fell back to me.

But I'm going to do my best to keep you awake. So I know everybody missed an hour of sleep, and that's a fell back to me. So that's what I'm saying. I lost an hour of sleep. You did. So these two fish, they were swimming along, and they hit a concrete wall, and one turns to the other one and says, damn.

Oh, Mark. Damn. Takes a little while. Sorry. Little shock. Get everybody's blood going. Okay. See? Look, did he say that? D-A-M. That kind of damn. Yeah, that kind of damn. I have a lot of jokes about unemployment, but none of them work.

You know what a pessimist blood type is? B-negative. What do you call it when you feed dynamite to a bull? Abominable. Figure that out.

You hear they open the first restaurant on the moon. Great food, but no atmosphere. What's the difference between a hippo and a zippo? Well, one is really heavy, and the other's a little lighter.

[1 : 31] Ooh. All right, all right. What did the big flower say to the little flower? Hey, bud. Oh, boy. They're getting worse. All right. Where does a waitress with only one leg work?

IHOP. IHOP. My teacher told me I'd never amount to much since I tended to procrastinate a lot. I told him, just you wait.

What do you call a cow with a nervous twitch? Beef jerky. Okay. Our passage is Matthew 21, 28 to 32.

And it says this. What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. Are we up? No. But give it a minute. We're going to put it up here for you, and you don't have to be looking at your phone probably.

I don't know. What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, Son, go and work today in the vineyard. I will not, he answered.

[2 : 35] But later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, I will, sir. But he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?

The first, they answered. Jesus said to them, Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him.

But the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. Let's pray. Father, we just thank you for your word.

We thank you for this passage here. And God, I just pray that you would enlighten us, that you would help us to draw from this passage, and that we would be changed for the better because of it. Amen. So this passage kind of hits home for me because I have two sons. Growing up, my youngest son, Joseph, he was more like the first son.

[3 : 37] I'd tell him to do something. He was a stubborn little guy, and he'd say, I'm not going to do it. And then he'd go and he'd think about it a little bit, and then he'd just go do it. My other son, Daniel, has ADD.

And so I'd tell him to do something. Yeah, I'll do it. And then I'd come back later, and I'd check. Oh, Dad, sorry, I forgot. I thought Teddy did a really good job last week of setting up the situation that we have here.

So just a brief review, okay? We're in the final week of Jesus' public ministry called the Passion Week by many. And so I provided a timeline on the back of your handout, okay?

So you can look at that on your own. Not now. And so in Matthew, this week, this last week of Jesus' life, it takes up from chapter 21 to chapter 28.

And you'll find that in most of the Gospels, the last week of Jesus' ministry takes up a big chunk, okay? Matthew probably provides the most detailed account because remember that this book, Matthew, was written primarily to a Jewish audience, okay?

[4 : 53] Since we have a short passage, I'm going to take a couple little detours, try to keep you awake here. Four Gospels, all right? Each one with a different audience in mind. So John, the Apostle John, who wrote the book of Revelation, he was called, he was carried to heaven when he wrote this book.

And maybe in a dream, he doesn't know, but he was carried to heaven and he gets this vision. And he gets to see the throne room of Jesus. And here's the description in Revelation chapter 4, verses 6 and 7.

In the center around the throne were four living creatures. The first living creature was a lion. The second was like an ox. The third had the face of a man.

And the fourth was like a flying eagle. And so when we talk about the four Gospels, each writer portrays a different facet or a different look of Jesus.

It's like a diamond. When you turn it, you see many facets. And so each one of these writers has an audience and it portrays Jesus in a certain way. And so Matthew was written primarily to a Jewish audience.

[6 : 00] And it portrays Jesus as the promised Messiah. Symbolized by the lion. The lion of the tribe of Judah. Okay. In Mark, the audience was different.

It was primarily a Roman audience. And so Jesus is portrayed as the suffering servant. Symbolized by the ox, a beast of burden, who carried our sins. Luke was written primarily to a Greek audience. And so it portrays Jesus as the Son of Man. And that's symbolized by the face of a man. And John, John was written to show the world how to get to heaven, really. If you look at John chapter 20 and verse 31, John's the only one that does this.

But he says exactly why he wrote his Gospel. He was the last one to write. He wrote after everybody. And so he's not like Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He writes a different Gospel.

And he says, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. And by believing, you may have life in his name.

[6 : 58] That's why John wrote. So John presents Jesus as the Son of God. Symbolized by the heavenly creature, the flying eagle. Now back to our passage in Matthew 21.

We have the triumphal entry on Sunday. That's called Palm Sunday by many people. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a colt. This is the Passover week. So Jerusalem is flooded with Jews from all over the place.

Crowded all over. And so there's huge crowds. So Jesus then leaves. And he spends the night in Bethany, two miles away, a little town. Some people say with Martha and Mary.

Then Monday, he goes back to Jerusalem. And on Monday, he cleanses the temple. And then he returns to Bethany again Monday night. Tuesday, which is where we are now.

Okay, we're Tuesday. He goes back to Jerusalem. And on the walk, you remember he cursed the fig tree.

[7 : 57] And then in verse 23, it says he entered the temple. The Jewish leaders question him as to his authority. What authority are you teaching under? And he answers them with a question. Now, it wasn't that Jesus didn't want to answer the question.

But what he wanted to prove was, you're not ready for the answer. And so he answers their question with a question. And so you might remember from last week that he asked them about John's baptism.

Was the ministry of John the Baptist from heaven? Or was it from men? Well, the Jewish leaders are afraid to answer because most of the people there held John to be a prophet, which he was. He was the first prophet in Israel in 400 years. Well, they say, well, if we agree, then he will say, why didn't you listen to John? And so they say, we don't know.

We don't know. Jesus says, well, neither will I tell you under what authority I'm doing this. So we now come to our passage.

[8 : 58] This is the continuation then of Jesus still teaching in the temple. Jesus is a master storyteller. And so he uses three parables here in Matthew. Okay. Only the second one is recorded

in Luke and Mark.

The Gospel of John has no parables at all. So there's a principle in biblical hermeneutics. That's my big word for the day.

Okay. Simply means the science of Bible interpretation. Okay. So all good Bible scholars would say this. We don't teach doctrine based on parables.

Okay. These are illustrations given to prove a point. But Jesus did tell these stories for a reason. And so I think we can learn from them. So all three of these parables that are in Matthew are aimed at the Jewish religious leaders and anyone who's following them.

All right. So the man has two sons. He gives the same command to both sons. The first son says no, but later changes his mind and goes and obeys the father.

[10:05] The second son says, I will, sir. But he does not go. So Jesus asked the crowd there as he's teaching there in the temple courts. He says, which of the two did what he wanted?

And they answer, well, the first one. Jesus begins then telling the religious leaders that the tax collectors and the prostitutes would be entering the kingdom of heaven and they would not.

Why? Well, the common people, the sinners, they actually listened to the message of John the Baptist. And while in some cases, maybe they didn't respond immediately, later they did.

And it's pretty clear they believed. And some of them are right there in the temple court listening to Jesus teach. Quick question. Do you think they were saved? Those tax collectors and prostitutes.

Think about it. We're going to come back to that. The religious leaders, they came out to see John the Baptist. They did. But they never responded to his message. In Matthew chapter 3 and verse 7, John the Baptist calls them a brood of vipers.

[11:08] A phrase that Jesus repeats in Matthew 12, 34. He says, you brood of vipers. How can you who are evil say anything good?

These men were supposed to know. They were supposed to know the truth from the scriptures. They were the teachers and the leaders. They didn't just accidentally miss the message.

No, this was willful. Matthew 15, 1 through 9. Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat. Now this isn't this kind of washing. This was a ceremonial washing, okay? Not a sanitary washing, right?

Notice the word in there, tradition, right? Okay, so this is, Jesus then replied, why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, honor your father and mother.

[12:10] And anyone who curses his father or mother is to be put to death. But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been given to help their father or mother is devoted to God, then they're not to honor their mother or father with it.

So they take what they could have helped their parents with and give it to the Lord. And he says, therefore, you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

You hypocrites. Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain.

Their teachings are merely human rules. Jesus' harshest words were directed to the outwardly religious, especially the leaders and teachers.

In Matthew 23, 27, he says, Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, and on the inside are full of bones of the dead and everything unclean.

[13:13] Pretty graphic. Pretty graphic. And I wonder if, like me, you're thinking, how arrogant, how arrogant these religious leaders are.

Well, Jesus sure thought they were. In three places in Matthew, he called them blind guides. Leave them alone. They're blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

You blind guides, you strain out a nap, but you swallow a camel. And for me, I can't help but think that these religious leaders are much like many of the religious leaders today.

They don't have the truth, just rules, regulation, and religion. Anyone who says that our religion is the only way is arrogant, just like these men were.

What they're saying is, God, I know better than you do. I know better than you do. And Jesus' answer would be the same. You will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[14:15] Now, for those of us who are saved, we know it's not religion. It's relationship, right? John 14, 6.

I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Romans 6, 23. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The religion I grew up in, they said they had all the answers. Every time I got a question, I felt like they never answered it completely, but they said they had the answers.

When I was in my 20s, at the behest of some of my friends, I began reading the scriptures, and I found the truth.

Praise God. I believe personally that religion keeps more people out of heaven than almost anything else. I really do. I think it's sad.

[15:12] Okay, so I always say that a message can only be about one thing, and we kind of covered that, so if you want to go to sleep now, it's okay. But since we have a few minutes left, I would like to cover something that's been a source of confusion for a lot of people, and that is this message of the kingdom.

The kingdom is mentioned many times in the Gospels. Jesus talked a lot about the kingdom, but not every time he talked about the kingdom. It was talking about someone being born again or being saved.

We, well, I guess it's probably been two years ago, we did this little book by Lucas Kitchen, if you guys remember this. It's salvation and discipleship, and the difference between.

A lot of confusion. There's a lot of really smart people who are in Christendom who don't know the difference and can't understand the difference between when Jesus is talking about being a disciple and following him and being saved and entering the kingdom.

And so, in John 3.3, remember John wrote his Gospel so that we would know how to get to heaven. That's why he wrote it. John 3.3, Jesus says, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he's born again.

[16:33] In verse 5, he says, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he's born of water and the Spirit. Now, we can see a couple things from this passage. Jesus is telling this religious guy, Nicodemus, he's one of the religious rulers, he sneaks off to Jesus at night because he's afraid of the rest of the Jews, and Jesus is telling them how to get to heaven.

This is it. This is the message right here. Those of you that have children, you know that they're born through water, right? The woman's water breaks, then comes the baby, okay?

So, that's the natural birth. And what Jesus is saying to this man is, that's not enough. You need a spiritual birth. You need a second birth. You need to be born again. And what I want us to see today is that entering the kingdom is that second birth.

So, when a person enters the kingdom, they are saved. They're born again. Those tax collectors and prostitutes, they're entering the kingdom.

We're going to see some of those people in heaven. But sometimes confusion occurs when the phrase inheriting the kingdom is used.

[17:46] And this is not the same. I went to the kitchen book, and I really, he does a great job, so I would encourage you. He does a great job separating these out. So, a little story might help with illustration.

Let's say that there's an elderly person, and the elderly person has two children. While this person's alive, these two children, they could come and visit him and enter his house anytime they wanted. But, for some reason, the father chose to leave the house to one of them. That's called an inheritance. That's a reward. In the Gospels, when we see the phrase inherit the kingdom, it's always talking about rewards, not salvation.

Salvation is entering the kingdom. Rewards are inheriting the kingdom. I want both. I do. But they're separate and distinct.

And so, we need to be clear when we share the message of eternal life. Nothing is required to enter the kingdom. Right? Faith alone and Christ alone. Rewards, however, are earned.

[19:01] They're worked for. And so, they don't cloud the truth of what it takes for someone to enter the kingdom. I hope that helps. If anyone has any questions, I'd be happy to talk with you afterwards.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you, God, that it is, while difficult, sometimes it is clear to those who are willing to pursue the truth.

And I thank you again that we have the Holy Spirit in us. Those of us that have trusted in you, we're given the Holy Spirit so that by his help and by your grace that we can come to truth, not just for

salvation, Lord, but just for how we should be serving you while we're still here.
And we just await the time when we will be with you. Amen.