

Gospel of Matthew
Chapter 17:22-18:14
“The Father’s Will”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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April 2018

Teaching: We left off last week with **verse 21 of Matthew 17** ... where Jesus was explaining to His disciples why they’d been unable to cast a specific demon out of a tormented young man.

And as we pick it up this morning in **verse 22**, the Lord and His followers have left Caesarea Philippi and returned to home base.

Verses 22-23: They seem to have missed everything after the bad news that Jesus would be killed.

Q. When someone says, “Do you want the good news or the bad news”, what’s the first thing you do? -- If you’re like me, you start thinking about all the possible pieces of “bad news” they might give you ... even before you give them an answer.

It’s part of our fallen nature, I think, to key in on the negatives. Because when we allow that to happen ... it can drag us down to the point that we miss the glories.

If the disciples had only heard the Lord’s whole statement ... honestly they’d have had no reason to be “**deeply grieved**”. But they were focused on the cross and, as a result, they missed the joy of the resurrection.

Paul says ...

Philippians 4:8 ... whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Verses 24-27: This “two-drachma tax” was an annual tax, collected for the support of the temple. So, these temple tax collectors go to Peter and ask, “Does your teacher pay the temple tax?”

And as he often has, Peter skips right over that thinking thing ... and just speaks ... “Well sure He does!” With the obvious intention of running back to the house and asking ... “Uh Jesus ... do we pay the Temple tax?”, but Jesus preempts that with a question of His own.

His question though, wasn't so Jesus could get answers, but rather to help Peter understand. Jesus is the Son of the King. His Dad is the king of the temple ... so He really was exempt from such a tax.

But don't miss what the Lord does in **verse 27**. I count three in particular:

- 1.** He sets the example of what Paul says we must all do as Christians ...

1st Corinthians 8:9 ... take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

Jesus wasn't obligated to pay the tax, but if He'd exercised His relationship to the Father and others saw that, they might believe that they too were except and therefore sin by not obeying God's appointed authorities (**Mark 12:17 & Romans 13:1**).

- 2.** He covered Peter's error but didn't ignore it. He ministered to Peter ... explaining to him where he went wrong, but He also extended unconditional love.

Lamentations 3:22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning ...

Peter was no stranger to trouble caused by his big foot-shaped mouth. And Jesus certainly knew that this was an area of weakness for Peter. And yet He was longsuffering with that weakness. His compassions are truly new every morning!

- 3.** He solved the problem in a very unique and interesting way. He allowed Peter to play a role in the fix ... even using his specific talents.

Q. Remember what Peter was ... professionally? -- He was a fisherman. He, not only enjoyed fishing, but was good enough at it to make a living doing it.

And I find that particularly interesting because it was Peter's mistake that caused this problem ... but still the Lord says, "You blew it and I know you're bummed about that ... so go do what you enjoy Peter and I'll fix the problem through that!"

So much grace and mercy ... and yet ... the specificity of the Lord's instructions tell us that there's a lesson to be learned here as well. Notice that He specifically tells Peter to take the "first" fish.

Q. Why? -- Because the Lord loves to give us opportunities to recharge our batteries, but there's an important balance too. He wanted Peter to enjoy himself, so He says "Why don't you go fishing for a little while Pete. Go catch a fish, but then come on back and let's get some work done."

Chapter 18, verse 1: If you weren't with us last week, you may want to go to the website and listen to last week's study because it explains where this question comes from.

The disciples were jealous of one another because of the unique and individual ways God used each of them.

Listen to what **Mark's gospel** says about this exchange between Jesus and the disciples ...

Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" **34** But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. **35** Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Apparently, the disciples were pretty sure that what they were discussing was wrong ... that's why they tried to hide it instead of talking it over with Jesus, but let's just state for the record ... there's nothing that you can't talk over with the Lord!

Now scripture doesn't tell us who started this debate but it's interesting that it comes on the heels of Peter witnessing to the Lord's glorification with Moses and Elijah. And then being a participant in a fishing miracle!

But then again ... maybe it was James or even John.

Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. **21** And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine [James & John] may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

Some really wise guy said back in ...

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.

Verses 2-5:

Q. So what is it about a young child that Jesus wants us to emulate?

- 1.** Young children are completely uninterested in their own status. They're not clawing their way up the ladder of success.
- 2.** Little one's trust. When dad says it's OK ... then it's OK.

- 3.** Little children are generally openness and honest. In fact ... sometimes just a little too open and honest.
- 4.** And little ones are always eager to learn. They ask non-stop questions. They're little sponges.
- 5.** And they have a tendency to emulate.

Q. When a child's father is a car salesman or a truck driver or their mom's a doctor ... what does that young child want to grow up to be?

-- Children want to be like their parents.

And likewise ... our Heavenly Father wants us to want to be like Him. He wants us to grow up and be like Him.

So, Jesus says be like this child; content and trusting. Open and honest ... eager to learn and earnestly desiring to grow up to be like our Heavenly Father.

Verse 6-7: These stones were over 300 pounds ... leaving virtually no chance of survival ... you're going to the bottom.

But what's interesting is that Jesus says that would be preferable. To have 300 pounds tied around your neck and to be thrown in the sea would be a better deal for you. Holy Smokes!

Jesus is saying that if you're tempted to trip or otherwise abuse one of His children ... drowning yourself in saltwater would be a much better option than what would happen to you if you actually did trip or abuse them.

Which gives us a glimpse into the intensity of His love and protection.

Verses 8-9: WOW!

Q. This isn't getting easier is it? --

2nd Peter 2:19 ... by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

Sin is a cruel and deceptive slave-master. And if we choose to participate in it ... we can very quickly be overtaken by it.

My brother and I used to do a little trapping back in Oregon and what you may have read about in National Geographic is true ... a trapped animal really will chew off their own leg to get free.

I remember looking at each other in bewilderment ... wondering how in the world that skunk foot got into our trap all by itself. But a foot was all there was.

The point is simple, but it's also drastic ... if you have something in your life that you know causes you to sin or maybe causes a brother or sister to sin... CUT IT OFF!

- Is it a relationship that you know you shouldn't have?
- Is it alcohol?
- Is it your credit card?
- Is it donuts and pizza?
- Is it your internet connection?
- Is it your gossip partner?
- Is it your easy chair?
- Or is it any one of a hundred billion other things?

It's far better to go through life without the internet or that new dress or that relationship ... than to enter Hell for all eternity.

Q. Do you remember reading Matthew 11:28? –

Matthew 11:28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

It's a repeated invitation ... “Come to Me” the Lord says. But that's impossible if your leg's in a trap! So, maybe that skunk had it right after all!

Q. Are you willing to leave a foot in the trap if that's what it takes to be free

Verse 10-14:

Q. Just how much does God love us? – It's really a rhetorical question, because I don't think that human language has the right words to capture the enormity of it.

Verse 10 says that God has given your angel an open-door policy in Heaven. My angel can report to the Father every problem I'm having ... every block that I stumble over, and my angel even tells the Father who put that block in my path. Yours does the same thing.

Hebrews 1:14 says of angels in general ...

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Then in **verses 11-14** it's telling us, in story form, about the Father sending Jesus to find each and every lost sheep. Find them all and rescue those who would be saved.

Q. You know what? -- God really loves us!

And notice this ... the sheep this passage is talking about had strayed away from the Shepherd. In other words ... this sheep was outside of God's will. It was disobedient.

Which should remind us that God loves us just as much when we're doing what we shouldn't as when we're doing exactly what we should. Just as much when we're yelling at a coworker or gossiping or telling a lie ... as He does when we're here in church or reading our Bible.

His love is truly unconditional. Ponder the significance of that! It is unconditional!

Q. Can you comprehend that? – No ... neither can I, but I sure like the way it makes me feel when I ponder it!

Our Lord doesn't want to lose or miss a single one and He will search, and He will rescue to the last moment. So, it's not too late!

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Your Creator wants to eternally save you and make you a better person and He turns away no one who wants those things.

Conclusion:

Q. As we wrap up this morning, would you glance back to verse 3 with me please? -- It's there that Jesus offers these wise words ... "**BE CONVERTED AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN**".

Of course, He was speaking to the disciples, but those words are just as much for us as they were for them ... "**BE CONVERTED AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN**".

Q. Have you been converted? Have you ever prayed in faith for Christ's saving grace and mercy? Are you a saved person? -- If not, please hear me ... Christ's mercy cannot be obtained after you die so as **2nd Corinthians 6:2** says ... **today is the day of salvation**. So, if you're not a born-again follower of Jesus Christ ... you need to be and this morning is your time to make that decision.

If, on the other hand ... if you are a Christian ... signed sealed and delivered. Then, just like me, the Lord has challenged you to be child-like.

- To be humble and to trust Him with your wellbeing.
- To be open and honest ... to hide nothing behind the wall of our pride.
- To be eager to learn from our Father and from the letters He's given us.
- And even more ... to be eager to become more like Him.

- And with that, to recognize that becoming more like Him will require that I increasingly separate myself from the things of this world. That I “CUT OFF” my own access to, and affiliation with, things that are not pleasing to The Father.
- Not just the things that are displeasing to Him ... but the things that are not overtly pleasing to Him as well. And that’s an ongoing process that we, as Christians are expected to be participants in.

So, whether it’s the 1st or the 50th time ... seek the Lord and His will for your life. Surrender to Him and let Him shape you.

One of my all-time favorite sermons comes from a man who is not one of my favorite teachers. A Swedish minister, theologian and author by the name of Karl Barth. A man considered by many to be the most influential protestant theologian of the 20th century and honored on the cover of Time magazine and on a Swedish Postage Stamp.

And at a gathering in his honor ... after some 60 years in the ministry, he was asked to tell the gathered group the most profound truth that he’d come to know after all those years of serving the Lord.

Dr. Barth slowly made his way to the podium, stared at the audience for a moment and then with tears welling up in his eyes ... he began to sing ... off key and in an aged and crackly voice ... “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” He then returned to his seat.

After more than 60 years of learning and teaching. After more than 60 years of writing and serving ... the most profound truth to him was that Jesus loved him.

May that be to most profound thing that any of us know ... and may we each know it profoundly well. **Jesus loves you ... the Bibles tells you so!**