

Spiritual Insights 02 Matt 23:17

by William MacDonald

Our value comes from our association with the Lord Jesus Christ, and we must treat others with kindness and respect as a reflection of how we treat Jesus.

Duration: 31:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 23:17, Matthew 25:40, Matthew 25:45, John 5:24, John 14:6, Romans 10:9

Topics: "Spiritual Insights"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of serving others in order to serve Jesus. He shares a story about a man who eagerly prepared for the visit of his master, but instead encountered a beggar, an old lady, and a lost child. The man selflessly helped each of them, not realizing that they were actually Jesus in disguise. The speaker then references Matthew 25:40, where Jesus states that whatever we do for the least of his brethren, we do for him. He explains that this verse is about the judgment of nations when Jesus returns, and how those who have shown kindness and compassion will be considered sheep nations. The sermon concludes with a prayer, urging listeners to trust in Jesus for forgiveness and to use their resources for the kingdom of God.

Transcript

insights with you from the Word of God. We'll just take up individual verses of scripture and try to draw some teaching out of them. And the first one I'd like to look at with you is in Matthew 23 and verse 17.

I'll read the verse first, but then we're going to have to go over and and read the whole paragraph, I think. Matthew 23, verse 17. Ye fools and blind, for whether is greater the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold.

Now that probably doesn't mean very much to you, does it? And I don't blame you. You have to get it in its context. So go back to verse 16.

The Lord Jesus is speaking to the scribes and the Pharisees and he says, Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing. But whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind, for whether is greater the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold.

And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing. This is what they said. But whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Ye fools and blind, for whether is greater the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift. Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it and by him that dwelleth therein.

He that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God and by him that sitteth thereon. Now here the Lord Jesus is dealing with some rules that the scribes and the Pharisees made up. They really weren't a part of the word of God at all.

And they made some very false distinctions. For instance, they said, If you swore by the temple, by the building itself, you didn't have to do what you promised to do. But if you swore by the gold in the temple, you better do it.

If you took an oath, made a covenant or a promise and you swore by the altar, it was a matter of little indifference whether you did what you said you'd do or not. But if you swore by the gift that's upon the altar, you were really responsible to carry out what you said you would do. You say that sounds kind of dumb.

Well, it was kind of dumb. That's what the Lord Jesus needs to show here. But he asked an interesting question here.

He asked, whether is greater, which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? They thought the gold was the thing of value and that the temple really wasn't very important. And Jesus is saying here, it's the temple that gives value to the gold and not the gold that gives value to the temple. Now there's some real spiritual truth for us in this, and I want you to think about it.

He said, it's the altar that gives value to the sacrifice, not the sacrifice that gives value to the altar. See, they had their sense of values all twisted, perverted, warped. They weren't seeing things the way God sees them, but they were seeing them pretty much the way people see them today.

For instance, if most people went into a building today and saw it spangled with gold, they would measure the value of the building by the gold that was in it. The Lord Jesus is saying that the temple was the house of God, and the great value of the gold was that it was privileged to be in the house of God. The highest honor that any gold could have in Jesus' day was to be used in the house of God.

The highest honor that could come to any lamb living in Jesus' day was to be offered on the altar of God. Think about that. I used to go down and speak at a conference, a young people's conference on Labor Day in Augusta, Georgia, and they had a big barbecue, I think they called it barbecue, every Labor Day, and for weeks in advance they would announce this young people's conference with the barbecue, and they used to announce that it was the ambition of every pig in Georgia to be used at that barbecue.

Well, that's something similar here. If sheep and animals could have ambitions, the highest ambition that any sheep or lamb could ever have would be to be used as a sacrifice on the altar of God. That's what the Lord is saying.

Whether it's greater, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold. That word sanctified means set apart as having value. Jesus is saying, where is the value? Is it in the gold or does the temple give its value to

the gold? And of course the answer is yes, the temple gives its value to the gold.

Okay, now what is the spiritual application in this for us today? I confess that when I first read something like that in the Bible, I, what does that mean to me? It does mean something to me. The application is that we are nothing in ourselves. The only greatness about any one of us is our association with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of that. Spurgeon said that. He said, the greatest thing about you is your connection with Calvary.

That's true, and that's exactly what this portion of scripture is teaching us. For instance, you may have a brilliant mind, and people might say, my, the Lord would be lucky to get that person with a mind like that. Uh-uh, you got your values wrong.

The Lord wouldn't be lucky. The greatest use that you could ever find for that mind would be to take it and lay it at the feet of Jesus Christ. No mind ever finds complete fulfillment until it is completely dedicated to Jesus Christ.

To me, that's beautiful. It's not your intellect that sanctifies Jesus Christ. It's Jesus Christ who sanctifies your intellect, and we must never forget that.

You may have talents today for which the world is willing to pay a high price, and you might think it somewhat beneath your dignity to use those talents for the church. The Lord Jesus is teaching us in this passage of scripture, it's the church that sanctifies your talents, not your talents that sanctify the church. Only talents that are really turned over to the Savior are finding their greatest usefulness in life.

You've heard of the missionary that was over in China years ago before the Communists came in, and Standard Oil was looking for a representative over there, and somebody suggested this missionary. He had a sharp mind, good talents. They thought he's just the man for Standard Oil.

So Standard Oil went to him and said they'd like him to represent him. They'd be willing to pay him \$25,000 a year. He said he wasn't interested.

So they thought, well, every man has his price, you know. They paid him, they offered him \$35,000, he still wasn't interested. They raised the ante to \$40,000, and when he wasn't interested, they were a bit disturbed with him, and he said, what's the matter? Isn't the price right? He said, the price is all right, but the job's too small.

You see, he had his priorities right. God had called him to be a missionary. You may have bundles of gold, you can hoard it, or you can spend it in selfish indulgence, or you can use it for the kingdom.

It's the kingdom that sanctifies your gold, not your gold that sanctifies the kingdom. You're not doing God a big deal. You turn your gold over to him.

But I tell you, he sanctifies that gold when you do. There was an American tourist over in Paris, and he wandered around among the shops in Paris. He came to kind of a secondhand store there, and he was browsing through, and he saw an amber necklace, and it was at quite a low price for an amber necklace, and so he bought it.

And when he came back to the United States, of course, he had to go through customs at Kennedy Airport, and they really socked him with duty on the amber necklace, and he began to wonder about it. So

one day he decided to take it to an expert in these matters, and he took it to this jeweler, and the jeweler put that little magnifying glass on. He looked at it, and the man said to him, how much is it worth? And he said, \$25,000.

Well, the man had only paid a few dollars for it. Well, this really aroused his curiosity, and he went to another gemologist, and this man put his magnifying glass on and looked at it carefully, and he said, how much is it worth? The man said, \$30,000. Well, he couldn't constrain himself any longer.

He said, look, why is it so valuable? So the jeweler handed his glasses to him with the magnifying glass on and told him exactly where to look, and it said he could see inscribed these words, to Josephine from Napoleon. It was a necklace that had belonged to Josephine, given by Napoleon. You see, that necklace really wasn't worth \$30,000 in itself, was it? It was only its association with Napoleon and Josephine that gave it its value.

That's true of you and of me. It's only our association with the Lord Jesus Christ that gives us any value at all. The sooner we find it out, the more we'll go for proper priorities in life.

For our second spiritual insight this morning, would you turn over one or two chapters to Matthew 25 and verse 40. Matthew 25 and verse 40. We're just going to take this verse right out of its context, but it means the same.

The king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. This has to do with the judgment of the nation that takes place when Jesus Christ comes back to the earth to reign. All the nations are going to be gathered before him.

These will be sheep nations. These will be goat nations. And he'll say to the sheep nations, I was in prison and you visited me.

I was naked and you clothed me. I was hungry and you fed me. They say, when, Lord, you weren't even bodily here on earth.

And he'll say, no, I wasn't. I wasn't bodily on earth. But because you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.

The way you treated my Jewish brethren during the tribulation period, that's the way you treated me. And he'll say to the goat nations, I was in prison and you didn't visit me. I was naked and you didn't give me anything to wear.

I was hungry and you didn't feed me. Lord, if we had seen you on earth, we'd have done it for you. And he'll say, because you didn't do it to one of the least of my brethren, you didn't do it to me.

So verse 40, first of all, it's a tremendously rewarding encouragement, but it's also a soul-shaking warning. It's a tremendous encouragement. We can show kindness to the Lord Jesus any day.

Isn't that wonderful? We can show direct kindness to the Lord Jesus any day by showing kindness to any one of his people, especially the least. Do you ever notice that the Lord Jesus was always speaking about the last, the lowest, the least, when he was here on earth? And he's saying here, yeah, you can really do it. I've often told of the dear soul who went to Israel and built a house up in the Mount of Olives so she

could serve a cup of tea to Jesus when he came back again.

She really did. She really wasn't equated too well with Matthew 25 40. She could serve a cup of tea to Jesus any day by serving it to the least of his brethren.

It's a wonderful encouragement. But I tell you, there's a soul-shaking warning here. That is this, the way I treat the least, the lowest, the most despised Christians is the way I treat the Son of God.

That really stops me dead in my tracks. It really does. Oh, we'd all, if Jesus came as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we'd all scramble.

We'd be falling all over one another in order to get to him, to show him some kindness. But Jesus doesn't usually come that way. He usually comes in very humble guise.

He came the first time as a baby in Bethlehem's manger and lived as a carpenter in Nazareth, not as a royal prince. In his book, *Shoes of Happiness*, Edwin Markham has a lovely poem called *The Way the Great Guest Came*. He tells in this poem of a cobbler, a shoemaker, who had a wondrous dream, and in the dream he was told that the master was going to come the next day to visit him.

And so when he got up in the morning, he started preparing for the visit of the master. But the master didn't come. A beggar came, and he fitted the beggar with a pair of shoes and sent him on his way.

An old lady came, carrying a heavy load, far too heavy for her. And he helped her with her load and gave her food to eat. And then a little lost child came to his door, and he didn't stop until he had reunited that little child with her mother.

And the poem goes on to say, Then soft in the silence a voice he heard, Lift up your heart, for I kept my word. Three times I came to your friendly door, Three times my shadow fell on your floor. I was the beggar with bruised feet, I was the woman you gave to eat.

I was the child in the homeless street. Jesus had come three times, but he had come as he usually does in very humble guise. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

The way I treat the lowliest child of God is the way I treat the Savior himself. Now shall we turn over to John chapter 5 and verse 4. John chapter 5 and verse 24. John 5 24, Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

Of course the great spiritual insight we find in this verse of scripture is that salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith and by faith alone. Let's take up the verse bit by bit and see what we find in it.

We come first of all to those two words, verily, verily, which in today's language would be truly, truly. Whenever we find those words, they are signal words in the Bible to alert us to the fact that something very important is going to be said, and we will not be disappointed. Watch out for those words.

They mean that something very important. In fact, I just read a verse with verily in it, didn't I? Verily I say unto you. Then it says, verily, verily, I. Who is the I there? Well, if you turn back to verse 19, you'll find Jesus.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, I, Jesus. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God. The Son of God is speaking.

Can I trust him? Can I be sure that what he says is true? Would he lie to me? No, he wouldn't lie. Would he deceive me? No, he wouldn't deceive me. Maybe he himself could be deceived.

No, he could not be deceived because he is God. Jesus is speaking, and nothing can be more sure than what he says. Verily, verily, I say unto you, you.

Jesus is speaking to you. Just think of it. The eternal Son of God is speaking.

You and I never had anyone so important speaking to us before. Greater than any dignitary of this world, the Son of God bows low and is speaking to us. If he's speaking to me, I ought to listen.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word. I should stop here to explain that when he said, he that heareth my word, he doesn't mean just to hear with the ear. You can hear things with the ear and be quite unaffected by them.

To hear the word, to hear means to hear and receive, to hear and accept, to hear and believe. He that heareth my word, it means to hear and obey. Jesus is speaking, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me.

Who sent him? Oh, you say God the Father sent him. That's right. Why did he send him? The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

That's right. God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer, bleed and die for you and for me. And when it says believeth on him that sent me, it includes all that.

It doesn't just mean believe that there's a God. That won't necessarily change your life. When it says believeth on him that sent me, it includes the whole scheme of salvation where the Lord Jesus, the Father sent the Lord Jesus to be a substitute for guilty sinners on the cross of Calvary.

Do you believe he died as your substitute? Do you believe he died to pay the penalty you deserve? Do you believe he died that he shed his blood for the remission of your sin? That's what it says. He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life. The Son of God who cannot lie and cannot deceive and cannot be deceived says that when a person comes, hears his word believingly, believes that God sent him to be the Savior on an individual basis, hath everlasting life.

Not a question of feeling, not a question of hoping, not a question of trying, that hath now everlasting life present. What else does it say? Shall not come into condemnation. What does that mean? It means he'll never go to hell. It means he'll never have to pay the penalty for his sins because Jesus paid it.

It means he stands perfect before the throne of God because a substitute has died in his place. What else does it say? It says he's passed from death onto life. He passes from a condition in which he's spiritually dead and he's born again to a life that will never end.

What does it say? Is there any risk in believing this? No, there's no risk. If you can't believe your creator, whom can you believe? If this is true and it is true, why don't you believe it? Why don't you come and accept the Savior as your Savior and pass from death to life? I read a verse like this and I say, no wonder it's called good news, because that's what the gospel is. The gospel is good news.

No wonder. The best news that has ever hit this planet of ours. Be careful how you read it.

It doesn't say that you'll feel that you have eternal life, but you'll have it on the authority of the word of God. I stumbled over this for years. When I trusted the Lord Jesus as my Savior, I had an idea in my mind that the bells would ring, the lights would go on, and I'd get electrical impulses throughout my nervous system, and they didn't come.

I figured that's the way I'd know I was saved by some great emotional upheaval in my life. But I trusted the Lord Jesus in simple faith. The bells didn't ring and the lights didn't go on and the electricity didn't flow.

And I guessed I wasn't saved. You see, I was misreading the verse. The Bible doesn't say you'll ever feel you're saved.

It says you'll know you're saved. Justification takes place in the mind of God and not in the nervous system of the believer. When a sinner trusts Christ, God writes his name down in the Lamb's book of life.

He doesn't feel it. He knows it because the Bible says it. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

No wonder it's called good news. Well, we'll continue with some more of these spiritual insights tonight, Lord willing, in our last meeting together for the time being. Shall we look to God now in closing prayer? Father, we do thank you for your word.

We thank you especially for the simplicity of the gospel that the most vile, ungodly sinner can come to you through the Lord Jesus Christ and find forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. We just bless and praise you for this today, and we pray that if there's one here in our meeting who has never trusted Christ, that he or she might do so today as you stand knocking at the heart's door. We pray, Lord, for those of us who do know the Savior that we might never forget that it's our connection with him that gives us any value at all.

Help us to take our minds, our talents, our gold, our silver, all that we have and lay them at his pierced feet that he might sanctify them for time and for eternity. And, Lord, in our dealings with one another, help us always to remember that the way we treat your people is the way we treat you yourself. We do ask it as we give our thanks in the Savior's name.

Amen.

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