

(Matthew) ch.13:44-14:21

by Zac Poonen

The kingdom of heaven requires a price, which is giving up all that we have to God, and becoming a disciple who obeys the Bible.

Duration: 54:54

Topics: "Kingdom Of Heaven", "Spiritual Purity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on two parables from Matthew's Gospel chapter 13. The first parable is about a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field and sells everything he has to buy that field. The preacher emphasizes that this parable teaches us the value of the kingdom of heaven and the willingness to give up everything for it. The second parable is about a merchant who finds a valuable pearl and sells all his possessions to acquire it. The preacher highlights the importance of keeping ourselves pure and being part of the core group of believers, rather than being like the birds of the air who are influenced by worldly Babylon.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13 and verse 44. In our previous studies we have been considering the parables of the kingdom of heaven. And we saw that this is the kingdom of heaven in its outward expression as we see it here on earth.

And therefore we saw that it contains good seed and bad seed as well. The children of God and the children of the devil sitting together in the same church, hypocrites. And then we read in verse 41 that the son of man will send forth his angels and sort out.

The two gather the stumbling blocks, the compromisers, everything that offends and those who live in sin and cast them into a furnace of fire. Verse 42, in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There are many people who sit in the church today who will finally end up in hell because they lived in sin, they caused offense to others, they lived as back biters and gossipers and many other evil things in their hidden life.

Remember, Jesus spoke about hell more than anyone else. He spoke about that furnace of fire, verse 42, in which there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There was no preacher that this world has ever seen who preached so much about hell as Jesus.

There was reason for that because he knew more about hell than any of us. He could see it. He had seen it.

He had seen the end result of people who had lived in sin. And he was so concerned, he warned people about this furnace of fire where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And it's good for us also not to so misunderstand the love of God that we don't warn people, as Jesus did, about this furnace of fire where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth in the day when the righteous will be separated finally and will shine forth as the sun.

That is why sin is serious. It leads people to a furnace of fire. And going to meetings and appearing to be righteous and singing the right hymns and saying the right language and saying we are born again will not help us if we are not seeking to be free from sin in our life.

It's not religion that takes people to heaven. No. It is a life.

It is repentance from sin. There are many religious people who go to many, many meetings who will finally go to that furnace of fire because they did not repent from sin. It's righteousness that leads us into that kingdom.

It's the righteous who will shine forth, we read in verse 43, as the sun, not the religious. Religious people go to hell. Righteous people go into heaven, into the presence of the Father.

Those who have turned from sin and who have first been justified by faith in Christ, having the righteousness of Christ imputed to their account, and then who have partaken of that righteousness in their life, that is the proof that they are justified. If God justifies a person, He sanctifies them. If a person is not being sanctified, it's the clearest proof that he is not really justified.

His faith is a counterfeit. In that day the righteous will shine. This is where the wheat and the tares look so alike.

Verse 44. Then Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven, and here He is speaking about the treasure hidden in the field, speaking about the wholehearted disciple, just like in the two parables in verses 31 to 33, He spoke about the opposite of this, the compromisers who corrupt the church. Here He spoke two parables in verses 44 to 46, of those who are wholehearted, who are the core of a church, the true church in the midst of what is known as the church.

The real church, in God's eyes, is a small group of brothers and sisters in the midst of a large system, which is known as the church by the world. In every place that is true. In every congregation of people, the real church is a much smaller core, and it's very important in every church that we belong to that core of people whom God considers to be the church, and not what the people around us consider to be the church.

That's a very small number compared to the other who are like the fringe people who sit on the outside. They sit in the meeting, but in God's eyes, they are on the outside. It's the core that God looks for, and the core consists of people like those described in verses 44 to 46, these two parables, and all the others consist of the people described in the earlier two parables, who are like the birds of the air sitting in the church, and who have been leavened by Babylon the great woman.

But here it speaks about those who kept themselves pure, and how did they keep themselves pure? We read in verse 44, The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. What is this field? The field is, we can say, the true kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, as it is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom that kingdom was personified. And for a person to get this, here the price is told us.

Forgiveness of sins is free. You don't have to pay any money for it. You don't have to sell all that you have to get forgiveness of sins.

It's free. The baptism in the Holy Spirit, that's free. God gives a treaty.

In fact, on the day of Pentecost, all that Peter said was, Repent, and you can receive forgiveness of sins, and also the gift of the Holy Spirit. But, if we want God's kingdom, that righteousness and peace and joy, Romans 14, 17 says, the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If we want the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, that brings righteousness and peace and joy, not just that enables us to speak in tongues, but that brings righteousness and peace and joy into our life, and floods our life with it, then we have to pay a price.

Here it speaks about something which you can't get free. Here is something that is bought. Obviously, this is not referring to forgiveness of sins.

It's a false teaching to say that we have to buy forgiveness of sins, or buy the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But here is something we have to buy. You have to sell all that you have, and buy.

Notice the word Jesus uses, you've got to buy this field. Again, the second parable teaches the same thing. He's like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Notice the word again, he buys it, he buys it, he pays a price for it. And the price is, in both parables, this little phrase, all that he has. All that he has, all that he possesses.

To understand this, we need to look at one of the conditions of discipleship that Jesus spoke in Luke chapter 14 and verse 33. He said, No one of you can be my disciple, Luke 14, 33, who does not give up all that he possesses. Does that mean we are to be hermits, and give up our clothes, and give up our house, and give up marriage, and give up our children? Because we have all these things.

There is a difference in having and possessing. Having in the sense of having as my own. What did this man seeking the field do? He collected all that he had, and gave it to the owner of the field, and bought the field.

What did the man seeking pearl, this wonderful pearl, do? He gave to the owner of that pearl, all that he had, and got the pearl. We can say the owner of the kingdom of God is God. So to get the kingdom, we have to give all that we have to God, in order to get the kingdom.

That is the meaning of those two parables. The owner of the field and of the pearl of great price is God, and we have to give him all that we have. That is the meaning of Luke 14.33. That we don't possess anything as our own in future.

And this is best illustrated in the story of Abraham, who possessed Isaac. He was the darling of his heart. He was probably an idol in Abraham's life.

And God said, give him up. And Abraham gave up Isaac to God on a mountain one morning. He didn't kill him, because God said, don't kill him.

But I see that you have given him up to me. From now on, he is no longer yours. He is mine.

He lives in your house. You can have him, but you can't possess him, because he is mine. That is how we must hold everything that we have on earth.

Your possessions, you can have them, but you can't possess them. Your children, you can have them, but you can't possess them. Your house, you can have it, but you can't possess it.

That is the mark of a disciple. He doesn't become a hermit and run off to the mountains. No, he has.

Isaac in his house, but he doesn't possess Isaac. Because he has laid all his Isaacs on the altar. Everything that is valuable, your job, you can have your job, you don't have to give it up.

But you shouldn't possess it. It shouldn't be as though your job is everything to you. If God wants you to give it up, you should be willing to give it up.

And you shouldn't make your profession everything, to be a God in your life. This is what it means to pay the price. And we need to make a checklist of everything that we consider valuable.

That list can be different for different people. Because some people consider one thing valuable, some people consider another. And make a checklist if you want to be a wholehearted disciple.

And list all the things that you consider valuable. Your bank account, your house, your property, your vehicle, your job perhaps, your children, your wife, your partner. Make a list if you are really sincere.

And go through that list and lay every one of those on the altar. Then you can possess the kingdom and be a part of that core that God is building in every congregation. To the leader of the church in Laodicea and to the whole church, also Jesus said, I advise you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, white garments and eye salve.

You have to buy these things, we read in Revelation 3 and verse 18. There are things we get free from Jesus. There are other things we have to buy.

And the price is to lay everything that you have on the altar. And say, Lord it's yours, it's no longer mine. And then we become a part of the core of God's kingdom.

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 13 and verse 47. We have been going through these parables that Jesus spoke concerning the kingdom of heaven. In these last studies.

And we saw that Jesus is referring to the kingdom of heaven and its outward expression. And that becomes very clear when we consider this last parable. It's like a dragnet, he said.

But the interesting thing is, this dragnet, when it is cast into the sea, which is the world, gathers fish of every kind. And when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach. And they sat down and, unfortunately, there was good fish as well as bad fish in the net.

And they put the good fish into containers. And the bad they threw back into the sea. They threw away.

So will it be at the end of the age, the angel shall come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous. The wicked are found in the midst of the righteous and will cast them into the furnace of fire. And there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The second time Jesus speaks about this furnace of fire. He had spoken about it earlier in verse 42. And he emphasizes this weeping.

Regret that they lived before the face of men. Regret that they lived in sin. Regret that they didn't turn from sin despite all the good words they had heard.

Gnashing of teeth in pain and suffering in an eternal hell. And Jesus spoke about it. And if we are those who take God's word seriously, we will find that there is a very healthy warning here.

For all who go for meetings in certain churches. That in the dragnet of the kingdom of heaven. He is not speaking about the world now.

The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet, he said in verse 47. And in that dragnet, the sea is the world. This net is cast into the sea.

I will make you fishes of men, Jesus told Peter. And they dragged this net. This is how they caught fish in those days.

They put the net in and pulled it in. And when they pulled it in, there were fish that were good, fish that were bad. The bad fish are those who did not repent.

Those in whom the seed did not produce fruit. Those which had no depth of earth. Those which were choked by the thorns.

Those which allowed the seed to be taken away by the birds. The bad fish were those who, like the mustard tree, grew up to be big in the eyes of men, but not pure in the eyes of God. For those who allowed the leaven of sin and compromise to corrupt their whole life.

And became part of a system that was compromising. But finally it sorted out. And the wicked will be taken out from among the righteous.

Exactly like He said earlier on in verse 41. The Son of Man will send His angels and gather out of His kingdom all the stumbling blocks. And all those who commit lawlessness.

All those who live in sin. All those who do not turn from sin in their life. Sin is a very serious thing, dear friends.

God sent His Son into the world to save us from sin. Not to save us from hell. There is no verse in the Bible which says Jesus came to save us from hell.

But there are many verses which teach that He came to save us from sin. In fact, in the very first page of the Bible. The very first page of the New Testament.

We read. Thou shalt call His name Jesus. Matthew 1.21 For He shall save His people not from hell.

Mark you. But from their sin. Sin is a very serious thing.

And Jesus came to save His people from that. And those who take that message. They will be the good fish.

Those who allow Jesus to save them from the sin. In their life. And the others.

Who only have religion. Who only have an outward form of godliness. But not the power of God unto salvation from sin.

Which the gospel is. They will be cast into furnace of fire. And we need to remember that not everybody who says he is born again.

Is born again. Unfortunately today there are many people who say they are born again. Who are not born again.

Really. Because they have not truly repented. There is a shallow gospel that is being preached today.

Which does not have the element of repentance in it. And that is what makes it a counterfeit. Just like a counterfeit currency note.

Will not have that little strip. In the middle of the paper. Which a genuine currency note has.

A little strip. That thin strip that you can see. When you lift up a hundred rupee note into the light.

Like a wire. That is not there in a counterfeit note. That element of repentance is missing.

We know that that is a counterfeit conversion. True conversion will always have that element of repentance in it. A turning from sin.

A mourning over sin. The fact that you fall into sin. Is not the serious thing.

The serious thing is that you do not mourn when you fall into sin. You may fall. But if you mourn.

And you desire to turn from it. You are alright. There is hope for you.

But if you can sin. Particularly sin in the private life. In the thought life.

And you do not turn from it. That is a very serious condition. That is like a man having leprosy in the conscience.

That his conscience does not trouble him. He can sleep peacefully at night even though he has sinned. Take that seriously dear friends.

It is not a light thing. We shall discover the end of the age. Many who are first will be last.

And many who are last will be first. Those whom we despised as not clever and smart. May end up first because they repented of sin.

And those who were clever and smart in the church. But who did not turn from sin. We shall discover our last.

And then Jesus spoke to his disciples and said. Have you understood all these things? They said to him yes. And he said to them.

Therefore every scribe. A scribe is a Bible scholar. A man who studies the Bible.

It is very important to study the Bible. But Jesus spoke about more than studying the Bible. He said every scribe who has become a disciple.

The Bible scholar must become a disciple. It is not enough to study the Bible. It is also necessary to obey it.

That is how you become a disciple. Otherwise you remain a scribe. You cannot become a part of the kingdom of heaven as a scribe.

You can be among the bad fish as a scribe. You can be among that corrupted leavened system as a scribe. You can be among that unnaturally grown mustard tree as a scribe.

You can be among that bad ground as a scribe. But the scribe it says must become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. You see how he concluded this section on the parables.

He is speaking about scribes. And then he says the scribe must become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise he remains like the bad seed, the tares which are sown by the enemy.

Like the leavened system. Like that which is big and great in the eyes of men. Where the birds of the air, the agents of Satan come and live.

It is not enough to be a scribe. Every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. That is he has fulfilled the condition of discipleship in Luke 14.33. He has forsaken everything and made Jesus supreme in his life.

He is like a head of a household. He can have a ministry then. Bringing out of his treasure of his life things new and old.

Fresh revelations and revelations received years ago. But everything can be brought forth powerfully, anointedly only if you are a disciple. Now this verse teaches that Bible scholars cannot bring forth spiritual revelations if they have not become disciples.

A scribe, we could read that as a Bible scholar. Every person who studies the Bible must become a disciple. And then only he can bring forth out of his treasure.

Otherwise he has no treasure. Bible knowledge is not a treasure. Bible knowledge we can say is only a photograph of a treasure.

It becomes a treasure when you become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. When you allow that truth to sink into your life. And it brings obedience in your life.

Then you can bring forth out of your treasure of your life new revelations. And they will be fresh. And even the old revelations that you got ten years ago will also be fresh.

Because there will be an anointing on it. And it came about, verse 53, Matthew 13, 53. When Jesus had finished these parables, he departed from there.

And coming to his hometown, he began teaching them in their synagogue. So that they were astonished and said, where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? They had seen Jesus grow up in Nazareth as a little boy. And like the proverb says, familiarity breeds contempt.

They were familiar with him from childhood and they despised him. Isn't this the carpenter's son? How can a carpenter's son be a man of God? They despised him because of his job. They despised him because of his origin.

Because of his family. Is not his mother called Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, Judas? They are all ordinary people here. His sisters are with us.

This is one of the verses that teaches us that Jesus had blood brothers. At least four of them. And sisters, we don't know how many.

It means at least two. In other words, Jesus grew up in a family of at least seven children. Of which he was the eldest.

Mary had six other children, at least, if not more. And they are all with us. They are very ordinary people.

Where did this man get all these things? And it says they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household. They despised him.

We read in John 7 that the brothers of Jesus, the blood brothers of Jesus, spoke very rudely to him. But the loss was theirs. He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Think of that statement. Many miracles that Jesus wanted to do could not be done because they didn't believe. Think if we faced that statement in the day of judgment, that the Lord wanted to do many things for you.

But he could not do it because of your unbelief, because of your familiarity. Don't be so familiar with the word that you are unbelieving. The important thing is faith, not knowledge.

The important thing is to be a disciple, not a scribe. May it never be said of us that Jesus could not do miracles in our life because of our unbelief. But may we be men of faith, not just Bible scholars, but disciples.

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 14 and verse 1. At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the news about Jesus and said to his servants, This is John the Baptist. He has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him. For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.

For John had been saying to him, It is not lawful for you to have her. And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude because they regarded him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.

Thereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. And having been prompted by her mother, she said, Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist. And although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests.

And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and they went and reported to Jesus.

Here we see a number of things concerning the character of Herod. And it's because of the way he conducted himself that later on we read that when Jesus stood before Herod, in Luke 23, verse 8 and 9, the same Herod was very eager to see Jesus and was hoping to see some miracle Jesus did. But even though Herod asked Jesus many questions and Herod was a mighty king, Jesus answered him nothing.

He never spoke a word to Herod. Jesus answered the high priest. He answered Pilate.

But he never answered Herod one word, and that's very significant. And the reason lies in a spiritual principle that we need to understand. It's possible for a person to have heard the truth for so long that he can cross a line where God does not speak to him anymore.

He has gone beyond the possibility of repentance. This is partly the meaning of the sin against the Holy Spirit, which does not have any forgiveness. Because Herod had crossed the line and there was no need for Jesus to do anything for him.

Jesus would certainly not do a miracle to demonstrate anything to Herod, much less would he even speak a word to him. No, he wouldn't do a miracle. He wouldn't even speak a word.

But we read here the reason for it in Matthew 14. Herod's conscience troubled him when he heard about Jesus because he had done something wrong in killing John the Baptist. And when he heard about Jesus, he felt that this is John the Baptist risen from the dead.

It's amazing how the things that we do wrong begin to affect us in our conscience and trouble us so that anything that happens, we say, ah, this is because of the wrong that I did at such and such a time. And there you can see the indication of a conscience that is not right with God and with men. When you feel that something has happened because of something else that you have done, this is how it was with Herod concerning John the Baptist.

He never was at rest in his conscience. And it's a very serious thing to go against our conscience. And we can see why did he do it.

It says here in verse 3, Herod seized John and bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias. Now Herod himself did not want to put John in prison. But because he had married his brother's wife or taken her, even if he was not lawfully married to her, living with her, and John the Baptist, fiery prophet that he was, not afraid of any king, told Herod straight to his face, it is not lawful for you to have her.

And Herod himself was probably convinced of that. We read in Mark's Gospel, chapter 6, in verse 20, that Herod was perplexed when he heard John the Baptist. Herod was afraid of John, Mark 6, 20, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man.

It's amazing, this godless king Herod was afraid of John the Baptist because he was a righteous and holy man. Many people are afraid of Herod, but Herod himself was afraid of John the Baptist. Only because he was a righteous and holy man.

There's a tremendous power in righteousness and holiness that puts a fear even into kings. And so Herod kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed, we read Mark 6, 20, but he used to enjoy listening to him.

So, obviously, Herod listened to John the Baptist frequently, but he never obeyed. The fact that a person likes to listen to a God-fearing, fiery preacher like John the Baptist does not necessarily mean that he is spiritual. Many people enjoy listening to fiery sermons, but they're not spiritual, they're no more spiritual than Herod.

But, because Herod was so henpecked by his wife, his new wife, his brother's wife actually, Herodias, Herodias kept on harassing Herod to kill John the Baptist. And Herod meekly submitted to his wife, like many foolish husbands do when their wives prompt them to do something wrong. And, but we read that he would not put him to death.

Again, the reason given in verse 5 is Matthew 14, 5, that Herod feared the multitude. He was afraid of the opinions of men. He was influenced by the opinion of his wife.

He was influenced by the opinion of people. He played to the gallery, as they say. He was interested in his own honor, his reputation, and his position, and for that he was willing to sacrifice his conscience.

No wonder Jesus never spoke one word to him when he stood before him later on. When people are like that, that they are willing to sacrifice their conscience for the sake of their own honor and position and reputation, we can be fairly sure that God will never speak to such a person. And we read here, because the multitude regarded John the Baptist as a prophet, Herod was afraid as to what people would say or think about him, and therefore he kept him alive.

He was tossed between the opinions of the multitude and the opinion of Herodias. And then we read something else. We read about Herod celebrating his birthday.

The Bible records only heathen people making grand public celebrations of their birthdays. One was Pharaoh, and the other was Herod. God never asked us to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ like Pharaoh and Herod celebrated their birthdays.

Jesus is never meant to be put in the same category as Pharaoh and Herod. That is the teaching of a Christendom that's drifted away from the word of God. It's Herod and Pharaoh who celebrated their birthdays in grand style, making a great feast.

And we read at the time of this birthday, when he made this great feast, he was so happy with the dancing of the daughter of Herodias that he promised her anything that she asked for. And she was prompted by her mother and asked for the head of John the Baptist. And notice what's written in verse 9. He did not want to kill John the Baptist, but again he was concerned about his opinion, his reputation in the eyes of his dinner guests, we read in verse 9. He was concerned about the opinions of men.

And because he was concerned about the opinions of men, we read that he was willing again to sacrifice his conscience. And he had John beheaded in the prison. This passage of scripture is a tremendous warning to us to be careful about going against the still small voice of conscience.

Never to sacrifice that to seek to please others. And so at the feast itself, John's head was brought on a platter and given to the girl. And she brought it to her mother.

And it's amazing that this man Herod could live after all that and never be bothered, never feel that he had done something wrong. It's possible for a person to go against his conscience once, twice, three times, four times and still his conscience speaks. Apparently, even though he had listened to John the Baptist so often and disregarded it, yet his conscience still spoke to him because it says he was grieved in verse 9. He was grieved because there was still the voice of conscience speaking to him.

But then he finally crossed the line and he killed John the Baptist. And we can say after that God didn't speak to him anymore. The word of God speaks about people crossing a line where they have heard and heard and heard and heard the truth so often.

And they harden their hearts and they can no longer hear. That's a very dangerous possibility. The word of God warns us today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts like the people did in the wilderness.

And that's a warning that we can get from the life of Herod as well. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 14 and verse 13. In our last study we were considering how Herod put John the Baptist to death.

We read here that in verse 12 that the disciples came and took away the body and buried it. And they went and reported this fact to Jesus. And when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place by himself.

When the multitudes heard of this, they followed him on foot from the cities. And when he came out, he saw a great multitude and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. We read something here which shows us the humanity of Jesus.

How he had emptied himself when he came down to earth of that perfect, complete knowledge of all things that God has. Omniscience that he gave up. He knew about the death of John the Baptist only when the disciples came and reported it to him.

God knows everything, but Jesus had emptied himself of that. And when he heard about it, he felt the feelings that we as human beings feel when someone who had been so close and so faithful had finally been martyred. He withdrew to a lonely place by himself, no doubt to be quiet with his father.

But he would not allow the sorrow to take so much of his time. He saw that he had a ministry to fulfill and he saw a great multitude. We read in verse 14, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.

A lesson for us and an example that even when we face sorrow, we are not to let it overwhelm us so much that we fail to discharge the ministry that our father has appointed for us. When it was evening, the disciples came to him, saying, The place is desolate and the time is already past. So send the multitudes away that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.

And Jesus said to them, They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat. And they said, We have here only five loaves and two fish.

And he said, Bring them here to me. And ordering the multitude to recline on the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, he blessed the food. And breaking the loaves, he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. There were about five thousand men who ate, aside from women and children. That last verse

indicates there probably were about ten thousand people there who were fed, five thousand men alone, it says, beside women and children.

And there are a number of things that we learn here concerning the attitude of Jesus to people who are in any type of need. And that includes material, physical need as well. God is not only interested in our spiritual needs.

He is interested in our physical needs, our financial needs, our material needs. He is very much interested in them because he knows that we need these things to live on the earth. He knows that we need food, we need clothing, we need money, we need a house, we need to educate our children.

He knows all those things, and he is concerned about them. Jesus taught us to pray, give us this day our daily bread. And that's a very spiritual prayer, to pray.

It's perfectly right to pray to God for our material necessities. It's quite another thing to pray for luxuries or for unnecessary things. And also, Jesus taught us to pray for material things after we had prayed first for the hallowing of his name, the coming of his kingdom, and the fulfilling of his will.

So there's nothing wrong in praying for material things, provided it is put in the proper place next to the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And we see a demonstration of that here, that when the disciples who wanted to pass on the responsibility of feeding them came on to the people themselves, said, send these people to the villages. In another passage it says that these people had been a number of days without food.

It's quite amazing how so many people followed Jesus to hear his word. And Jesus had compassion on them. Give them something to eat, he said.

And we read from John's gospel that they brought a little lad who had five loaves and two fish with him. And it's very interesting to see something here, that Jesus, who could have easily created bread from nothing, did not do that. And that is a spiritual lesson for us.

The Lord always wants to work in partnership with human beings. He could have evangelized the world without the help of any human beings, but he chooses to use us. He could have blessed others without any human instrumentality, but he always uses a human instrumentality to bless.

And that's what we see here. He's using a little lad to bless the multitude. And one can imagine that little lad going home and saying that Jesus and he fed the multitude.

And that was true. It was his gift of five loaves and two fish, which was probably sufficient just for himself, which enabled Jesus to feed the multitude. Not because he could not have done it without that, but because he wanted to do it with the cooperation of one human being at least.

And this is a fundamental principle. You remember in the marriage of Cana, he could have created the wine from nothing, but he asked the servants to fill the water pots of stone with water and turn the water into wine. An act of cooperation.

Jesus always works in partnership with us. Take my yoke upon you, we studied in Matthew 11. It's a partnership, a fellowship with Jesus in which we fulfill our ministry.

And he doesn't need much. Five loaves and two fish look like an insignificantly small amount of food to feed a great multitude, but that's enough. And that's an encouragement to every one of us, that when you look at the need and you look at your own resources, your own resources may look pitifully small compared to the need, whatever the need is.

Maybe a need in your home, maybe a need in your children, it may be a need in your church, it may be a need in your area, and you look at your own resources and they are so small. If you keep that for yourself, of course, you'll only feed yourself. But if you give your all to Jesus, he can feed a multitude.

There's another lesson here. It's those who give everything that they have to the Lord, who are used by God to bless the multitude. Do you give everything that you have to the Lord, like this little lad? Then he can use it to bless the multitude.

There are people who give ten percent to God. That was Old Testament. In the New Testament, we're not called to give ten percent.

We're called to give everything. And when we give everything to the Lord, it's not that our needs are not met. In fact, this boy who gave five loaves and two fish could have had ten loaves and four fish if he wanted afterwards.

He gets back not only what he gave, but more than what he gave, and in addition, the multitudes are fed too. And that's a lesson, that if you give your all to the Lord, you'll find not only your own needs are met, but God can use you to bless the multitudes. And here is where very, very few people give their all.

So many people seek their own, even among believers. They're always keeping back for themselves, and that's why God cannot use them to bless the multitudes. And we read here that the disciples took the food and gave it to the multitudes.

And there again, we learn another lesson, that Jesus did not ask for volunteers. One would think that a more efficient way of distributing the food would be to ask for five hundred volunteers, and the job would have been done quicker. But he didn't ask for volunteers.

He asked his twelve disciples to feed these ten thousand people. Not the most efficient way of doing it, but the most spiritual way. Because in God's service, there are no volunteers.

You cannot volunteer to serve the Lord. You have to be called. If God doesn't call you, you cannot serve him.

You cannot go and bless the multitude just because you want to. You cannot volunteer in saying, Well, Lord, here I am, I would like to serve you full time. He may not want you to serve full time, then you better sit down.

No, Jesus called his disciples, and only to them did he give the food. And here is the reason for such a lot of shallowness and hollowness in the ministry of the word today. Many are preaching who have not been called.

They have volunteered. We cannot volunteer. Jesus did not ask for volunteers.

He gave the food to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes. And remember, the disciples were hungry too. They had also been without food for a number of days.

And one can imagine the disciples thinking, I hope there is something left for us after all these people have eaten. But the Lord took care of them. We read that after everybody was fed, the Lord had made such an abundance, and he asked the disciples to pick up what was remaining.

What was remaining does not mean the broken bones of the fish and the crumbs of the bread. No, this was fresh bread and fish that had been multiplied in excess of what was needed. Good bread and fish.

And they collected twelve baskets, one for each of the disciples to take home. That is how God rewards those who serve him. If we serve him unselfishly and faithfully, you can be sure that there will be a basket full left for you at the end of your life.

None of your needs or your family's needs will ever go wanting, when you have served the others unselfishly. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 14, and verse 22. And immediately, that is immediately after he had fed the five thousand men, beside women and children, and after they had all gone home, it says he made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of him to the other side while he sent the multitudes away.

And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. Notice something here. Jesus compelled the disciples to get into the boat, and go ahead of him.

The literal word there is he compelled them, which seems to give the indication that they did not want to go. But since he compelled them, they went. And that's a very significant statement, which we shall consider in a moment as we go on with what happened later on.

But notice this just for the time being, that he compelled them. He insisted that they go. Sometimes the Lord tells us to go somewhere, and we don't want to go.

And then he compels us, of course we can still refuse him, because he doesn't take away our free will. He urges us, he will not catch us by the neck and push us into the boat, but he says, you must go, I want you to go. And you say, no Lord, I don't really feel like going.

But the Lord says, no, I want you to go. That's the meaning of he compelled them. And they obeyed.

And they got in and went. And then he sent the multitudes away. And after sending the multitudes away, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray.

And when it was evening, he was there alone. We see here that Jesus often sought time to pray. He was very, very keen on finding time alone to pray.

Now notice, Jesus was not praying for material things. Most believers, when they pray, they are praying for some material thing or some healing, usually something which has no eternal value. Jesus prayed for things which had eternal value.

He was more concerned about the things of eternity and of heaven. And notice also this fact, that Jesus was one who had never sinned. In all those years, it was not that he was praying because he wanted restoration of fellowship with the Father, because it had been broken in some way.

His fellowship with the Father was never broken. All through his earthly life. And yet, we read of a time when he spent a whole night in prayer.

We read of times when he would slip away from multitudes and his disciples and be alone and pray. We also read of a time when he was praying with his disciples present. That was a time when the disciples, after hearing him, said, Lord, teach us also to pray the way you pray.

So we see that he prayed in public, he prayed in private, quite a lot in private. He would often slip away into the wilderness and pray, we read in Luke 5.16. Just like tourists, when they come to some new place, they want to see what are the sights to be seen. Jesus, whenever he came to a new place, he'd find out if there was some convenient quiet place where he could go and pray.

That's the difference between tourists and disciples of Jesus. Jesus was looking for place where he could be quiet to pray. And many of us may live in homes where we don't have a room to ourselves to pray.

But if we are wholehearted, God will show us some place where we can be alone. And we can be alone with him. And I believe that the greatest incentive to prayer is the fact that Jesus himself, the one who had never sinned, the one who walked in perfect fellowship with the Father, needed to spend time alone with his Father.

Otherwise he could never have lived the life that he lived of purity and fulfilled the ministry that the Father had for him. And we read further in verse 24. As the boat in which the disciples had been compelled to go was a number of yards away from the land, hundreds of yards away, many stadia means each stadion was 200 yards, hundreds of yards away from the land, it was battered by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

Notice that when Jesus compels us to go in some direction, as we read earlier on in verse 22, the wind is not necessarily going to be smooth and calm, the waves are not going to be calm and quiet. No. Many people think that when we follow Jesus and obey him, life will become easy.

Quite the contrary. He compelled them to go and when they went in the boat, they found that the waves were battering the boat and the wind was contrary. And that's very often our experience in life, that when we obey the Lord, we find we run into problems, we run into difficulties, we run into storms.

And God has designed them to teach us a lesson. Who are the people who have the easiest time in the world? It's the sinners. It's the people who disobey the Lord completely.

Jesus did not say, in the world you'll have an easy time. But what did he say? He said in John 16.33, In the world you shall have tribulation, but in me you will have peace. Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.

He himself faced tribulation and persecution. And he does not allow us to face any temptation that he has not faced himself. For we read in Hebrews 4.15, that he was tempted in all points exactly like we are.

And he did not sin. So he does not send us into any trial without going ahead himself. And just like here, we read that he sent the disciples in the boat, compelled them to go, and they faced this contrary wind and the battering of the waves.

But where was Jesus himself? He was on the mountain praying for them. And that's a beautiful picture, when Jesus has thrust us out into the world, and we find in the world the wind is contrary and the waves are battering us, we can remember that there's one who's standing on high at the right hand of the Father praying for us. And that's our comfort.

We're not alone. And he's also sent his Holy Spirit to be with us, which is something better than what those disciples had in the boat. And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking upon the sea.

In the middle of the storm, we shall find the presence of the Lord there to encourage us. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying it's a ghost, and they cried out for fear. They were very human.

And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid. And dear friends, that's what we need to hear in the middle of every storm, and when the waves are battering our life, we need to hear the Lord speaking to us, saying, Take courage and don't be afraid, for I'm here. In the middle of the storm, when the waves are battering you, the Lord says, I'm here.

You don't have to be scared. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water, because Jesus was walking on the water. Now, this is not because he was the Son of God.

He was the Son of God, no doubt. But remember, he had given up those powers when he came to earth. He came as a man.

It was as a man with the supernatural ability that the Holy Spirit gave him that he walked on the sea and overcame the law of gravity. And the proof of that is that he told Peter that Peter could do the same. Peter was not the Son of God, but Peter also walked on the water with the same power that Jesus walked on the water.

And that is the significant thing for us. And what an experience that was for Peter. To come out of the boat, Jesus said, Come.

And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. What Jesus was saying is, as I overcome the law of gravity, Peter, you can also overcome if you look at me and have faith in me. And the spiritual application of that for us is, there is another law which is very similar to the law of gravity.

It's called the law of sin and death in Romans chapter 8. The law of sin and death also pulls us down into sin, just like the law of gravity pulls us down. And the interesting thing is Jesus, when he came to earth in our flesh, was tempted and was subject to this law of sin and death as well. But he never sank.

He overcame. He was tempted, pulled by sin downwards. But he overcame and triumphed and walked in triumph every moment.

And the message to us is, the miracle here is not just that Jesus walked on the water, but a far greater miracle is that Peter walked on the water too. That Jesus overcame sin, the law of sin and death, is that a great thing? It is, because he had our flesh. But the greater thing is that we too can follow in his footsteps.

And overcome that same law of sin and death. Romans 8 too says, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. And we can take an illustration from the flight of the aeroplane.

We can say the law of aerodynamics has overcome the law of gravity so that 1,000 tons of steel flies in the air without any effort almost. Because the law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity. That's what Paul says in Romans 8 too.

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that when I experience that same life that Jesus had, that I receive it through the Holy Spirit, it gives me the power to overcome the law of sin and death. Just like the birds. God's put a life into those birds that can overcome the law of sin.

And he can put a life that can overcome the law of gravity. God can put the life of Jesus in us in the same way so that we can overcome the power of sin. But it depends on our looking unto Jesus.

Because we read here that when Peter stopped looking at Jesus and started looking at the wind and the waves, he said, Lord, save me. He began to sink. And we do begin to sink when we turn our eyes away from Jesus unto the trial or the sorrow or the difficulty or the temptation.

But in that moment too, if we say, Lord, save me, Jesus is still there to stretch out his hand and to take a hold of us. He said to him in verse 31, Oh, you of little faith. Why did you doubt? Everything depends on faith.

If you can have faith that the Lord can enable you to walk in triumph in every situation, like it says in 2 Corinthians 2.14, Paul had it that way, we too can walk in triumph. If we look to him and say, Lord, you'll give me grace to overcome as you overcame.

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