

# (Matthew) ch.14:22-16:12

by Zac Poonen

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*God sends storms across our way so that we can experience His power and get a new revelation of Jesus.*

**Duration:** 54:38

**Scripture:** Isaiah 29:13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:19-20, Matthew 16:1, 1 Timothy 5:8

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Divine Providence"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the miracle of Peter walking on water towards Jesus as a parable for our lives. He emphasizes that just as Jesus overcame the law of gravity and walked on water, we too can overcome the law of sin and death. The preacher also highlights the importance of directing people's attention towards God rather than ourselves in our ministry. The sermon further discusses Jesus' compassion for the multitude and his willingness to provide for their needs, using the examples of the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand. The preacher encourages the audience to trust in God's ability to meet their needs, no matter how great they may be.

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## Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 14. We were considering in our last study this wonderful miracle of Peter walking on the water to go toward Jesus. And this whole passage, right from the beginning, has got such a lot of spiritual lessons in it, so many spiritual lessons, such a powerful spiritual message in it, because it is a parable, it's in a sense concerning our life.

It was a miracle that was a parable. The miracle was that Jesus walked on the water and Peter walked on the water. The parable to us is that when the law of sin and death pulls us down like the law of gravity pulled Jesus and Peter down and Jesus overcame and Peter could also overcome, we too can overcome the law of sin and death.

We were considering in our last study how Jesus compelled the disciples to go across in the boat. They didn't want to go. Think if they had disobeyed.

What would have been the consequences? If they had disobeyed and said, no Lord, we're not going to go, Jesus would not have caught them by the neck and pushed them into the boat. They would not have gone into that boat and we could have said they would have avoided the storm. They would have avoided the battering of the waves on the boat.

Wouldn't that be a good thing? Wouldn't it be a good thing if we faced life without any trials and difficulties? If we look only at this life, the answer would be yes. But if we look at character and eternal values, we'd say the answer is no. If you go through life without facing any contrary winds, without a storm, without waves battering your life, maybe you have a comfortable life, but you'll never learn to know God who can be known only in the middle of the storm.

Think of the experience these people had of Jesus walking on the water. What an experience! But if you want that experience, you've got to go out into the middle of the storm. Think of the experience that Peter had to walk on the water.

Well, you can have that experience only when you listen to Jesus and go and face the storm. And we read that when Jesus came into the boat, the wind stopped. The mighty power of God that can lead you through that storm, you can experience only when you face the storm.

So, I, for one, certainly don't want to go through life without any difficulties because I know that will only give me a comfortable earthly life. But I shall never know God in a deep way. My character would not develop.

And so, dear friend, it's the love of God that sends storms across your way. And it's when you disobey the Lord that you find life comfortable and easy. An easy, comfortable life is God's portion for those who have disobeyed Him.

A difficult life full of storms and the battering of waves is God's portion for those who have obeyed Him. But in the middle of those storms, they will experience Jesus overcoming and teaching them also to overcome. For the book of Revelation calls us to be overcomers.

But how can you overcome if there is nothing to overcome? No. God has ordained it in such a way that we shall face tribulation, persecution, trial, sorrow, difficulties and all types of temptations because that's the only way we shall become overcomers. And that's what He wanted the disciples also to experience.

Think of the disciples that never had that experience there. They would not have known Jesus' ability to still the storm. And it's because we pray so much that God will not allow us to face any storms that we never experience the mighty power of God being able to make us overcomers in a storm.

Which is better? To be an overcomer in the middle of a storm or never to have faced any storms at all? The spiritually minded man knows the answer. It's far better to face the battering of the waves and contrary winds, even opposition and persecution from people if we can know the mighty power of God in the middle of that. Ask a man who has gone through trials and sorrows and difficulties in the opposition of people and he will tell you that he's become a richer man spiritually, probably poorer materially, but richer spiritually because he's gone through those storms and gone through the battering of the waves.

And not only that, we read here they got a new revelation of Jesus at the end of it all. Those who were in the boat worshipped Him and saying, you are certainly God's son. They got a revelation and we too can get a revelation, a new revelation of the Lord if we are willing to go through the storms.

So there it is, what Paul told to Timothy in 2nd Timothy 3 and verse 12. All those who live a godly life in Christ Jesus, who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in any country, in any century. It's not just in lands where there is a lot of persecution that they suffer persecution.

Even in lands where there is no obvious external persecution, there can be other forms of persecution. If we wholeheartedly desire to live a godly life and follow Jesus, we shall face storms and contrary winds and battering waves. But we shall know the power of God in the midst of that and we shall get a new revelation of Jesus and we shall become overcomers if we live by faith.

Notice this, that the only thing that Jesus ever rebuked his disciples for was for unbelief primarily. And we read in Matthew 16, we'll come to that, he rebuked Peter for seeking his own interests. Jesus never rebuked his disciples for making mistakes.

And that's a great encouragement for us. We will make mistakes and you'll find that the Lord doesn't scold you for that. Parents scold their children easily for making a mistake.

We all make mistakes. To err is human. Be merciful when other people make mistakes.

To forgive is a divine habit. God does not rebuke us for making mistakes but he does rebuke us for unbelief when we don't trust him. That's more serious than any mistake.

When we don't trust him, when we seek our own interests, that's serious. And so Jesus rebuked his disciples saying, Oh you of little faith, he told Peter. Why did you doubt? Why didn't you trust me? What a word of rebuke that we need to hear when we are anxious and fearful.

Why did you doubt? It's easy to trust God when there is no storm. But our faith is tested only in the middle of the storm. Peter, seeing the wind, became afraid.

When you're in the comfort of a boat, you can think you have a lot of faith. But when you step out, you realize how little faith you have. But the Lord's desire is to strengthen our faith.

And when they crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent him to all that surrounding district and brought to him all who were ill. And they began to entreat him that they might just touch the fringe of his cloak.

It's amazing the mighty power of God that flowed through an anointed man like Jesus, that flowed through a pure man like Jesus. When he was on earth, he was as a man that he walked. There was such mighty power in him, such an anointing in him, that it carried over even into his clothes.

If they touched his clothes, they were healed. This is not only for Jesus. We read in Acts 19 that Paul would send handkerchiefs which touched his body that would heal others.

Paul lived under the same anointing, the same purity. There was a mighty power. There's a mighty power in the anointing of the Holy Spirit and in a pure life.

Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem saying, Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. The Pharisees were very concerned about tradition. Tradition was more important to them than God's word.

And they were concerned about some silly little tradition that they had that when you eat bread, you must wash your hands. And that's not just a matter of hygiene. Of course, it's necessary to wash your hands for hygienic purposes, but here it was a matter of a ceremonial washing of hands all the way down from the elbow, which is a tradition of the elders.

And he answered to them, Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? Jesus, who always answered the disciples exactly what they asked very often, didn't answer the Pharisees in the same way. He always saw a man's heart before deciding whether to answer his question or not. A good example for us to follow.

And Jesus told the Pharisees, God said, Honor your father and mother, and he who speaks evil of father and mother, let him be put to death. But you say, whoever shall say to his father or mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given to God. He's not to honor his father or his mother.

And thus you invalidate the word of God for the sake of your tradition. Jesus said, You people encourage young people sometimes to give their money to God instead of helping their parents. And Jesus rebuked them for that.

If you have money, and your parents are in need, this passage teaches us, don't give it to God. Give it to your parents. Take care of your parents.

The Pharisees said, No, we must give to God. And religiously minded people think that is the most spiritual thing to do. But Jesus set it straight and said, No, you must help your father and mother who have taken care of you when you were small.

Honor your father and mother. And he related that honoring a father and mother here to financial help. Every child has an obligation to take care of his parents in their time of financial need when they're old.

And if you don't do that, you don't honor God's word. And you can say that you are giving it to God, but you're a Pharisee. And it's not only money.

It's also time. If your parents need your help, give them help. Don't say, I've given my time to God and neglect your parents.

You can invalidate the word of God by such Pharisaic traditions when God's word says, Honor your father and mother. Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel and chapter 15. Here we read of the Pharisees and Jesus having another one of their many encounters.

And this time the subject was, Why don't your disciples keep the traditions of the elders? Matthew 15 verse 2. There are many people for whom the traditions of the elders are as sacred as the word of God. That is one of the easiest ways to become a Pharisee. If you want to be a Pharisee, give the traditions of the elders the same place as God's word.

Jesus never cared for tradition. He cared for God's word. In fact, he said that the Pharisees invalidated the word of God for the sake of their tradition.

It's amazing that by keeping tradition, we can invalidate God's word. One example he gave was how the Pharisees taught young people to neglect their parents with an apparent show of spirituality, religious language that they were to use saying the money I could have helped you with I've given to God. And Jesus said that that was invalidating God's word which said, Honor your father and mother.

When the Bible speaks about honoring father and mother, this passage clearly indicates that it refers to finances, money that should be given to parents for the care that the parents have extended to the children in their younger days. In fact, God's word says in 1 Timothy 5 that in verse 4 If a widow has

children or grandchildren, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents for this is acceptable in the sight of God. Where shall you practice your godliness first? Very clear.

In regard to your own family. And you are to give back to your parents some return for all that they have done for you. And this is acceptable in the sight of God.

That's a very clear word and it goes on to say that if a man does not care for his own family like that verse 8 of 1 Timothy 5 he is worse than an unbeliever. The unbelievers know how to take care of their old parents but sometimes some believers get super spiritual. Just religious.

There's a difference between being spiritual and being religious. And the Pharisees made people religious. They didn't make them spiritual.

Jesus came to demolish all that false religion and lead people to true spirituality. There's a lot of false religion in the world that has a show of appearing to be spiritual but it's not really spirituality. And Jesus turned around and told these Pharisees in Matthew 15 and verse 6 you have invalidated God's word by your tradition.

He never answered their question as to why the disciples didn't wash their hands because it is a waste of time. It is a waste of time to answer the questions of some people. We read in the book of Proverbs do not answer a fool according to his folly lest you also be like him.

And there are certain questions we don't answer because it's asked by people who have no interest in obedience to God's word. And so Jesus never answered that question. He just pointed out to them the other reason why they are disobedient.

Another area where they were disobedient. And told them that they had invalidated God's word by their tradition. You hypocrites! Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, verse 7 This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far away from me.

In vain do they worship me teaching us their doctrines the precepts of men. Why were they disobedient? Because they wanted to keep their traditions. They honored God with their lips.

In other words, they said the right things they prayed and they sang hymns perhaps but their heart was far away from the Lord. In vain, in emptiness they worshiped the Lord. We need to ask ourselves whether a lot of so-called Christian worship doesn't fall into the same category.

Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. This is a quotation from Isaiah chapter 29 verse 13 It happened to the Israelites it's happening to Christians today. When they speak so many good things they say so many good things to God in their prayer and their worship and their hymns but God who sees their hearts sees that their heart is far away from Him.

And then the Lord says all your worship is empty. Consider your own life. We don't need to judge other people.

The word of God says don't judge others but the word of God says we've got to judge ourselves. It's a very good thing to do to examine our life to see if there is anything in our life which we can say has no foundation in God's word but is a tradition of the elders maybe something that's been practiced for

hundreds of years or tens of years in your church but which has no foundation in God's word. Remember, this passage has an application to that practice of yours.

You can cancel out God's word by a tradition that looks so innocent and that perhaps looks so religious but which has no foundation in God's word. You can justify it. I'm sure the Pharisees justified their telling the young people to give their money to God saying we must put God first.

Doesn't that sound spiritual? But Jesus said that was not spirituality. They had to care for their parents. Sometimes a show of spirituality can be hollow.

It's the spirit underneath that God sees. And Jesus called to himself the multitude and said to them, Hear and understand. And now he answers the question not to the Pharisees but to the multitude concerning the washing of hands.

He says you don't get defiled by what goes into your mouth but what comes out of your mouth that's what defiles you. Isn't that interesting? People who are so concerned about bacteria and germs and very careful to boil the milk and very careful to filter the water and very careful to cook the food properly seem to be so unconcerned about the words that come out of their mouth. Imagine the folly of believers who are so careful about physical hygiene not particular about spiritual hygiene and yet Jesus said the words that you speak can have far more spiritual bacteria and germs in them than the food that you eat and you don't seem to be concerned about that.

It defiles you. A man cannot be defiled by what enters into his mouth but what comes out of your mouth can defile you. And that's a word that we need to take very seriously.

Every word that we speak we have to give an account on the day of judgment. If you are a disciple of Jesus you'll be more concerned about what comes out of your mouth than what goes into your mouth. Jesus was not saying that we don't have to be careful about physical hygiene.

It's good to boil the water and the milk. Sure. But you can't be defiled by that.

Maybe your stomach will get a little upset but you can't be defiled. You means your heart cannot be defiled by what you eat. But your heart which is much more important than your stomach can easily be defiled by your words.

And that's what Jesus said you need to take more heed to. And the disciples came and said to him Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this? But you didn't answer their question straight. So many people are offended when they hear the truth.

People were offended with Jesus when he spoke and the way he spoke. And he answered and said Every plant which my heavenly father did not plant shall be rooted up. The question is not whether it looks religious and good in the eyes of men but did my heavenly father plant it? A very important question.

That which does not originate in God will finally be rooted up. The wonderful thing that you do and if it has not originated in God's mind will finally be destroyed. Every plant which my heavenly father did not plant.

If you are not born again if you have not been brought to birth by God one day you'll be rooted up. The same thing applies to your work. You can have a ministry and that ministry may not have originated in God's mind but in your own fertile brain.

One day it will be planted up even though it looks so good in the eyes of men. The question is not a question of whether it's good. The question is a question of origin.

Did God plant it? Did it originate in God? The Bible begins with the words In the beginning God. And those words must be written about every single Christian project that we are engaged in. So many people engage in Christian work just because they've got the money just because there is a need.

The need does not constitute a call to a ministry. The fact that money is available does not mean that we can engage in something. Jonah had money to buy a ticket to go to Tarshish but he went in the wrong direction.

The question is what is the will of God? If we could meditate on just this one verse Matthew 15, 13 it could revolutionize our life and ministry. Everything that I do must originate in God. I should not plant a plant that my heavenly Father is not called me to plant.

Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel chapter 15. We were considering verse 13 in our last study where Jesus answered the disciples and said Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up. He replied to the disciples when they had told him that the Pharisees were offended with what he had spoken.

But we see here that Jesus was not bothered whether people were offended with what he said or not. He was a prophet and it is only to be expected that people will be offended with the message of a prophet. People are pleased and satisfied with the message of false prophets.

But the true prophets were never popular and Jesus was not at all bothered what religious Pharisees thought about his message. And he said Let them alone. The disciples were wondering whether they should go and appease the feelings of the Pharisees and Jesus said Leave them alone.

Don't bother about them. You don't have to go and explain to them and far less apologize to them. There is nothing to apologize for and there is no need even to explain.

Leave them alone because they are blind. They are religious but they are spiritually blind and they are guides of other blind people and if a blind man guides another blind man both will fall into a pit. The Pharisees were blind but the sad thing was other people allowed such blind people to be their leaders.

You and I need to ask ourselves as to who our leaders are. If our leaders are blind then you can't blame anybody but yourself when you fall into the pit. A blind man guides a blind man both fall into the pit and this is why it is very very important for every Christian to make certain that his spiritual leader his spiritual shepherd is one who has got his eyes open spiritually.

One who can hear God. One who is spiritually a man of revelation. A man who has the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

It is fatal to follow a man who does not have the revelation of the Spirit. Very very serious. Peter answered and said to him explain this parable that you spoke about what proceeds out of the mouth defiling the man and he said are you also still without understanding? Think that Jesus expected his disciples to have some understanding by that time even without the Holy Spirit having been given.

How much more in these days after the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit has been given that the Lord has to say to us are you still without understanding? Oh what a great need there is among believers to meditate on God's word so that we get the revelation of the Spirit in humility so that we understand. And then he explained to them he says do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? Yes you can get a stomach upset but the body has been made in such a way that you can bring up and there is an elimination system in the body and that takes care of matters of things that go into your stomach. But he said the things that come out from the heart that defiles a man that which proceeds out of the mouth comes from the heart.

How did it get into the heart? It came from your flesh into your heart. Temptation is when your flesh knocks at the door of your heart and says let me come in. It could be some dirty lust it could be a bitterness it could be anger it could be immorality it could be a slanderous thought it could be a lying thought it could be a bad thought it could be a lustful thought it could be a sexually dirty thought all these things dwell in your flesh and as long as they remain in your flesh you don't sin.

But in some particular circumstance you are tempted. Temptation we can say is these lusts knocking at the door of your heart and saying let me come in. A thought flashed into your mind which is sinful that's the flesh knocking at the door of your heart.

And when you yield to that when you respond to it and when you accept it you open the door of your heart and it comes in and your heart is defiled and then it comes out through your eyes through your bodily actions through your hands through what you write through what you speak through your mouth and so out of the mouth what comes out from the mouth started in the heart and got into the heart from the flesh because of your unfaithfulness in your thought life and thus you are defiled. And the first thing that Jesus said that comes out of a dirty heart is evil thoughts. Jesus took evil thoughts very seriously.

Many Christians don't because people don't see or hear our thoughts. Just imagine if God had made our system in such a way that our thoughts sounded out as loud as our spoken words I think many of us would be very much more careful with our thoughts. Why is it we are so careless concerning evil thoughts? It's because we don't fear God.

Why is it we are careful with our words? It's because we fear men. And that's why God has allowed each of us to have a private area in our life called our thought life into which nobody can penetrate. The one who sits next to you cannot hear what's going on in your thoughts.

He cannot see. But there God sees and tests whether you fear him or not. Out of the heart come evil thoughts murders, adulteries fornications, thefts, false witness slanders.

These are the things which defile the man. Do you know that a man is defiled by evil thoughts? That one evil thought is far worse than a hundred typhoid germs or tuberculosis germs getting into your stomach? If only we would realize this. We who are so careful with germs getting into our stomach in the food that we eat would become very, very careful if we realize that one dirty thought getting into the heart is worse than that.

That's what Jesus was explaining to Peter here. That you don't have to be so concerned about what goes into your stomach as to what goes into your heart and comes out of your heart through your mouth and through your life. These are the things which defile the man but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

The man is what? The man is his heart. He is not defiled just because his hands were a bit dirty when he ate. Oh, if only we would take the words of Jesus seriously.

What a transformation it would bring into our life. We read further in verse 21. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.

And if you were to look into a map of Palestine you would read there, you would see there that it was a distance of 50 miles. Notice that just in passing for the moment. That Jesus walked 50 miles to go to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

Why did he do that? No doubt because he had a prompting from the Holy Spirit. Just like if we are listening faithfully to the voice of God we can get a prompting from the Holy Spirit too at times. To go to a certain place or to write a letter to someone or to do something.

Jesus had a prompting. He was a man and he was prompted by the Spirit and he obeyed that prompting and went to the district of Tyre and Sidon not knowing why. But when he went there he saw why.

There was a Canaanite woman whom God had seen in that area who was in need because her daughter was demon possessed. And God had a faithful servant on earth, Jesus who obeyed the prompting of the Spirit to go and help this Canaanite woman. She was not an Israelite.

She was not a descendant of Abraham. But God cared even for those who were not descendants of Abraham. That was a demonstration in the ministry of Jesus that God cared for others too.

And the interesting thing here is again he listens to the prompting of the Spirit. He doesn't immediately go to deliver the demon possessed person. Some people have a tremendous lust to go looking around for demon possessed people to deliver them.

Jesus never had any such lust. He obeyed the prompting of the Spirit. And it says he didn't answer her a word.

And his disciples they were always fed up with people who were pestering Jesus. And they said send her away for she is shouting. She was so desperate.

And the disciples got sick and tired of her pestering and said send her away. And then he answered and said I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And he answered and she came and began to bow down before him and said Lord help me.

She was not going to give up. And he answered again and said it's not good to take the children's bread that is that which belongs to the children of Abraham and throw it to the dogs, the Gentiles, those who are outside the fold. And she said yes Lord.

But even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said to her Oh woman your faith is great. Be it done for you as you wish.

And her daughter was healed at once. Many people ask this question. Why did Jesus refer to her as a dog? We need to understand that.

Was it because of lack of compassion? That is why I pointed out to you in verse 21 that he walked 50 miles. And then we read in verse 29 he departed from there and went back to Galilee. He went 50 miles

up and 50 miles down to help one person.

Can we say he despised him? Despised her? You don't despise a person if you walk 100 miles to help that person. No. This is one of those unique cases where Jesus walked 100 miles up and down just to help one single person.

What we see here is just the opposite of despising. A tremendous compassion. But he wanted her to take the lowly place of deserving nothing.

Then he could bless her. And that's the place he wants us to come to also. Do you realize that you deserve nothing more than a dog? Then God can give you much.

But if you think you deserve a lot you'll get nothing. The children of Israel they didn't get what this woman got. Jesus said Are you willing to take the place of a dog? She said sure.

Give me a crumb Lord. And then the Lord delivered her daughter immediately. What a lesson for us.

Take the lowly humble place and you can get God's best. Let's turn to Matthew's Gospel chapter 15. We were considering in our last study verses 21 to 28 where Jesus healed this Canaanite woman's daughter delivering her from demon possession.

And we saw how when the Canaanite woman took that place of humility of saying Lord I'm willing to take the place of a dog. And if I can't get bread can you give me a little crumb? Jesus answered and said oh woman your faith is great. Be it done for you as you wish.

In the Gospels that is in verse 28 there are only two places where Jesus spoke about the greatness of someone's faith and it's very interesting to see them. The first was in an earlier study in chapter 8 of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus said concerning the Roman centurion.

Romans 8.10 I have not seen such great faith in anyone in Israel. And the other is here in Matthew 15 verse 28. Oh woman your faith is great.

One was a Roman man and the other was a Canaanite woman. What do we see? Both were non-Jews. The people who had the Bible, the people who studied the Bible didn't seem to have as much faith as this Roman centurion and this Canaanite woman.

And that's quite a word to us. We can have so much Bible knowledge but ultimately the thing that matters ultimately what matters is our faith not our knowledge. Here was a woman with great faith and faith is very closely linked with humility.

Notice in the case of the Roman centurion he told Jesus in Matthew 8. Lord I am not worthy that you should come to my house. He took a very lowly place and he had faith. The same thing with this Canaanite woman.

She was willing to take the place of a dog sitting at the foot of a table and she had faith. This teaches us that there is a very close connection between humility and genuine faith. Jesus said in John 5 verse 44 How can you believe when you receive glory from one another? Who are the ones who receive glory from one another? Proud people.

Haughty people. He said how can you have faith when you receive glory from one another? The clear meaning of John 5.44 is that it's humble people who have faith. People who are willing to take the low place who realize their unworthiness of receiving anything from God like the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman.

Their faith was great. Very often our faith is not great because we think we deserve so much from God. Do you know what you and I really deserve from God? The lake of fire.

And if any one of us has not yet gone to hell, we have to say we haven't got what we deserve. Anything better than hell is what we don't deserve. And yet our attitude can be that God should do this for us and that for us and give us this and give us that.

And that's why our faith remains so small. Take the lowly place dear friend and you'll find that your faith increases. The Lord who traveled a hundred miles to help this Canaanite woman will travel a long distance to help a needy person if he sees the person has humility.

The other thing he tested with this Canaanite woman was her persistence. Very often we don't get what we want because we don't persist in asking. Is it God's will that your daughter should be demon possessed? Certainly not.

That's not the will of God that anybody should be demon possessed. And you can get deliverance from demon possession or any harassment of Satan in your life which is not the will of God if you persist and say Lord I want to be free from this. I don't believe this is a good and perfect gift of yours.

This is an evil thing that Satan has put upon my daughter. I want to be free. I want her to be free.

Persist. And even though it appears as though he's not answering your word in response to your prayer verse 23 don't go away. Persist.

And you will get the answer to your prayer. For that is how Jesus taught us to pray. And it is that persistence which is the proof of our faith.

Verse 29 And departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up to the mountain, he was sitting there. And great multitudes came to him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others. And they laid them down at his feet, and he healed them.

He healed those who were sick, so that the multitude marveled, as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they glorified the God of Israel. They didn't glorify Jesus. They glorified the God of Israel.

In other words, we see that Jesus' ministry was in such a way that he directed the glory to God. So different from the healing ministry of many people today, who direct the attention of people to themselves. Look at their magazines, and you'll find the magazines full of photographs of themselves.

The attention is drawn to the man. Jesus drew the attention of people away from him to God. Even though he healed all those who were lame, crippled, blind, and dumb, such a healing ministry as the world has never seen, they glorified God.

And that's a very good test that we can apply to ourselves in our ministry, to ask ourselves when people come in touch with our ministry, do they glorify us, or do they glorify God? Are we directing the attention of

people towards ourselves, or towards the Lord? We read further in verse 32, and Jesus summoned to himself his disciples and said, I feel compassion for the multitude, because they remain with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way. A second instance of the feeding of the multitude.

And the disciples said to him, where would we get so many loaves in a desert place to satisfy such a great multitude? Just a little while earlier, he had fed five thousand men in a miraculous way, and many women and children besides, and they had forgotten so quickly. It's amazing how quickly we forget the miracles God does for us. How easy it is in a time of trial or difficulty to forget all the miracles that God has done for us in previous difficult situations.

It's almost as though he's never done anything for us. And we come up with unbelief. But we can be sure that the one who's helped us in previous difficulties will help us now too.

And so Jesus said to them, how many loaves do you have? They said, seven, and a few small fish. And he directed the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fish, and giving thanks, he broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn to the multitudes.

Notice again the same principle. He did not ask for volunteers. He asked only his disciples to distribute the food, even though there were four thousand men, we read in verse thirty-eight, beside women and children.

Jesus was not interested in efficiency or in doing things so quickly as he was interested in using only disciples to serve him. Very often we can think, we can pay people to serve the Lord? No. Or shall we get volunteers? No.

Whom shall we ask to serve the Lord? Only disciples. Jesus only asked disciples. And if it were only twelve, that's enough.

Even though it may take a long time for twelve people to go around feeding seven or eight thousand people as they were there. Imagine. Efficiency-wise it would have been better to ask for volunteers, but Jesus did not.

A very, very important principle in Christian work. And we also see here something else which was true in the case of the feeding of the earlier multitude. He took the loaves and the fish and he gave thanks.

Jesus always prayed before eating food and taught others to pray. A simple act, but it wasn't a ritual. It was an expression of thankfulness to God his Father for providing his material necessity.

A very, very good example for us to follow. Always this was out in public. He gave thanks for the food that he ate.

And also we can say that what we give to God, he blesses and breaks. The seven loaves and the few fish are a picture of we giving ourselves to God so that God can use us to bless others. What will he do with us? He will bless us and then he will break us.

He blesses and he breaks and then he uses. A fundamental principle in Christian service. Do you want God to use you? You have to be blessed first with the power and the anointing of his Spirit.

But that is not enough. You must be broken. The loaves were broken.

It's the same thing that we read in Matthew's Gospel in chapter 14. He blessed verse 19 and broke. And then used it to feed the multitude.

The same principle today. Many are blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit, but they are not willing to be broken. And so their usefulness is limited.

We read in verse 37, the people all ate and were satisfied. And again they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven full baskets. There was plenty left over.

The Lord's blessing always makes an abundance. It brings an abundance with it. There is nothing miserly that comes from God's hand.

God gives in abundance. And dismissing the multitudes he got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan. Here is a miracle that was repeated twice.

To emphasize upon his disciples a lesson. However great the need. There may be 5,000, 4,000, 10,000 maybe 500,000.

Whatever the need. If you will give me all that you have, even if it's very little, allow me to bless it and break it, the need will always be met. And may we never forget that lesson.

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel and chapter 16 and verse 1. And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, testing him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. It seems as though the Pharisees and Sadducees never seemed to give up on pestering and testing Jesus in various ways and making life difficult for him. They followed him and they wanted to see a miracle now.

But Jesus was not a magician going around giving magic shows. His miracles were not magic shows. Very often people seek to make their ministry more like magic shows than a service for people.

But Jesus was not a magician. He was ministering in order to help and bless people. And Jesus answered and said to them, When it is evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red.

The Pharisees were good weather forecasters. And in the morning, there will be a storm today, you say, for the sky is red and threatening. Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times? It's more important to be able to understand the time in which we live than to be able to forecast the weather.

To know the future concerning the weather is not important, but to know the time in which we live now, to understand, to discern the signs of the times. And that has far greater relevance for the situation in which we are living today, the close of the 20th century, so close to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, this word of Jesus. Can you not discern the signs of the times? Can you not understand that the nation of Israel has been in the land now for 40 years? The fig tree has put forth its leaves, and we see many other signs, wars, terrorism, in a scale in which the world has never seen.

Can you not discern the signs of the times? These are the signs that Jesus spoke about that would indicate His second coming. We are very close to that now. He who has years to hear, let him hear and be ready and purify himself as Jesus is pure.

But concerning miracles, He said, an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a miracle. Do you know that it's not a very spiritual thing to seek for a miracle? To seek after a miracle, Jesus said, is what an evil

and adulterous generation looks for. There are many Christians hankering after miracles, just like these Pharisees, and they need to hear the word of Jesus.

An evil and an adulterous generation seeks for a sign, seeks for miracles as a sign. No, we are to seek for that which will glorify God. If God wants to do a miracle, He'll do it.

That's up to Him. But we are to seek the glory of God in our life, not for attesting miracles. Leave that to God.

And He said, attesting miracle or sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah. The sign of Jonah is mentioned in another passage, is the sign of the resurrection, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, that is in the paradise section of Hades, in the heart of the earth, where it was in those days. He was three days and three nights there, and then He came back from there into His body, which was in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and came out alive again.

The sign of the resurrection is far more important than any other miracle. The sign of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus' resurrection had not yet taken place, and that is why during His earthly life He did so many miracles.

But after His resurrection, it is that sign which is the primary miracle that God wants the world to believe in. That Jesus was raised from the dead, the sign of Jonah, and He left them and went away. And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread.

And Jesus said to them, verse 6, Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they didn't understand what the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees were. And they thought, well, maybe Jesus is rebuking us because we forgot to take bread, and we won't have anything to eat.

It's amazing how when our mind is occupied with earthly things, we think that God's word always speaks to us about earthly things. But Jesus wasn't bothered about whether they forgot to take bread or not. It was something spiritual that He was talking about.

And again Jesus rebuked them for their faith. Oh, you men of little faith, He said. Why do you discuss among yourselves because you have no bread? Is lack of bread such a serious problem? No.

He said, don't you understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many large baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets you took up? Is it difficult for me to make bread? Even from nothing? It's very interesting to see that when Jesus was in the wilderness and He was tempted by Satan, and Satan said, turn these stones into bread, He never did it. He would never do a miracle for Himself. What an example.

But when the multitude needed bread, twice, when the five thousand and the four thousand, when they needed bread, He was ready to produce it. He never did a miracle for Himself, but He would do it for others. A wonderful example for us to follow.

That's how it was with Jesus. And Jesus reminded them of that. He says, is that a problem for me to produce bread for you? From nothing, that's no problem.

You just trust the Lord. The Lord was saying here, you can trust Me for your material necessities. And that's a word that every one of us need to take heed to, particularly those who are in difficult financial circumstances.

And with the cost of living going up so high, and we can be worried about so many material things, and we need to hear this word from Jesus, you men of little faith, can't you trust Me? Why don't you give your life to seeking the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, and I will take care of your need, whatever the cost of living may be. Whatever inflation does to the value of currency, the Lord will take care of His people. Certainly.

But what you need to beware of is not your lack of bread. What you need to beware of is the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, which is something spiritual, which is far more dangerous than your not having bread to eat. Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

We can ask ourselves, what is the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees with Jesus put a danger signal on saying, beware? It is like the warning sign we see in front of an electric switchboard. Danger, 440 volts or 10,000 volts or whatever it is. He said, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Something that we need to be really more scared of than even if we don't have food in the house. You see, if you don't have food in the house one night, you've got to feed your children. The next morning, you'd really be concerned.

That would really cause you some anxiety, but Jesus said, here's something that should cause you more concern than even lack of food in your house. The teaching of the Pharisees and the teaching of the Sadducees. The leaven of the Pharisees is explained in Luke's Gospel chapter 12 and verse 1 as hypocrisy.

The Pharisees, their doctrine was correct, but their life was wrong. Jesus said in Matthew 23 and verse 2 whatever the Pharisees tell you to do, you can do. Because their doctrine is correct.

But don't follow their life, because they don't practice what they preach. They preach things they never do in their life. That is hypocrisy.

To give an impression to people that you are far more spiritual than you really are. To talk high-sounding spiritual language. And to live a very low spiritual life.

To be selfish, miserly, backbiting, gossiping, having dirty thoughts and living a low spiritual life. And to talk high-sounding spiritual words about the anointing and baptism in the Holy Spirit and so many wonderful things. That is the leaven of the Pharisees.

Talking about things which are not true in your life. Beware of it. It is more deadly than 10,000 volts of electricity.

And the other thing is the teaching of the Sadducees. Now the Sadducees are those we read of them in the Acts of the Apostles. That they did not believe in the resurrection.

They did not believe in angels or spirits. That was the teaching of the Sadducees. They did not believe in the supernatural.

Their doctrine was wrong. And so Jesus gave us two warnings. He says, beware of false doctrine and beware of a false life.

What are we to take heed to? Paul said in 1 Timothy 4 verse 16. So Timothy, take heed to your life and to your doctrine. And if you do that, you will save yourself and those who hear you.

And the more dangerous thing is the life. Because if you have false doctrine, that is fairly easily spotted. But when you have a false life, you can get credit for being a godly person and ruin yourself.

But here are two things that Jesus warned us about and it is good for us to really take heed to this and say, Lord, I really want to be careful, first of all of my life and then of my doctrine, that both will lead to godliness for then I can save myself and lead others to godliness as well.

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