

# (Matthew) ch.20:1-21:22

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon explores the importance of serving God with the right attitude, emphasizing love over reward in the context of Matthew 20:1-21:22.*

**Duration:** 50:43

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:16-22, Matthew 19:27, Matthew 20:1, Matthew 20:17, Matthew 20:28, Matthew 21:12-13, Matthew 21:15

**Topics:** "Servant Heart", "Motivations Matter"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the laborers in the vineyard from Matthew 20. He highlights the different groups of laborers and their motivations for working. The first four groups worked for payment, with varying levels of knowledge about their wages. However, the fifth group worked without any expectation of reward, serving out of love for the landowner. The preacher emphasizes that it is not the quantity of work that matters, but the attitude and motives behind it. He also references other Bible verses, such as 1 Corinthians 4:5 and 1 Corinthians 3:12, to support his points about the importance of serving with the right attitude.

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## Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 20 and verse 1. For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. In our last study we were considering how Jesus answered Peter's question after the rich young ruler had left. And Jesus had said that it's difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God because that rich young man was unwilling to sell his property and be free from the love of money.

And then Peter, comparing himself with that rich young ruler, felt he was superior and said, Lord, Matthew 19:27, we've left everything and followed you. What will there be for us? And Jesus, first of all, told them that he did appreciate the fact that they had left everything. The Lord certainly doesn't deny that appreciation.

He said, you have followed me in the regeneration. You will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. And if you have left anything for my name's sake, you will be rewarded a hundredfold, for God is never going to be in debt to any man.

God will not be in debt to you. If you've given up money, God will give it back in one way or the other. But if we don't change our attitude, even though we may be first and we may get back much that God repays, yet we can be lost in eternity.

And it is in this context that we need to understand this parable. The question in this parable is, are you serving for reward or are you serving out of love? The elder son in the story of the prodigal son is a classic example of that. He had served his father for many years, but when the prodigal son came back and the father received him joyfully, he was very disturbed, this elder son.

And he tells his father in Luke 15 and verse 29, I've served you all these years and you never gave me anything. What did he serve for? Reward. The elder son is a type of those who serve God in a legalistic spirit for reward.

I have served you all these years and I want to ask a question to those of you who feel that you are serving God, perhaps in some full-time way. Ask yourself whether you have the attitude of the elder son. Lord, I have served you all these years.

Why haven't you answered my prayer in this particular area? Why haven't you given me this comfort or that comfort or this thing or that thing? It's the attitude that ruins all of our service. All of our service becomes dead works when the attitude is wrong. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 19:30, those who are first will be last.

People who have stood up in the front in the church as outstanding self-sacrificing individuals and have been honored here on earth will end up last in the kingdom because their service was all full of dead works. It was not love that motivated their service, but this questioning attitude, what will I get out of it? Matthew 20, we read about this landowner who went out hiring laborers and at six o'clock in the morning he went out and he found some and they agreed, he made an agreement with them to serve for one denarius a day. At nine o'clock in the morning, Matthew 20, verse 3, he found some others.

With them also he made an agreement, not for one denarius, but for whatever is right. They also served for wages because the agreement was, verse 4, the master told them, you go into the vineyard and whatever is right I will give you. So they also went.

At twelve o'clock noon and at three o'clock in the afternoon, verse 5, it says he did the same thing. There were four groups of laborers, all of whom came to work for pay. The first a specified pay, the second, third and fourth groups for an unspecified pay, but still for pay.

Finally, in verse 6, at five o'clock in the evening, when there was only one hour of work left to be done, at the eleventh hour, at five p.m., he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, why have you been standing here idle all day long? They said to him, because no one hired us. He said, you also go into the vineyard and notice what is absent.

There is no promise of payment. There is no agreement of any sum. They were completely different from the first four groups of laborers in this one feature, that they worked without any hope of payment or reward.

The first four groups were different. The first ones knew how much they would get. The second, third and fourth also worked for payment, though they did not know how much they would get.

The fifth group alone worked without any hope of reward or payment. They just worked, let's assume, out of love for the landowner. Anyway, this is the meaning of the parable.

In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group first. And when those who were hired at the eleventh hour came, to their surprise, they got something. They got much more than they expected.

They got twelve times what their work deserved. They got a denarius, which was a whole day's wages when they had worked only one twelfth of a day. And then those who were hired first, who had agreed for one denarius, came.

They thought they would receive more. They thought they would get twelve because these other people got one for one hour's work. But they were also given one denarius each.

And when they received it, they grumbled. Just like the elder son in the story of the prodigal son, who said, All these years I have served you. They said, These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.

And he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. But if I want to give to this last man the same as to you, what is that of you? Isn't it lawful for me to do what I wish with my own money? Or is your eye envious because I am generous? Again Jesus repeated what he said in Matthew 19.30, Thus the last shall be first and the first last.

And we can ask ourselves this question, What is it that made the first people last here and the last people first? It was certainly not the amount of work done. In terms of amount of work done, those first people had worked twelve times as much as the people who worked last. What was it that made the difference? The difference was just this, The first group of laborers worked for a specified amount of pay.

And the last group of laborers came without any expectation of pay or reward. There was no contract, they just worked. And the Lord was saying here to Peter in answer to his question in Matthew 19.27, When you give up everything to follow me, For this was what Peter's question was, Lord we have left everything followed you, What reward will we get? What payment will we get? And Jesus gave this parable as an answer to that.

Beware of that attitude, What payment shall we get for the twelve hours that we have worked? That is certain to put you last in the kingdom of God. Even if you are first in the sense that people have seen that you have worked the whole day. You are a senior servant of God perhaps.

But that wrong attitude puts you right at the last in God's eyes. And the Lord says, Isn't it lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Is your eye envious because I am generous? God is generous to those who have a right attitude. Notice here that quantity of work makes no difference.

It's the quality of work that the Lord looks for. That is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. There are many parables that Jesus spoke that highlighted this difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

The parable of the prodigal son for example. Old covenant service is typified in the elder son who served for reward. And because his heart was so legalistic towards God, we find that his heart was so hard

towards his brother as well.

Those who serve God in a legalistic way do not know how to be large hearted and good towards repentant sinners. And that's clear from that story of the elder son. Here too, we have the elder son in the first group of laborers.

And the younger son in the last group of laborers. Consider how the younger prodigal son would have served his father. It would have been in quite a different spirit after his father had welcomed him so gladly, not put him in the servant's quarters, but made him sit at him at the table, put a ring on his hand and the best robe on him.

From that day onwards, the younger son's service would have been one of love, not for reward. His attitude would have been, father, I deserve nothing. I deserve to be in the servant's quarters, but you've given me a place as a son.

Here is my service. It's the least that I can do to show my gratitude. I don't want any reward.

That is the only right attitude with which any of us can serve the Lord. In the day when Jesus comes again, we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5, that God will reveal the secret, the hidden things of darkness and the hidden motives of men's hearts. 1 Corinthians 4, 5 says clearly, it's not the quantity of work that we do that's going to be judged, but the motives with which we served.

And then, 1 Corinthians 4, 5, each man's praise will come to him from God, and the last will be first, because their attitude was right. Even if they served only for one hour, they served with the right attitude. And others who were senior servants of God in the eyes of people who served for 12 hours can end up last, if their attitude is not right.

This is the meaning also of what is written in 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 12 about building on the foundation with gold, silver and precious stones, or wood, hay and straw. It's not quantity there. One ton of wood is reduced to ashes in the fire, but one ounce of gold, one gram of gold remains.

It's quality. This is the difference between new covenant service and old covenant service. If your emphasis is on quality and length of years in which you have served, then you are legalistic.

In the new covenant, the important thing is you do it out of love. You do it without any hope of reward, just because you are so grateful for all that God has done for you. You have been forgiven so much.

You want to show your gratitude in a lifetime of service. That is the attitude that has highest value in the kingdom of God. Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 20 and verse 17.

And as Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves. And on the way He said to them, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him up to the Gentiles to mock Him, and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up. We noticed before how Jesus kept reminding His disciples from that time in Matthew 16 onwards, that He was going to die.

He was going to be crucified. He was preparing them as He approached the cross, that He was going to death. He was not going to establish the nation of Israel like the Old Testament kings.

He had come to build a spiritual kingdom. And there was going to be nothing of this earth in it. In fact, He would be rejected.

And He was preparing the disciples for that. And then the mother of the sons of Zebedee, and here is an example we read in the following verses of how difficult it was for the disciples to understand this. They had been so steeped in that Old Testament concept, that if we served God, we would have no difficulties, no trials, and God honoring us meant that we would be the top nation on earth, and we would be blessed in every earthly possible way, but Jesus had come to establish a heavenly kingdom.

And then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, What do you wish? She said to Him, Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit on your right and on your left. Here again, the desire for reward.

Jesus had just spoken about not serving for reward, but they found it so difficult to understand, how very much like us, how slow we are to understand, even though we read the scriptures so often. Are you looking, perhaps not for reward on earth, but for reward in the millennium? To sit on the right hand and the left hand of Jesus? Again, the attitude can be wrong. God may give a reward in eternity, but that should not be the motive for our service.

It is true. In fact, the last page of the Bible says that Jesus is coming and His reward is with Him to give to every man as His work shall be. God is going to reward, but the reward will not be for those who have looked for reward, or for those who have served for reward.

It will be for those who have served with the right attitude, who have served out of gratitude, and not with hope of reward. Not with the hope that they will sit on the right or the left of Jesus in the millennium. Jesus answered and said, You do not know what you are asking for.

Jesus was so gentle. He said, Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? He asked those two, James and John. They said to Him, We are able.

They didn't realize what they were saying. Like Peter, who later on said, Even if all men deny you, I will never deny you. They also said, We are able.

He said to them, Yes, my cup you will drink. But to sit on my right and on my left is not mine to give. It is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.

What does it mean to drink the cup? And in another parallel passage, Jesus said, Are you able to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? This is a baptism of suffering. There are three baptisms that Jesus spoke about. Water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the baptism of suffering.

In Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20, He speaks about water baptism. In Acts chapter 1, verse 5, He speaks about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And here to the disciples, the sons of Zebedee, He speaks in the parallel passage in Mark 10, verse 35 to 45, about being baptized with His baptism.

Mark chapter 10, verse 39, which is not mentioned here in Matthew. But the cup means the same thing. It is the cup of suffering, of total denial of oneself, of taking up the cross, going the way of the cross of death to self every day.

This is the meaning of drinking the cup and being baptized with His baptism. The baptism of suffering. Of suffering not just physically, for not all Christians are called upon to suffer physically, but an inward suffering which can sometimes be more painful than physical suffering.

Death to the self-life, day by day. It is sometimes easier to be a martyr once physically at the stake than to be a martyr every day when self is slain in the provocative situations of daily life in our dealings with other human beings. To be a living martyr is more difficult than to die just once.

And it is this cup that He is speaking of here. If you can drink this cup, then you can be rewarded. But, He says, I still can't promise that you can sit on my right or my left because that my father will give.

It's not mine to give. It's for those for whom it has been prepared by my father. In other words, the father has prepared that place of the right hand and the left hand of Jesus for those who have been most utterly faithful here on earth in humbling themselves and going the way of the cross.

And it need not be an apostle. It could be some poor widow who never traveled the world, who was faithful in her circumstance, in her circumstances, the circumstances of life. We read that Jesus was exalted to the right hand of the Father for one reason and only one.

Philippians 2, verses 5 to 8 makes that very clear. Because He humbled Himself to the death of the cross. Therefore, Philippians 2, verses 5 to 11, God has exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.

Made Him sit at the right hand of the Father. So, a position at the right hand of the Father was given to Jesus because He humbled Himself as a man down to the dust. Humbled Himself, became obedient even unto death.

That is the cup. And the one who has drunk that cup to the maximum is going to sit on the right hand of Jesus and the left hand of Jesus. Those who have drunk that cup of humility and obedience unto death the most, the Father has prepared it for them and there is no partiality with the Father.

And in the day when Jesus returns in glory and we see who it is who is going to sit on His right hand and who it is who is going to sit on His left and when their life story is revealed to us, just as the Father will reveal the life story of every disciple in that day, every one of us will be in wholehearted agreement that whoever sits there will deserve to sit there because we shall see their faithfulness in their earthly lives in that day. And dear friends, in that day we shall discover that all the honors of earth will be like garbage compared to the honor of being rewarded by the Father. To hear the Lord say, well done.

To hear the Father say, well done. It is for you that I prepared this seat. And the other lesser rewards too.

This is something to live for. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 that people compete in earthly Olympic games for rewards. In those days it was a laurel wreath.

In these days it is a gold medal. Look at the pains they go to. And some even do things against the rules.

In order to get that honor, in order to get that gold medal, they do it for a corruptible reward. Whereas we are running a race for an imperishable reward, an incorruptible reward of being honored by the Father. And this is where a Christian should feel ashamed when he sees the self-discipline that so many Olympic athletes go through to get their reward.

And how self-indulgent we can be even though we say we are going in for a reward which is far greater. May God have mercy on us and give us light that we shall judge ourselves more severely and seek more wholeheartedly to drink of the cup with Jesus. Not for reward, but in the right spirit, out of gratitude.

And a reward will be given by the Father because He is righteous. And we see something further here. We don't see that Jesus rebuked these two disciples.

He just told them how they could sit on His right and left hand if the Father saw that they were faithful in drinking the cup. But we see here that the other ten were actually just as evil in their attitude or wrong in their attitude. Because we read in Matthew 20, 24, the other ten disciples were indignant at these two brothers.

It's almost as though they were upset that these two asked for those seats first. And they missed the chance. And then Jesus called the other ten and began to rebuke them.

So if you read this passage carefully, you find that the rebuke is not to James and John, but the rebuke is to the other ten for being upset with James and John. He says, You know that the rulers, the Gentiles lord it over them, and that great men exercise authority over them, but it is not so among you. Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant.

Again, not a strong rebuke, a very mild one, saying, Why are you in competition for this type of reward? The great thing in the kingdom is not honor. Among the heathen people, they think of sitting on thrones and lording it over others and having authority over others, but it must never be like that among you. You must have a completely different attitude, both in time and in eternity.

Your desire must be to be a servant, and if you want to be first, then you must be a slave. The more perfectly one serves the Lord and others, the more he is qualified to be first in the kingdom. If only we could be gripped by this attitude in the church.

The son of man, verse 28, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Part of his service for others was to give his life. And Jesus said, Whoever is faithful in this, to serve others and to lay down his life for them, in serving them and serving them and serving them, without any hope of reward, that is the person who qualifies to be first in the kingdom of God.

If we can be gripped by this attitude in the churches, in the world, it will make a tremendous difference. The spirit of Christ will once again be found, and God will be glorified in our midst. Let's turn now to Matthew's gospel in chapter 20 and verse 29.

And as they were going out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold, two blind men, sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. And the multitude sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David.

This is quite an amazing fact that these two blind people had more spiritual sight than all the other seeing people in Israel, all the other religious leaders. They knew this was the son of David prophesied in the Old Testament. They knew this was the Messiah.

And that's why they called him the son of David. And even though the multitude sternly told them to be quiet, they cried out all the more, Lord, they called him Lord. Physical handicaps like blindness, even

blindness or deafness, or any other type of physical handicap, is no hindrance to spiritual revelation.

God has chosen the poor and the weak and the despised, and very often the people who are physically handicapped and given them light on eternal truths and on Jesus Christ as Lord. And Jesus stopped. He always stops where there are people who are sincerely crying out to Him.

Don't give up. If they had given up the first time, they prayed and they didn't get an answer, they would never have got an answer. And don't give up even when other people tell you it's no use praying.

It says the multitude sternly told them it's no use praying. But they prayed all the more. Lord, have mercy.

It's that persistence that brought them far more than they anticipated. Jesus stopped and called them and said, What do you want me to do for you? And that teaches us another thing about prayer. When we pray, we must be specific.

Lord, have mercy on me is such a general prayer. Just like Lord, bless me. What does it mean? What does it mean? What do you want? What is the specific blessing that you are asking for? That's what the Lord wanted them to specify.

What exactly do you want me to do for you? The Bible speaks about offering up prayers and supplications in Philippians 4.6. Supplications are specific requests. There are general prayers that we pray. There's nothing wrong in saying, Lord, bless us.

But along with those prayers, there must be specific requests, supplications, specific requests. And both must be persistent. And so the Lord asks them, what is the specific request? You have prayed generally, Lord, have mercy on me.

What is the specific request? Now, is it that the Lord did not know? He who had all the gifts of the Spirit could certainly have discerned, even if there was no external means of knowing it. But even we as ordinary human beings without any gifts of the Spirit would also be able to discern when a blind man asks what he wants. He wants sight.

It's not that the Lord did not know. But he wants them to express their request. It's not that the Lord does not know our need.

Jesus said in Matthew 6, Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him. Jesus knew what these blind people needed before they even asked. And when they asked, He knew what they wanted.

Yet, He wanted them to express their need in a specific request. This is one of the mysteries of prayer. Your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask, but you don't get unless you make a specific request for it.

You have not because you ask not, James says. Ask and receive, Jesus said, that your joy may be full. We have to ask specifically.

Lord, give me this. There are many things God gives us without our asking. For example, Jesus taught us to pray, Lord, give us this day our daily food or daily bread.

But we get it even sometimes and many times without our asking for it. Material things, it's very easy for God to give without our asking. But when it comes to the spiritual realm, it's almost impossible to receive anything without specifically asking for it.

Do you want forgiveness of sins? You'll never get it by just saying, Lord, bless me. You've got to say, Lord, forgive me. Or words that mean the same thing.

Do you want the power of the Holy Spirit? Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire? You're not going to get it without asking specifically for it. There's nothing we receive from God in the spiritual realm without specifically asking. Every higher step, higher position, higher ground, higher realm in the spiritual life comes through specific asking, through specific saying, Lord, I'm not satisfied with this level.

I want to go higher. Bring me to that life where the joy of the Lord will always be found in me, where I can rejoice always and never be anxious for anything, where I can be rooted and grounded in love, where I can be patient with the power of the Holy Spirit. What do you wish me to do for you? Verse 32 is the question that Jesus is asking many, many disciples today.

They were specific. Lord, here is our specific request. We want our eyes to be opened.

God grant that we shall be just as specific when we pray to God. And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. And immediately they received their sight.

He answers specific requests offered in faith. And it says they followed him. Beautiful words.

When we ask the Lord for a physical blessing, or a spiritual blessing, it's good to also ask ourselves, why am I making this request? James, whom we quoted earlier saying, you have not because you ask not, James 4, verses 1 and 2, also said, you ask sometimes and you don't receive because you're asking with wrong motives. Are you sick? And are you asking the Lord to heal you? Good. You need to ask yourself another question.

Why are you asking the Lord to heal you? Why do you want God to give you health? Is it so that you might be up from that bed, up on your feet, so that you can live more for the glory of God, or so that you can live more for the world and make money, and live for yourself? Why are you asking God to heal you? Is it so that you might be fit like these blind men? It says when they received their sight, they followed him. In other words, their prayer was, Lord, give us sight so that we can follow you. What a wonderful way to pray.

No wonder they were healed immediately. They said, Lord, grant us this prayer so that we can follow you. And that's a very good thing to ask ourselves in every prayer request we make.

Am I asking this so that I can follow Jesus more wholeheartedly and glorify God more in my life? This is why I'm asking and making this request of God. When that is the motive, we can be pretty sure we'll get the answer quickly. Matthew 21 and verse 1. And when they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go into the village opposite you and immediately you'll find a donkey tied there and a colt with her.

Untie them and bring them to me. Now we are approaching the last few days of Jesus' life on earth. It's the last week now.

They had approached Jerusalem. He had steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. And now he was prompted by the Spirit to ride on a donkey into Jerusalem.

And so, this is the fulfillment of prophecy. He sends his disciples, Go into the village opposite you and you'll find a donkey there and a colt. Bring them to me.

And if anyone says something to you, you shall say, The Lord is need of them. And immediately he will send them. We could read something into this, apply it to ourselves, that even if we are like donkeys, stupid, foolish, the word of the Lord is that we should be untied from every bondage that binds us.

He wants to free us. And he wants us to be brought to him. Apply this word to yourself.

Even if you are like a donkey, the word is you are to be untied, verse 2, the last part, and brought to the Lord. And the Lord says, He has need of you. Even today, He has need of donkeys.

Earthly kings used to ride on horses in triumph. Jesus rode on a donkey. God has chosen the weak and the foolish and the despised to confound those who are bright and clever.

That is always God's way. Now, this took place, verse 4, that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled. Say to the daughter of Zion, verse 5, Behold, your king is coming to you.

The king of Zion is coming, not proud and haughty, riding on a horse like earthly kings, but gentle, and mounted upon a donkey, even upon a coat, the full of a beast of burden. There we see the humility of Jesus. He was born in a stable.

He grew up, He who grew up in the despised town of Nazareth, who had that ordinary job of a carpenter, finally riding on a donkey. And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them and brought the donkey and the coat and laid on them their garments on which He sat. And most of the multitude spread their garments in the road and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.

And the multitudes going before Him and those who followed after were crying out, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

There again we can learn something from Jesus riding upon the donkey and all the multitude praising Jesus and saying how wonderful it was the Son of David was coming in the name of the Lord and how utterly foolish it would have been on that donkey's part if it began to imagine, think how great I am that all these people are praising me. That is the folly when a preacher or a servant of God or a believer who gets honor from others for his service imagines that he is somebody great. It's the Lord they honor.

Let's not be foolish. That donkey wasn't foolish. The donkey didn't have any idea or feeling that people were praising it.

Let's remember the same thing. We carry Jesus and if people are blessed through our ministry, let's never forget that we ourselves are like donkeys whom the Lord has been pleased to sit upon and therefore He has transformed us into sons of God. In a sense we are not donkeys or dogs.

We are sons sitting at the table but let's never forget it's because we carry the Lord. It's because we have the Lord that we can bless others and that any honor comes to us. If we can learn these lessons from the donkey that carried Jesus into Jerusalem, we can glorify God more.

Let's turn now to Matthew chapter 21 and verse 10. This is speaking about the time when Jesus entered Jerusalem not riding on a horse like earthly conquerors, not in arrogance and pride, but like it says in Matthew 21.5 gentle and mounted on a donkey for He had come to give earth heaven's sense of values and in heaven, humility is the great thing, gentleness is the great thing and God chooses those who are foolish and despised like donkeys to fulfill His purpose. As we read in 1 Corinthians 1. When He entered Jerusalem, verse 10, all the city was stirred, saying, Who is this? And the multitudes were saying, This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. This is the one about whom it is written that He was gentle, verse 5, and mounted on a donkey in humility, but His gentleness and His humility did not prevent Him from purifying the temple. Man's understanding of gentleness and humility can be quite contrary to what spiritual gentleness and humility mean.

Humility means obedience to God. It means seeking nothing for oneself. Jesus did not drive the people out of the temple because He was upset.

It's because He was prompted by the Spirit to do so. And His humility is seen there in the fact that He was not bothered about what His disciples thought about it, whether they thought He had lost His temper. It didn't make any difference.

He was so humble that He was willing to do exactly what the Father told Him to do, even if it meant driving these people out of the temple, turning their tables over. He did not go up to them and gently say to them, Gentlemen, will you please remove your tables? This is not glorifying to God. That's not how He spoke.

It says here He turned the tables of the money changers and cast out strong words. And there we see the balance in Jesus. The glory of God was seen in Jesus full of grace and truth.

It wasn't just full of grace. It was also full of truth. It wasn't full of truth alone.

It was also full of grace. He knew how to ride on a donkey. He also knew how to take the whip and chase people out of the temple.

He would never do a thing to people who pulled out the hairs from His face and who slapped Him and spat on Him because that concerned only Himself. But when it concerned the purity of God's house, the zeal of God's house ate Him up and He wasn't concerned about His reputation. He was concerned that God's house should be kept pure.

And there is a lesson here for us, dear friends. The zeal that God, Jesus had for God's house manifested there in the temple is exactly the same today, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The zeal that He has for purity in God's house, the church.

Even today, Jesus desires to cast out those who are making money in the name of religion in the church. Those who are seeking honor in the church. Those who are seeking gain for themselves in the church.

Think of the multitudes that would have to be cast out if Jesus were to physically come into churches today. But that is the purpose with which He places prophets and preachers in the church. That they might proclaim the word that will drive out people making money in the name of religion.

People seeking their own and coming to build the church of Jesus Christ. People seeking honor and gain and profit in the name of religion. And there are many like that today.

Jesus was not a diplomat when it came to the purity of God's house. And He said to them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer. This is the place to pray, to seek God.

Not the place to make your profit and to earn a living. But you are making it a robber's den. How were they robbing? They were not robbing in the sense of stealing people's things without the knowledge of those people.

Jesus called them robbers because they were making money for themselves in the name of religion. They were trying to serve God and money. And you cannot serve God and money.

And one who serves God and money or who tries to serve God and money, Jesus would call a robber even today. There are many robber's dens in Christendom that need to be cleansed. And the preaching of the word is meant to cleanse but alas, very often the preaching of the word has been devalued and diluted to the point where we now hear the voice of the diplomat and not the voice of the prophet in many a pulpit.

We need to meditate on this passage and see the zeal that Jesus had for purity in God's house. What does it mean to serve God like this? The merchant spirit that seeks gain for oneself. The servant spirit is quite different.

The spirit of the son that wants to serve and serve and serve without any reward. That is the spirit to be found in the church. And then we see grace along with truth in the temple.

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. That also must take place in the church. There are many people, spiritually blind, spiritually lame.

They must be healed. The prophetic word must drive out the money changers and those who seek their own gain. And the prophetic word must comfort and deliver and set free the spiritually blind and the spiritually lame.

For Jesus does two things in the church even today. He drives out the money changers and he heals the lame and the blind. Verse 15.

When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things he had done and the children who were crying out in the temple saying Hosanna to the son of David, they became indignant. There we find religious people who cannot understand this type of prophetic ministry. Religious people who cannot understand that money changers need to be turned out of the temple.

These chief priests never did anything to the money changers. Perhaps they were getting a commission out of the money changers themselves. They were exposed there.

There are religious people who cannot understand Jesus' prophetic attitude. They are diplomats. They cannot understand the children crying out and praising God.

Imagine the children were praising God in the temple and instead of being delighted these religious people were upset. Religious people are upset when the noise of praise, sincere praise ascends to God. And Jesus said And they said to Jesus in verse 16 Do you hear what these are saying? And Jesus replied.

He defended these people, these little children who praised God. He said, haven't you read? David says in Psalm 8 verse 2 Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise for yourself. This is the fulfillment of that.

When grown up religious people with all their Bible knowledge do not know how to open their mouths to praise God in the midst of the saints. Here children were raising their voice and crying out and praising God. And Jesus delighted in that praise then and He delights in that praise today.

Praise with loud voices in the church is what Jesus delights in. Verse 17 And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. Verse 18 In the morning when He returned to the city He became hungry and seeing a lone fig tree by the road He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves.

And He said to it No longer shall there be any fruit from you. And at once the fig tree withered. Seeing this, the disciples marveled saying, how did the fig tree wither at once? And Jesus answered and said to them Truly I say to you if you have faith and don't doubt you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree even if you say to this mountain be taken up and cast into the sea it shall happen and everything you ask in prayer believing, you shall receive.

The cursing of the fig tree is another parable. He came and He found nothing but leaves. Verse 19 Leaves fig leaves are a picture of human righteousness.

The fruit is a picture of the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus came looking for fruit. He saw only fig leaves.

Remember Adam and Eve covered themselves with fig leaves. They had sinned and they tried to cover up their sin with fig leaves. Human righteousness is that which seeks to cover up sin.

But Jesus cursed that tree and the leaves withered up and He curses human righteousness. All our righteousness are like filthy rags in God's eyes. That's why there is a curse on human righteousness.

The righteousness of the law. God desires that we may be clothed like He clothed Adam with coats of skin. With Christ's own nature with the divine nature.

That's what we need. Not what we manufacture ourselves. Not the righteousness we produce by human effort by some type of moral rearmament.

But rather that which comes through repentance and which we partake of which we receive from God. Not what we manufacture ourselves. The other picture here is of Israel.

Israel is a fig tree. And Jesus came to Israel looking for fruit. But what did He find? The leaves of religion.

They were religious but not spiritual. Fig leaves are a picture of religiosity. Fruit is a picture of spirituality.

And Jesus looks for spirituality. And very often what He finds in people is religiosity. And there is a curse on all religiosity.

Those are the two lessons we can learn from the cursing of the fig tree symbolically. Another lesson we learn here is the lesson of faith. Jesus said, I say to you, if you have faith and don't doubt what I did you can do.

Jesus was always saying that. When He walked on the water He told Peter he could do that too. And Peter walked on the water.

We read that Jesus healed the sick and the apostles healed the sick. If you have faith and you don't doubt, He said, what I did to the fig tree you can do too. If you say even to a mountain be taken up and cast into the sea.

It shall happen if you believe. And this is the important thing in prayer. Believe that you receive many, many prayers ascend to heaven from Christians from born again Christians.

One wonders whether even 10% of those prayers are offered in faith. If very few prayers receive an answer it's because very few prayers are offered in faith and the word is still to be said unfortunately. Jesus could not do many miracles for them because of their unbelief as we saw in the end of Matthew 13.

When God has shown us something as a hindrance to His work we can speak against it. A mountain, we can speak against it. If we speak in faith it will be removed.

Not any mountain that we don't like but under the prompting of the Spirit. If we see something as a hindrance to God's will we can speak in faith against it and it will move out of the way. Whatever we ask in prayer if we ask in faith we shall receive.

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