

(Through the Bible) Matthew - Part 1

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on Matthew emphasizes the significance of the Kingdom of Heaven, the genealogy of Jesus, and the call to live righteously as citizens of this kingdom.

Duration: 55:34

Scripture: Matthew 1:1, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 5:8, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 8:10, Matthew 9:28, Matthew 10:16, Matthew 10:37, Matthew 10:42

Topics: "Kingdom Of Heaven", "Christian Character"

Description

This sermon delves into the beginning of the New Testament with a focus on Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 1. It emphasizes the importance of studying the Word of God with precision, using the New American Standard Bible for doctrinal understanding. The genealogy of Jesus Christ is explored, highlighting Matthew's intent to convince the Jewish people of Jesus as the Messiah through Old Testament references. The phrase 'the kingdom of heaven' is a key theme, signaling a shift from an earthly kingdom to a heavenly one. The sermon underscores the need for believers to shift their focus from earthly desires to heavenly pursuits, emphasizing the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Additionally, it touches on the significance of humility, faith, character, and discernment in the Christian walk, cautioning against false prophets and stressing the importance of appreciating and encouraging others.

Transcript

Today we begin the New Testament and we will turn to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 1. And I would like to read from the New American Standard Bible. You may have noticed when I was going, when we were studying the Minor Prophets, I was using the New Living Translation, which is a development from the Living Bible. Because I have personally found it easier to read those, some of those heavy Old Testament prophecies for ease of reading in the Living Bible.

But when it comes to studying doctrine or studying the Word of God verse by verse or word by word, we can't use the Living Bible because that's only a paraphrase. I prefer to use the New American Standard, particularly when we come to the New Testament. Now, here we turn to the pages of the New Testament and the very first thing that we read is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The book of Genesis in the Old Testament, there were genealogies given of various people. And here also a genealogy is given. It doesn't go all the way to Adam like it does in Luke, Chapter 3. Here it only goes as

far as David and Abraham, and he's called the son of David and the son of Abraham, which possibly indicates to me that Matthew was primarily writing to the Jewish people of that time trying to convince them that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

And that's why you find in this Gospel at least 40 times where the Old Testament is quoted to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. There are about 53 quotations actually from the Old Testament in this book. But there is a phrase that comes only in this book in the Gospels, and that is the phrase the kingdom of heaven.

It's referred to as the kingdom of God in the other Gospels, but the phrase the kingdom of heaven comes 32 times in this Gospel. And I was thinking about that. You see, when an expression is used frequently in a letter or in a book, we say there must be a reason.

The Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, and therefore there must be a reason why he has used that so often. John the Baptist comes preaching saying repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And then after that, Jesus himself picks up the same message in 417, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And even when he begins the Sermon on the Mount, the first thing he says is, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. So we see that emphasis right from the beginning. And in the Sermon on the Mount itself, heaven is mentioned about 18 times, just in those three chapters, five to seven.

So what I understand from this is, the entire Old Testament, right from the time of God making a covenant with the Jews in Mount Sinai, all the way up to this time, was the kingdom of earth. That means, you were given a land in Canaan, you were given material prosperity, you were given physical healing, many, many earthly benefits, you had an earthly king, earthly riches, and many things on earth. But now, Jesus has come to lift us to another realm.

And we must remember that as we turn to the New Testament, that the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, as opposed to the kingdom of earth. So when you say you're saved, you know this is a very common expression among believers, we're saved. Saved from what? I'd say, I hope you're saved from the earth, not just saved from sin and saved from hell, but saved from this earthly way of looking at things, the earthly way of behaving, earthly way of many things on this earth, you know, interest in earthly things.

This is the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. And Matthew is inviting those who are interested in a kingdom in heaven. Now you see, there are a lot of people in India who would like to become citizens of the United States of America, that's a very attractive place to go to.

But supposing I say, how many of you are interested in going to Timbuktu, or some strange place in Africa? Nobody's interested in that. And it's somewhat like that, you know, hardly anybody in this world is really interested in the kingdom of heaven, because their mind is so much set on the things of earth. And when the gospel is not preached properly, you find a multitude of so-called believers sitting in the church who are not interested in the kingdom of heaven.

We have so many believers today who are not interested in the kingdom of heaven. They want to go to heaven when they die, but they don't want the kingdom of heaven. And now kingdom, unfortunately, is a word which we don't understand today.

When this gospel was written, everybody understood it. For example, we don't say the kingdom of India. We don't say the kingdom of Sri Lanka, or the kingdom.

Kingdom is used only where there's a king. Maybe the kingdom of Bhutan, perhaps, there's a king there, the kingdom of Nepal. But we don't say the kingdom of India, it's not a very common word today because there are not so many kings.

What we use today is the word the government of India, and that we can understand a little better. The government of heaven. That's what it means.

Otherwise, we get this phrase kingdom of heaven, it's a nice spiritual thing to talk about. What does it actually mean? It means the government of heaven in your life. You know, when you live in India, you have to live under the rules of the government of India.

And if you come into the government of heaven, you've got to live under the rules of the government of heaven. Is that what you were saved to? Have you changed your citizenship? You know, when a person goes to another country, he changes his citizenship, he becomes a citizen of that country. Do you know what salvation really means? It means being saved from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of heaven.

And I'm sorry to say, the salvation of many believers has not got that far. They don't want citizenship. They want to go there when they die, and all the time they want to live here on earth.

And that is why their Christian life is so unsatisfactory. The other thing is, there is a word used in Matthew, which is not used in any of the other Gospels. And that's the word, church.

Twice, it comes in Matthew 16 and Matthew 18, church. Jesus spoke about the church. Now put these two things together.

The kingdom of heaven, not mentioned in any other Gospel, church, not mentioned in any other Gospel. Put them together, and you say, this is what the church is supposed to be. The church is supposed to be the kingdom of heaven on earth.

In heaven, everybody knows the government of heaven, God's rule is known there. But here on earth, everybody runs their own life. And in the midst of people who run their own life are a group of people who say, no, we don't run our own life.

We are citizens of another kingdom, of another country. That is the church. Now do you think that the church represents heaven in India? I don't think so.

It's pathetic. That's the thing that's grieved my heart for years. I hope it grieves your heart.

I'm not blaming them. I'm blaming us. I'm not saying they.

I'm saying we. We, not they. We are the church, and we have failed the Lord in this land.

I don't want to point the finger at anybody else. I point it at myself as part of this church in India, which has failed the Lord miserably in representing the government of heaven. And I say, Lord, forgive us.

Help us to represent heaven better. And Matthew, once you understand this background, is presenting the ruler of this government of heaven, how he lived on earth, and how he taught, particularly his teaching.

Matthew's emphasis is more on the teaching.

There are more parables of Jesus in this gospel than any of the other gospels. We have a whole chapter, Matthew 13, with a number of parables about the kingdom of heaven. His teaching that's emphasized in Matthew.

We have a whole chapter on the Pharisees in Matthew 23. We have two whole chapters, Matthew 24 and 25, on the coming, when the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven will be established on the earth when Christ comes again. We have three chapters, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, on the principles of this kingdom of heaven.

How the members of this kingdom are to live on this earth. So it's very clear that this is Matthew's burden as we consider this gospel, and it's good for us to keep that in mind. And we find the book could be divided into three parts.

First, chapters 1 and 2 about the birth of Jesus, and then from chapter 3 to chapter 18 about his ministry in Galilee, and chapter 19 verse 1 says he moved from Galilee to Judea, and thereafter the ministries in Judea. And that's just for, as a by way of interest since the scripture says that. I just want to point out a few things in these chapters as we go along.

First of all in chapter 1, in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Jews only mentioned men, and that's, they hardly ever mentioned a woman's name in a genealogy. You look back in the Old Testament genealogies, it's always man's name that comes there, and significantly when it comes to the genealogy of Jesus Christ there are four women mentioned here, teaching us first of all that Jesus had come to raise the level of women from that degraded position that Jewish society had given them, and that heathen society had given them. That's why you read about Mary Magdalene, you read about Mary and Martha and the woman caught in adultery, and the woman, the sinner who anointed the feet of Jesus, and many many prominent women.

And it says the people who supported Jesus financially, Luke chapter 8 verse 3 were women. So, here we see that four women are mentioned in the genealogy, and significantly not only they are women, but they are some of the, some women who got a very bad history. The first one mentioned is Tamar in verse 3, to Judah were born Peter and Zerah by Tamar.

Tamar was the one who was Judah's daughter-in-law. It was incest, incest means sex within a family, like father and daughter, or father and daughter-in-law. Here it is father and daughter-in-law, incest, and from that came a child.

And Jesus, he was in heaven when all this happened, way back in Genesis chapter 38, and Jesus watched it from heaven, and saw this child being born out of incest, and decided, I'm going to come through that line. How many of you would choose such a line to come through? So that in the very first page of your biography, it is written that you came from an incestual relationship. Second, the second woman is Rahab, verse 5. Rahab was the most well-known prostitute in Jericho.

She was not even a Jew, she was a heathen, and she was a prostitute, and she got married to a Jewish man called Salmon. And when Jesus saw that from heaven, that Salmon, who had come through this Judah-Tamah relationship, decided to marry a prostitute, who was not a Jew, a Gentile, and had a child, Jesus said, I'm going to come through that line. Now notice, he's making specific choices from heaven,

because he's deciding which family line he must come through.

Thirdly, there's a woman here called Ruth. Now Ruth was a Moabitess, and she would never have been born, listen to this, she would never have been born if Lot had not committed adultery with his own daughter. Lot committed adultery with his daughter and got a child called Moab, and from that child came Ruth, who was also a heathen, as the Jews considered it, a Gentile.

And Jesus saw that from heaven, and saw Lot committing adultery with his daughter, Moab being born, and from there Ruth, and Jesus said, I'll come through that line. Another incestual relationship. Think of that.

Why are these three women's names mentioned here? Why did Jesus choose such a line? The fourth woman mentioned is Bathsheba, verse 6. David was, Solomon was born to the wife of Uriah, that is Bathsheba. She's mentioned here as the wife of Uriah, not as the wife of David. He had a son through somebody else's wife, that's what it says.

Now even though Jesus did not physically come through Solomon, Joseph came through Solomon, but Mary did not come through Solomon. This is the genealogy of Joseph. Jesus' physical genealogy deviates from David through another son and comes through Mary.

That's described in Luke chapter 3. Here the genealogy comes through Solomon, and that is descended to Joseph, who, if there was a king in Judah and Israel in those days, Joseph deserved to be the king, because he was of the royal line. And Joseph's firstborn son, according to the records, though Jesus was not born of Joseph, was Jesus. So he deserved to be the king of Israel, that's the point of this genealogy, that he came from the royal line.

Why did Jesus choose this line? To show that he did not come to call the righteous, but he came to call sinners to repentance. And when you go and proclaim the gospel, please proclaim it in this spirit, as one who is born of a sinful fallen race, who has nothing to glory in. You don't have to be ashamed of your family line.

We live in a country where people boast about being related to such and such a big family person, related to such and such a bishop, this, that and the other. I say, what are we? Jesus, what could he say about his family line? That's the very first thing mentioned in the first pages of the New Testament, teaching us to fall on our dust and humble ourselves, and get rid of all the glory we have in stupid earthly things. And then we read about the birth of Jesus, and I notice here that a number of times, we read about dreams in the first two chapters.

Dreams, God guiding supernaturally through dreams. First of all, Joseph. It says here that Mary, the mother of Jesus, verse 18, was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit, and she was already engaged to Joseph.

And when Joseph heard about it, verse 19, it says, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, he wanted to put her away secretly. Now notice one very important thing. What is the subject of the Gospel? The subject of the Gospel is how man, how an unrighteous man can become righteous before God.

That is the basic subject of the Gospel. We are sinners, and how we can become righteous before God. Then, think of the first person in the New Testament who is called a righteous man.

Who is that? Joseph. Right here, verse 19. Why is he called a righteous man? Because he wanted to cover the sin of somebody else.

Do you have that spirit? Then you are a righteous man. When you hear that somebody has sinned, what is your immediate reaction? If you are a righteous man, you will cover it. If you are an unrighteous man, you'll talk about it.

And I want to say to you, Joseph, who did not know about Calvary, who did not have the New Testament, who did not have the Holy Spirit, is far more righteous than millions of believers today who talk about the New Covenant. I would rather follow Joseph than the example of millions of believers today. Joseph was a righteous man.

With the old covenant standards, he decided to cover the sin which he thought, maybe he thought it was sinful. Later on, he discovered that she had not sinned at all. Can you imagine what remorse he would have had if he had spread stories about Mary and later on discovered that this was the Holy Spirit? And how can you pull back those stories? Because when you tell a story to somebody, he has already told it to ten people before you meet him tomorrow.

And you have told a story to somebody else and that fellow has gone and told another five people. How can you pull it all back? Once you have spoken something about somebody, you can feel sorry, but you can never set it right. Because it's gone to 25 other people before you decide to set it right.

A little exhortation from the very first chapter of Matthew. When you see somebody sin, cover it. It's in the very first page of the New Testament we profess to follow.

You want to be a new covenant believer, a new covenant church, do this. And then Joseph did what the angel told him, to marry and be reared. Jesus is called Jesus because he has come to save his people from their sins.

Verse 21. The very first promise in the New Testament is not about forgiveness from sin, but about being saved from sin, which is more than forgiveness. Forgiveness is that your past guilt is blotted out.

Saving means I'm saved from my anger, saved from the lust of my eyes, saved from the love of money, saved from bitterness, saved from jealousy. Saved from Egypt means what? Out of Egypt. That's what it means to be saved from Egypt.

To be saved from sin means I'm no longer a slave to sin. And that is the first promise in the New Testament. Verse Matthew 1.21. You shall call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins.

The second promise in the New Testament is Matthew 3.11. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. There are two promises with which the Gospel of Matthew begins the New Testament. Number one, being saved from sin.

Number two, being baptized or immersed with the Holy Spirit and fire. We need both of these desperately. If you are a New Covenant believer, you are to be saved from sin in your life.

You have to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. That's the New Covenant. That's how it begins.

In chapter 2, we read about the wise men who came to meet Jesus. You know the story. But it says there was one foolish thing they did.

They were supposed to be wise. But even wise people can do foolish things sometimes. You know, and there's a warning for us.

It says that they followed the star for many hundreds of miles. I don't know whether they came from Iran or somewhere there. They followed the star.

And the star is a picture of the Word of God. And that Word of God would have led them to Christ. The Word of God always leads you to Jesus.

You just got to follow it. They followed the star. And then they know the star.

They knew the King of the Jews is born. And they followed the star. And they came to Jerusalem where a king's palace was there.

And then these wise men became foolish. They said, oh, now we've come to Jerusalem. We don't need the star anymore.

We know where the king's palace is. Naturally the king will be born in a palace. And that's where they were stupid.

And they went to the king's palace to find if the king was born there. And they said, we never heard about any king here being born. So those wise men had to humble themselves.

And it says, they came out from the king's palace. And verse 10, again they saw the star and decided to follow the star. And the star led them to a small little hut.

And they went inside. And the king was there. You know, if you follow the Word of God, it will lead you to Jesus.

And it will lead you to where Jesus is found today. And Jesus is not found in the big, grand, among the rich. Jesus is found among simple, poor people who love him and want to follow him.

They may be meeting in a little hut. Follow the star. Don't be foolish like the wise men where at a certain point you say, well, now I don't need to follow the Word of God.

I can use my reason. He will go wrong. Follow the star.

It will lead you to Jesus. And then the angel gave them a dream, saying, don't go back the same way. Go another way.

We read about other dreams which Joseph had to save the life of the child, to go to Egypt, come back, etc. And then we come to the ministry of John the Baptist. Now, this word, Baptist, it's a new word, you know, which was invented by the translators of the King James Version and brought into the English language.

Because I understand that when the King James Translation was being made 400 years ago, the king gave certain rules to the translators. And one of the rules he gave them was don't disturb existing church traditions. And those days, you know, in the churches, like in Anglican churches today, they were baptizing babies, christening them.

Well, there was no name. They were just christening them. And these people, when they translated the scripture, they came across this Greek word, baptizo or bapto, which in ordinary Greek language means immerse.

That's the translation. But they didn't translate it because that would have disturbed existing church traditions. At the same time, they were honest people.

They could not say John the christener because he was not a christener. He wasn't christening anybody. They wanted to be honest.

At the same time, they didn't want to displease the king. So they invented a word into the English language, which nobody knew the meaning of, baptism. It's like a strange word, you know.

Like the English people, when they came here, they took certain words back from here, like dobie, dobie, B-H-O-B-I. It's not an English word. Dobie, sahib, S-A-H-I-B.

The words, they came here and took it back and gradually it acquired a meaning like that. The Greek word was baptism. So when the common people read the Bible, they read baptism.

What is that? I've never read that word before in English. They look up the dictionary, no such word. Oh, this must be what they do in the church when they pour the water on the child.

And so that's how child baptism came up, for your information. John the Baptist. It's actually translated, it should be translated John the Immerser.

I have never found a single translation in the world that has had the courage to translate that Greek word exactly like it is written. Because nobody will buy that Bible. I mean, not nobody.

All the denominations that practice child baptism will not buy it. But I have to tell you the truth. You go and ask the Greek scholars what baptizo means, what bapto means and see if it doesn't mean dip, immerse.

There is no other meaning. It's not sprinkle. I mentioned that in passing.

And we read here about Jesus coming to John for baptism. And when Jesus came, John said, Hey, I can't baptize you, you need to baptize me. It's true, Jesus did not need baptism because it was a baptism of repentance from sin.

And here's another wonderful thing we learn at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel. Look at the wonderful lessons we've been learning so far just in these few chapters. Certain principles of the new covenant and of this kingdom of heaven.

Think of Jesus' baptism. Why did he have to get baptized? He had never sinned in his whole life. Not consciously, not unconsciously, not anyway.

There was no sin in him from head to foot. He was born holy. And all through his life he was holy.

The angel said to Mary, That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. He was a spotless lamb without any smell or trace of sin. He did not have a sinful nature like we have.

Why did he stand in the queue? You see, there was a big queue of people getting baptized. And Jesus, who looked just like any other carpenter, Jewish carpenter, dressed like all the others, goes and stands in

the queue. They don't know who he is.

Some of the people from Nazareth would have said, Yeah, that's a carpenter, Joseph's son. And he goes in the queue. And can you imagine the reasonings that would have come into his mind? People will misunderstand you if you stand in the queue.

People will think that you have committed some secret sin in your life. That is why you are confessing it now. You can be misunderstood.

Your testimony will be affected. But none of these things bothered him. His father had told him, Go and be baptized.

He did not lean upon his own reason. That's what I wanted to emphasize. If he had leaned upon his own reason, he would never have been baptized.

If he had consulted you and me, I think we would have told him, Lord, you don't need to get baptized. You don't need to get baptized at all. This is for sinners.

But his father said, Go and identify yourself with sinners. Even though you are not a sinner, go and identify yourself and stand there. You know, some of us are so holy that we don't like to be identified with sinners.

We like to show that we are a little holy. And that's why our ministry is so pathetically useless. That God cannot accomplish what he wants through us.

Jesus identified himself with sinners totally. Though there was not a spot of sin in him. We, who are so holy, think that we are better than that group, and better than this group, and better than this other group.

And the more holier than others you think you are, the less useful your life is. Let's humble ourselves and say we are sinners. Saved by the grace of God.

We're not better than anybody else. We're not better than any other Christian. And our group is not better than any other group.

God have mercy upon us if we think otherwise. And we see here, he told John, you have to baptize me, because that's the only way I can fulfill all righteousness. What did righteousness mean for Jesus? It meant doing the will of his father.

And he did it. In Matthew chapter 4, we read about the temptation in the wilderness. The three temptations.

And since they are going to come again in other gospels, I'll leave them for the time being. We go to chapter 5, chapter 6 and 7, where we read about the Sermon on the Mount. And this begins with this expression.

In Matthew 5, 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit. And I want to emphasize that. That the fundamental quality for entering God's kingdom is poverty of spirit.

Poverty of spirit is like a master key with which you can open every door in this palace called the kingdom of heaven. All the riches of heaven can be yours if you have this master key called poverty of spirit. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? Let us consider what does it mean to be poor in money.

Then we'll understand. Let's take the example of a man who is poor financially. A beggar.

A beggar who comes banging at your gate in the morning. And maybe you give him one rupee or something like that. He comes again tomorrow morning.

He'll come again the day after tomorrow morning. He's always in need. I've seen beggars in Bangalore whom I saw 25 years ago begging on the streets.

They are still begging on the streets today. They are poor. They are always aware of their need.

And they are humble enough to come to a gate and say, yes, I've been coming for 25 years. Please give me something. I still need money.

Now apply that spiritually. This is what it means to be poor in spirit. To go to God and say, Lord, I'm a needy person spiritually.

I don't have need of money. I've got plenty of that. I don't have need of help.

I've got plenty of that. But spiritually, Lord, I'm in need. If you don't give me, I'll have nothing.

That beggar will starve if he doesn't get money. Lord, I'll starve. And Lord, tomorrow you'll find me at your gate again.

25 years from now, you'll still find me at your gate. 40 years from now, you'll find me at your gate. I'm poor.

You know what Jesus said about such people? The entire kingdom of heaven belongs to such people. Do you want to possess the kingdom of heaven? Keep this attitude all your life. One day when God uses you mightily, my brothers and sisters, uses you to bring many people to Christ and uses you to build churches, don't forget to be this beggar who goes to God and says, Lord, I'm poor.

Lord, please give me. Please teach me. Please give me your spirit.

Please give me power. Please give me love for these unlovely people. And please give me purity, Lord.

My heart is so filthy. It's the beggar who becomes holy. It's the beggar, the spiritual beggar, who gets the best from heaven.

But you've got to be humble to be a beggar. How many of you would like to go to somebody's house and knock and say, please give me some money? That's pretty humiliating. We don't like to do that even before God.

But that's the only position in which you can get all the riches of heaven. I want to be in that place till the end of my life. I don't want any other place.

I know that God has made me tremendously rich and he's got more to give me if he gives me grace to remain in that place forever. And I want to encourage you to be there forever. There are many other things like this.

You could read there about mourning and being pure in heart. Let me just mention one thing. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, verse 8. And I read it like this.

That when your heart is pure, everywhere you look, you will see God. You will see God in your circumstances. You will see God in the people who help you.

You will see God in the people who harm you. God in the shimmy eyes who curse you like David saw. You'll see God everywhere because your heart is pure.

When your heart is not pure, what do you see? Oh, that brother who's troubling me, that difficult wife, that difficult neighbor. You'll have a lot of problems when your heart is not pure. Blessed are the pure in heart.

They will only see God. Now a pure heart is different from a clean heart. A clean heart is just a good conscience that I've not sinned in any way.

A pure heart is a heart which has got no place in it for anyone other than God. You know a man can have a good conscience and still have other interests in his life other than God? There are lots of people like that. They don't sin in any obvious way.

Their conscience is clear, but their ambition is on this earth. But a man who's got a pure heart, his ambition is not on this earth. His whole heart belongs to God.

It's total purity. That's a pure heart. Okay? Chapter 6, he speaks about practicing our righteousness and our fasting and our praying before God alone.

You know, I've met a lot of people in my life who speak about fasting. And let me tell you my observation. In the people I've met, almost all the people who fast tell other people about it.

Do you know that Jesus gave only one command about fasting? Only one. And that was, when you fast, don't tell anybody. And that's the one command they disobeyed.

How many commands did God give Adam? He disobeyed that. How many commands has God given children? One. Obey your parents.

What do they disobey? That one. How many commands has God given to those who fast? Only one. Don't tell anybody.

That's the one they disobey. See, man's like that. So, let us raise up another generation of people here who will obey that one command on fasting at least from today.

Okay? And not only in fasting, but in praying, and in giving, don't tell anyone. Don't let anybody know about it. But there's such a lust.

I must get some honor from somebody who should know that I have fasted, that I have prayed, that I gave so much money for God's work. And the Lord says, you'll lose your reward. You'll have nothing left in heaven.

You'll lose your anointing here on this earth as well. And it's happened to lots of people. Okay? There are many other wonderful things we could spend hours and hours on the Sermon on the Mount alone.

But we don't have time. I want to encourage you to read Matthew 5, 6, and 7. He speaks there about number of subjects. And the main subjects are related to the inner life.

The life of the righteousness of the Pharisees. Matthew 5 and verse 20 was on the outside. And when he says, your righteousness must be more than that.

What he's saying is, your holiness must be inside. That's what he meant. Not more in terms of quantity, but more in terms of quality.

The quality of our righteousness must be fundamentally different. The Pharisees had an earthly righteousness. But we are talking here of the kingdom of heaven.

And in heaven, the important thing is the inner life. It must flow from within. Your adultery must... Freedom from adultery must not just be outside, within.

Freedom from hatred, murder must be within. That you don't even get angry. Everything must be within.

So the kingdom of heaven is within you. It's inside that it begins. Chapter 7, Jesus spoke about false prophets.

And I just want to say a word here about false prophets. Because it's very important to understand this in our day and age. Verse 15, Beware of false prophets, Matthew 7, 15.

Because they will come in sheep's clothing. That means the correct doctrine. Sheep's clothing means correct evangelical doctrine.

But inside, there are wolves. What do wolves do? Wolves are interested in eating up what the sheep have. Or the sheep themselves.

And when a man is interested in exploiting other believers for his own gain, he's a wolf. If he wants to exploit you to make money for himself, he wants to exploit his Christian faith to make money for himself, he's a wolf. But that wolf may be clothed in absolutely perfect evangelical fundamental doctrine.

That's the sheep's clothing. And that's where you get deceived. If you listen to the doctrine, you'll think he's a sheep.

But he's actually a wolf. Because he is trying to exploit you. Financially or in some other way.

His Christianity is one where he's trying to make gain for himself. A name for himself. Some honor for himself.

That's a wolf. But very often today, the understanding of a false prophet is his doctrine is wrong. I tell you this, listen to me.

If you go only by wrong doctrine, I tell you, you'll be deceived thoroughly. Look at character. Jesus said, How do you discern false prophets? Verse 16, Not by their doctrine, not even by their ministry, but by their fruits you shall know them.

Matthew 7, verse 16. It is not by their gifts, but by their fruits. Look at their character.

Have they got humility? How do I identify a false prophet? Not by his doctrine. Not by whether he has got supernatural gifts. But, does he have the spirit of Christ? Is he a humble brother? Is he free from the love of money? Does he emphasize purity of character? Is there purity in his relationship with the opposite sex? These are the things by which I identify a false prophet.

And God has protected me for 40 years. You go by doctrine, you'll be led astray. I'll tell you that.

And yet, that is the only test by which people assess false prophets today. And that's why Christendom is in its pathetic, carnal condition. Even though Jesus said, You will not be able to discern them by their doctrine or their gifts, but by their fruits.

Now I'll come to gifts. Here are the gifts. In verse 22, you read about people who had gifts.

He talks about the fruit of the spirit and the gift of the spirit in the Sermon on the Mount. First gift is prophecy. It's one of the fruits of the spirit.

Lord, Matthew 7, 22, we prophesied in your name. We cast out demons in your name. We did miracles in your name.

We had all these gifts of the spirit. And the Lord says, depart from me because you lived in sin. They had the gifts of the spirit and they went to hell.

They preached to others, they healed others, they cast out demons and the preachers went to hell. Now how many of you believe that when you see a healing campaign, a man casting out demons, prophesying and doing miracles, that it's possible that that man may finally go to hell? I don't think any of you believe that. Do you? I hope you do.

I believe with all my heart that man may go to hell. I don't know. I want to see his fruit.

I'm not interested in his prophecy and his casting out demons and his miracles because Jesus said here, verse 22, many, not one or two, many, many people who cast out demons and who heal the sick and who prophesy in my name, I like to send them to hell because there's sin in their private life, which you people don't know when he stands on the platform with the spotlight on him. He who has a ear to hear, let him hear. I preached this for so many years, but I still find very, very few people who believe it.

Because our nature is such, we'd rather believe ourselves than what Jesus says. I want to raise my hand to heaven and say, I believe what Jesus says. I don't believe myself, and I don't believe what you say either.

Let God be true and every man a liar. There are many, many people who are going to come to the Lord on the final day and say, Lord, all these gifts I had, and they go to hell. Why? Because they don't have character.

Now reverse it. Do you think there'll be people who come to the Lord on the final day and say, Lord, by your grace, my sins are forgiven, and by your grace, I lived an overcoming life, but I never prophesied, I never healed the sick, and I never cast out demons. Will the Lord say to them, go to hell, you who never healed the sick, and you never cast out demons.

It won't work like that. The opposite is not true. You can have fruit and no gifts and enter God's kingdom, and you can have gifts without fruit and go to hell.

That's what God says. Depart from me, I never knew you. I never knew you.

Is it possible that people who are casting out demons in Jesus' name, doing miracles in Jesus' name, prophesying today's multitudes of prophets, prophesying in Jesus' name, that one day Jesus will say to

them, I never knew you. These are the false prophets, who got gifts, but no character. No humility.

They love money. How can such a man be a disciple of Jesus who loves money? That itself should open your eyes. Please, we live in a day of tremendous deception.

Be alert. Chapter 8. We read about the miracles that Jesus did. He not only spoke, he cared for people.

He cared for lepers. When a leper came to him and asked for healing, he healed him. When a centurion came and asked for healing for his servant, he healed long distance.

The centurion was such a humble man, and he said, Lord, I'm not worthy that you come under my roof. Just speak the word, and it will be done. And when Jesus heard it, he said in verse 10, I have not found such great faith, Matthew 8.10, with anyone in Israel.

Now, I learned something from there about the character of Jesus in the kingdom of heaven. You know what that is? A habit that all of us Indians need to learn. You know what that habit is? Publicly appreciating people.

We are so reluctant to publicly appreciate a person. Oh, he'll become spiritually proud. I don't want to tell him anything.

You are more foolish than Jesus. I mean, you're foolish. Jesus was not.

Jesus was wise. You are foolish, and he was wise. He was not afraid to praise a Roman centurion.

I have never found such faith in all of Israel. Do you think that Roman centurion ever forgot that sentence for the rest of his life? He was so encouraged that he must have been such a wholehearted disciple. Sometimes you are a godly man, you give one word of encouragement to a younger brother, that may be the thing that sends in full steam ahead to follow Jesus for the rest of his life.

Why don't you give that word of encouragement? Because you foolishly think, oh, he may become proud. Jesus didn't think like that. He could publicly praise Peter.

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. My father in heaven has revealed this to you. He looked at Nathanael and said, there is a man in whom there is no guile.

Jesus was lavish with his appreciation of people who were not perfect. You think that Roman centurion was perfect? You think Nathanael was perfect? You think Peter was perfect? There are so many faults in them, but he appreciated them. We cannot even appreciate godly people.

We cannot even praise godly people. That is the pathetic nature we have as Indians particularly. I have seen it in Indian society.

We are so reluctant to appreciate. And even people who say they are born again, new covenant, and every fantastic word they use, but they haven't learned this habit of Jesus Christ. Appreciate where you see something good in someone.

That's what I see here, and I'm greatly challenged by it. I want to do it much more than I've done it in the past. And we read about a number of healings here.

And I want to move on to chapter 9, where we read of this blind man, two blind men who came to Jesus in order to follow him, in order to be healed rather, Matthew 9, 27. And Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I'm able to do this for you? Verse 28. Before Jesus did a miracle for them, he asked them a question.

Do you believe that I'm able to do this for you? They said, Yes, Lord. And their eyes were opened. Jesus said, According to your faith, be it unto you, verse 29, which is a principle.

Now I want to ask you some questions. Did they want their eyes to be opened? Yes. Did Jesus want to heal them? Yes.

But still, their eyes would not have been opened if they did not have faith. Now apply that to yourself. Do you want something from God? Yes.

Does God want to give that to you? Yes. But you still may not get it if you don't have faith. Supposing one blind man had said, Well, Lord, I'm not very sure whether you can, you know, I'm not so sure.

But perhaps you can open one eye. The Lord would have said to him, According to your faith, be it unto you. And he would have come out with one eye open.

Praise God, he would have said, My eye is open. And the other fellow goes in and he says, Lord, I believe you can open both my eyes. And he comes out and has both eyes open.

And so that one-eyed man starts the one-eyed denomination. And this two-eyed man starts the two-eyed denomination. This fellow says, Jesus can only forgive sins.

This fellow says, Jesus can forgive sin and give victory over sin also. And this fellow will call the other fellow a heretic, saying, No, no, no, that cannot be possible because in my case, he opened only one eye. Brother, that's because you had faith only for one eye.

That's why he opened only one eye of yours. Don't get upset with this other man. He had faith for both eyes and he not only got forgiveness, he got victory too.

It applies to us today. Which denomination do you belong to? The answer is, according to your faith, be it unto you. You believe Jesus can only forgive your sins, but he'll leave you defeated by your anger and your lust and your pride and your jealousy.

According to your faith, be it unto you all your life, you'll be defeated by your anger and your jealousy and your lust and your everything, but your sins will be forgiven. Another fellow sitting here says, No. Romans 6.14 says, No sin will have dominion over me.

He gets both eyes open. Don't get upset with him. He's not a heretic.

He's got something more than you. But not because he's better than you, but because he trusted the promise of Jesus Christ. Matthew chapter 10.

We read about Jesus calling his 12 disciples and giving them authority over for their ministry. And then he told them, It's not only authority that you're going to have in this ministry. I believe you need authority.

You and I need authority in the service of the Lord. But more than that, along with that authority comes persecution. I send you as sheep, verse 16, Matthew 10.16, in the midst of wolves.

Be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. If there is one word we need to remember in India today, it's that word. God sends us as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Don't be foolish. Don't be stupid. When you go to places where heathen people are in control, don't say foolish things, which will unnecessarily provoke them.

Be wise in how you present the gospel. Think. Don't think zeal means you go around denouncing all the idols and all the goddesses and gods.

That's foolishness. Be wise as serpents. Harmless as doves.

Present Jesus Christ without denouncing their religions and their idols and their gods. Present Jesus. Lift up, show them that they are sinners and that Jesus is a savior.

Be wise as serpents. Be wise in your handling of money. Be wise in... Oh, I believe one of the greatest needs among Christian workers today in India is being wise as serpents.

Don't unnecessarily reveal a lot of information to people when there is no need to reveal it. Be wise as serpents. Be wise as serpents.

Don't unnecessarily make enemies of people if there is no need to make enemies of them. Be harmless as doves. Don't harm anybody.

And one last thing before we close. Your enemies will be members of your own household. Verse 36.

When we follow the Lord, we are going to have misunderstanding from our own relatives. A prophet is never accepted in his own country or among his own relatives. And the Lord said, if you love father or mother more than me, you can never be worthy of me.

Verse 37. So let's learn to recognize that we are going to find it difficult from our own relatives. And in the days to come, we are going to find it difficult in the world outside.

But, if I am willing to lose my life for Jesus' sake, verse 39, I will find it. And one last word. You know, if you receive a disciple, verse 42, in the name of a disciple and give him a cup of water, you will not lose your reward.

Even if you give a cup of water to a brother or sister, Jesus will take note of it. Let us serve one another in every way we can. This is the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Let's pray.

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