

Is Jesus Trustworthy?

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[0 : 00] Amen. I wonder when was the last time you had a conversation that ran along these kind of lines. I think for me it was last week. Are you still friends with anyone from your school? Or for our children, are you still friends with some people from your nursery class perhaps?

Or are you still connected to people from your university days? We tend to have those conversations from time to time. Maybe especially in a place like Edinburgh because a lot of people I guess move to Edinburgh for a variety of reasons and that involves leaving people behind. But also just because life is so fast moving and we're much more mobile than we used to be. Our lives seem to be much more busy. There's a whole world of opportunities. So we tend to be more likely to be moving around from place to place.

And all of that we recognize has impact on friendships and relationships. And that's really significant because it can create a challenge for us to have deep and abiding relationships so that there are people in our lives in whom we can place our trust.

There are lots of people who live with isolation, who live in loneliness, who don't really have someone they can trust. And perhaps it's because of social mobility for various reasons.

[1 : 33] But then we think about our own human limitations. That's a factor as well. There are times when we perhaps want to be a good friend to somebody, but we find we don't have the time or we don't have the capacity, we don't have the availability.

We have experienced our own letdowns, I'm sure, when we think about our relationships. And we have let others down. There are natural changes that happen in life. There are seasons and rhythms to life that can make our availability for other people more limited.

And so the question can still stand, is there somebody who I can trust, especially when I find myself in a time of need?

And one of the things that Matthew's gospel in this section brings to us with resounding clarity is that we have in Jesus a friend, a savior, a Lord who is entirely trustworthy.

So he's bringing, Matthew's bringing this journey section to a close, and he's gone really rapidly through a whole range of stories. And all the way along, Jesus has been showing his credentials.

[2 : 46] He truly is God's promised Messiah. He really is bringing in the kingdom of God. And Matthew chooses to close the journey with this two stories, once more drawing attention to the trustworthiness of Jesus, that he is faithful to his God-given mission, and that he is faithful to all those who trust him.

And he's leading us towards a crucial question for all of us to consider. It's the question that was first asked of the blind men there in verse 28, do you believe?

And this little section highlights two very different responses to Jesus. And so it invites us to consider and respond to Jesus for ourselves. So two very simple, brief things to say this evening. First, Jesus is trustworthy because he is faithful to his mission. We're going to jump ahead just one page, a couple of chapters. Matthew chapter 11, verses 2 to 6.

You have this moment where John the Baptist is in prison, and he sends some of his disciples to ask Jesus, Jesus, are you the one who is to come? Are you really God's promised Messiah, or should we expect someone else?

[4 : 03] And what Jesus does is so helpful, because he draws on at least a couple of passages from the prophet Isaiah, and he gives a checklist. This is what God said his Messiah would do.

Verse 4 of chapter 11, go back and report to John what you hear and see. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

And in Matthew chapters 8 and 9, Jesus has ticked each and every one of those boxes. And the last one to be ticked off is that Jesus then heals these blind men in verses 27 to 29.

He is God's appointed Messiah. There's an irony within this section as well. And it's the fact that these men who are physically blind, spiritually they are able to see in a way that the Pharisees, the religious leaders, cannot.

Look at how they call out to Jesus. Have mercy on us, son of David. So they recognize, though they are blind, they recognize Jesus is son of David.

[5 : 14] Now that's a title of the Messiah. And what do they come for? They come for mercy, and that's bound up with the mission of the Messiah. And so Matthew records the words of these blind men because they're so important to the theme of Matthew's gospel.

Jesus wants us to know, Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is that promised Messiah King. He draws so much from the Old Testament, and he actually begins his gospel with genealogy to make just that point.

Matthew chapter 1, verse 1. This is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David. Matthew begins, you can trust Jesus.

Everything you hear about Jesus, you can trust. You can trust him for salvation. And these blind men are enabled to see that Jesus is the Savior that they need.

And Matthew goes on from there to record further evidence to indicate Jesus' faithfulness to his mission, as once again, verse 32 and 33, he drives out the demon.

[6 : 22] A man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. And we've seen this along the way. Jesus drives out the forces of evil.

Here is the kingdom of God being brought in, and God's king and God's kingdom is greater, and darkness cannot stand against it. And the crowd, they're able to see, they sense the wonder.

What do they say? End of verse 33. Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.

God is doing a new thing in the sending of Jesus. But not everyone agrees. The Pharisees certainly don't.

What's their response to Jesus? Verse 34, to his mission, it is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons. And so they will continue to reject and to oppose and to slander Jesus.

[7 : 25] If he controls a demon, well, that's evidence that he's on the side of the demons. And what's so interesting is that as we read the Old Testament, and as we listen to Jesus' own words, we come to understand that this is part of his mission too.

Jesus will be the rejected one. He will be the despised one. He is the suffering servant, so slander is no surprise. Part of his faithfulness, part of Jesus being trustworthy, is him staying on mission even when he is rejected.

He will remain faithful. Now, it's important to recognize that their conclusion is wrong. It's not by the prince of demons that Jesus drives out demons. Rather, we listen to Jesus' own words in chapter 12 and verse 28.

If it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Jesus is the Spirit-filled king promised by God who is establishing his kingdom.

And no one, not even demons, will stop Jesus building his church because he is faithful to his mission. And do we see how this is good news for us? Here is one whom we can trust, the very best friend, because he is none other than the Son of God.

[8 : 52] And so we can trust that Jesus will be with us. As we put our trust in him, he will be with us always, even when we, as his followers, face some of that opposition and slander and rejection that Jesus did.

It is good for us to recognize that our faith rests in one who is trustworthy in the mission that he was sent to do. Remember the words of the angel to Joseph?

Matthew chapter 1, verse 21. You shall call his name Jesus. Why? Because he is on a mission to save his people from their sins. And then we remember Jesus' word, it is finished upon the cross. He was faithful to that calling. In Matthew chapter 18, there is the same words that we hear in Luke chapter 19, verse 10.

The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. And Jesus is faithful in that mission also. Jesus will lose none of those he came to save. And so when we come in our need, when we feel lost, when we acknowledge our sin, when we come to him as Savior, we come trusting he will forgive.

[10:13] He will grant us new life as a child of God because he is faithful to his mission. So that's the first thing. The second element of Jesus' trustworthiness of this, he is faithful to those who trust him.

And this is another aspect of Matthew 8 and 9 that's brought out in lots of different ways, that faith comes in all shapes and sizes. So the section begins with the centurion, with great faith.

Jesus, you don't even need to come to my house, just speak the word and my servant will be healed. I'm not worthy to have you come, but I know you've got authority. And Jesus says, I've not found faith like this anywhere in Israel.

So there's that kind of faith. But then if you remember that the women's faith last week, very secret, coming quietly behind Jesus, hoping no one, even Jesus, wouldn't notice, just touching the hem of his robe, trusting there'd be healing there.

And now we have the faith of the blind men, the faith that leads them to call out, have mercy on us, son of David. And then when Jesus in verse 28 asks them, do you believe that I am able to do this?

[11:23] Do you believe that I'm able to show you the mercy you seek? Yes, Lord. They replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, according to your faith, that it be done to you.

And their sight was restored. And so the focus again is on their faith. Their faith, which is in Jesus. Because faith is what brings us into contact with Jesus.

Trust in Jesus is how anyone comes to know God's power and God's salvation. Now we said it last week, but it's worth saying again, the point is not, and Matthew's gospel draws this out, the point is not how strong or how weak is my faith, but who is the object of my faith.

And these blind men, we don't know what they've heard, but they've obviously heard some of the stories of this man, Jesus of Nazareth, who's traveling around and he's saying great things and he's doing great miracles.

And they certainly know something of the promise that God would send a coming king who would redeem and rescue his people. And we certainly know that their faith, driven by need and desperation, moves towards Jesus.

[12:33] And isn't that how often God works? giving us the gift of faith at that point of desperate need. Isn't that often when we come to an end of ourselves where we recognize, I need to go to Jesus.

He is the one who can help me in my trouble. And that's what they do. And we discover as that happens that Jesus is faithful to them because Jesus is faithful to all those who trust him, to all who come to him in faith.

Because God must be faithful to his promises. I came across this week an illustration that I found really helpful from Don Carson.

He took us back to the night in the book of Exodus of the Passover, the first Passover. So imagine with me two Israelite dads the night before the Passover we're talking over the fence to each other. And there's one dad and he's saying, I've seen and I've heard about these plagues, the frogs and the boils and the hail. And I've heard the announcement of the last plague, the judgment on the firstborn.

[13:49] And I'm really scared. And the reply comes over the fence, well, haven't you done what Moses told us to do? Haven't you sacrificed the lamb and haven't you sprinkled the blood on the doorposts?

Oh, of course I've done that, but how can some blood stains keep my son in the house safe? I'm so afraid of what's going to happen.

To which his neighbor says, listen, you've done all you need to. God has promised. Judgment will pass over every house where blood has been sprinkled.

Don't you trust God? They turn in for the night. Dad one has a sleepless, anxious night, whereas dad two sleeps like a baby.

Next morning, which dad has lost a firstborn son? The answer is neither.

[14:49] Why? Because the outcome depended on God being faithful to his promises, not depending on whether one person or another person's faith is strong or weak. That's not the point.

The point is, who do we trust in? And we are invited to trust in God who is faithful to his promise to save. We're invited to trust Jesus, the promised Messiah, the one who is faithful to his mission.

And so we're invited to come to Jesus, to look to Jesus, to receive and rest in the salvation that Jesus has secured through his death and his resurrection.

And so Matthew closes the section saying to us, Jesus is trustworthy. He continues his mission. He fulfills his mission. He is faithful to those who trust him.

And he'll show that in the way the story continues. Jesus is going to journey to the cross in line with God's word and God's will. And having completed his work of salvation, Jesus will then journey from the tomb in victory just as he promised.

[15 : 54] And Jesus will journey again to return to heaven to sit on his throne. He is faithful to his mission. And so you and I today, we can trust him to forgive our sin.

You and I, we can trust him to restore our life with God. We can trust him in our needs and in our fears. We can trust him to grant to us eternal life with our God.

Jesus is trustworthy. Back to verse 28. Do we believe it? And we need to ask the question because plenty in Jesus' day didn't.

We see it in the Pharisees. They were blinded to the glory and the goodness of Jesus. They were blind to his glory and to his love, to his power to save as the promised king and they rejected him and they stayed on the outside and still today, despite evidence, many stay on the outside.

And as we continue in Matthew's gospel, we hear Jesus sound, serious, somber warnings about that, the reality of future condemnation for those who refuse to acknowledge him and turn to him for salvation.

[17 : 09] And so we're invited to trust, to respond to Jesus' love and to Jesus' loving warning and to come to him in faith. But we see too throughout the gospels and throughout the pages of church history that many do believe, like the blind man, that Jesus is trustworthy, he is God's king, he does show mercy, he can restore us and give us wholeness.

And so as Matthew draws the section to a close, we're invited to follow the faith of the blind man, to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord, as our king, to come to him for salvation, to come to him for help, to trust him that he is and will always be trustworthy to come to him in our need.

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