

Who Is This Guy? "He Is Your Everything"

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Date: 23 July 2017

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[0:00] And if everyone else would open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 17, we're going to finish up this passage, this section, and closing up in Matthew 17 today.

We're going to be looking at verses 14 through 27. And for the last several weeks, chapters 14 through 17, I've been asked the question, who is this guy?

And time and time again, it's this is the Christ, the son of the living God. There's nobody like him.

And what does he do? He calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.

And to do that, you've got to believe him. You've got to trust him. You've got to have faith in him. We learn from Hebrews 11 that faith is being assured of things hoped for and having conviction of what is unseen.

To trust. And so, to be a follower of Jesus is to trust in something you can't see right now. Someone you can't see right now. And this morning, we're going to look at three distinct little passages that are aimed to strengthen your faith in the Christ, the son of the living God.

[1:20] And so, we're going to look at a passage that Jesus exposes what he calls little faith, not to be mistaken for mustard-sized faith that can move mountains.

And then Jesus is going to focus on himself, the son of man, and what he has done on the cross.

And then Jesus, in an extraordinary little story, he's going to encourage your faith this morning. It's a story about a shekel in the mouth of a fish.

The call to follow Jesus starts with a call to trust Jesus. And this morning, we're going to look at just that.

So, would you open up your Bibles, if you haven't already, to Matthew chapter 17. I'm going to read verses 14 through 20. And I'm going to kind of walk through that passage and kind of bring it to bear on our lives today.

[2:31] And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him, Jesus, came up to Jesus, and kneeling before Jesus said, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic, and he suffers terribly.

For often he falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him. And Jesus answered, Oh, faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you?

How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, Why could we not cast it out?

He said to them, Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you would say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move.

And nothing will be impossible for you. Who likes summer cookouts? Raise your hand. Oh yeah, I do.

[3:36] And I'm a bit of a cookout connoisseur, informally, of course. A good cookout has, when it comes to food, has at least three things. It's got an appetizer, it's got the main dish, and then it's got dessert.

And for me, a good appetizer is just kind of like potato chips. What it does is, it just really kind of stimulates your taste buds.

In this passage that we're looking at, it's kind of part of a three-part meal, in which Jesus is going to build our faith, but first, he's going to start with stimulating your faith buds.

And in order to do that, he's going to expose something in us. So in verse 14, Jesus and his three disciples come down off the mountain, which Jesus was transfigured.

They've just beheld him in his glory. And as they're coming down the mountain, they walk into a crowd. Do you see that in verse 14? They came to the crowd, and a man came up to him, and kneeling before him said, this man is a dad.

[4:44] And he's a dad of a boy, a child. And this man comes out of the crowd and meets Jesus before Jesus, and his disciples get to the crowd. His three disciples get to the crowd.

And he says, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he's an epileptic, and he suffers terribly. And so this dad comes to Jesus with a plea. And he says, have mercy.

It's not a question mark. It's a desperate plea. He's saying, help us. Help me. And then he gives the reason. For his son is an epileptic, and he suffers terribly.

And so whatever this condition was, we see it kind of elaborated, this terrible suffering. We see it elaborated, for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.

So whatever this condition is, this boy is falling into the fire, often probably a fire within the home, probably water around, something that is a constant threat to his kind of health and life.

[5:56] So what this dad is coming to Jesus with is something pretty intense. The life of his son. And so his son has been suffering greatly.

Now, could you imagine being the dad or the mom of a boy who's suffering this way? You would be on constant watch. It would be vigilant. It would be wearying.

And so this dad comes to Jesus, and he drops on his knees just to show his desperation. And he says, Lord, have mercy. Help us. My son is suffering terribly.

He's on the verge of death almost daily. Help. And if that wasn't bad enough, look at what he says in verse 16. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.

So the other nine disciples were down kind of doing the work, while Jesus and his three disciples were up on the mountain. And this dad brought his son to the other nine disciples, and they were unable to heal him.

[6:57] And so it's kind of like this. Have you ever been talking in like in a store before, and you're talking to the person behind kind of the counter, and you're like, you know what? I return this. I just want to get my money back. And they're like, I don't know what you're talking about.

We cannot help you. And then you see the supervisor walk in. You're like, oh, you're the guy I need to talk to. And what this dad sees is the supervisor coming down off the mountain and says, you're the guy I need to talk to about this.

You can do something about this. These nine disciples can't. And so what does Jesus do? Look at verse 17.

Oh, faithless and twisted generation. When you see that word, oh, that's an emotional response of Jesus. Oh, faithless and twisted generation.

When Jesus says generation, he's talking about all the people. He's talking about all the people of Israel, his disciples included. And when he says faithless, it's not a compliment. He's saying a lack of trust in God.

[8:05] And twisted, that's distortion. It's corrupted belief. For those, there was a lack of trust. And for some who trusted, it was a corrupted, distorted trust, a misunderstanding trust.

And so he says, oh, faithless and twisted generation. And then two rhetorical questions. How long am I going to be with you? The point is, I'm not going to be with you much longer.

And the second rhetorical question, how long am I going to bear with you? How long am I going to have to do what you seemingly can't do, but should be able to do?

And then he says, bring them here to me. Jesus is essentially saying, I'll take care of this. In verse 18, we read that Jesus rebukes the demon.

Now, that should catch your attention. Because up to this point, there's been no mention of a demon. Apparently, maybe, perhaps, these disciples have been treating this boy.

[9:10] They've been treating symptoms and not the actual cause. They've been trying to heal this boy of his epilepsy, not address the demon

that's apparently the cause of this.

And so Jesus rebukes the demon, and it comes out of the boy, and we read that he was healed instantly. And on a side note, we see Jesus' authority exercised again.

He speaks, and demons obey him. He has authority over the demonic world. And by the way, this will be the last time in Matthew Jesus casts out a demon.

So Jesus casts out the demon. Now, I'm guessing that for some of you in the room, you're asking yourself a question. And it's a question that goes like this.

What is the relationship between demonic influence and physical illness? So apparently here, there was a demonic influence that was the cause of this boy's epilepsy.

[10:20] And Jesus casts out the demon, and the boy was healed instantly. So what's the relationship? Now, we can make one of two mistakes.

Mistake number one is this, that we think that behind every sneeze, cold, and flu is a demon. That's mistake number one.

And we know that's not the case, because remember the woman with 12 years of bleeding? She came up to Jesus, and what did Jesus do? Did he cast her, cast a demon out of her? No.

He healed her of her bleeding. So mistake number one is thinking that demons are the sole cause of every illness that we experience today. That's mistake number one.

The mistake number two is on the other side. And that is thinking that there's no demonic influence causing any kind of physical illness in our day today. That's mistake number two.

[11:17] That's kind of writing off demonic influence as kind of a bygone era. And so we as a church recognize we've got room to grow here, but we also need to be paying attention to what's the true cause of what is happening in a person.

And so when you go back up the passage and you see this little boy who's being cast into a fire and into water on a regular basis who is seeking to be destroyed, that should raise a question of what's at work in this child that would seemingly, regularly try to destroy his life.

The MO of the demonic world is to distort and destroy image bearers of God. And so we look at this passage, it raises a question, and we're going to move forward saying as a church, we're not going to overreact or underreact, but we're going to seek God in the moment and respond in faith.

But I need to let you know that this passage isn't in your Bible to answer that question. This passage is here to address the issue of a lack of faith.

Let's read on. After Jesus rebukes this demon, in verse 19, the disciples come to Jesus privately and they ask him, why could we not cast it out?

[12:54] And so one of the things that we've learned about the disciples is that they tend to forget quickly and they tend to not exercise belief often.

They misunderstand. Jesus is constantly kind of correcting and rebuking them. And so I think the question comes down to, you know, what's going on?

What's going on here? Jesus, they come to Jesus privately and for that, they show themselves to doing something right.

They recognize something, something is off and they go to Jesus for an explanation. And they say, what's wrong with us? Why couldn't we cast this out?

Now, I tend to think that this question that the disciples are asking is a question that many of us as followers of Jesus, we ask in a variety of different forms.

[13:54] Why isn't this happening? Why isn't this good thing that I imagine that would bring honor to God not happening? And the disciples ask a question that I think we can say is, what's wrong with me?

What's wrong with us? It kind of shows up in things like this. When I share the gospel with somebody, why aren't more people coming to faith than Jesus? What's wrong with me?

It's, what am I not doing right? What I'm trying to help people change? Why don't they change?

What's wrong with me? Shows up in another kind of set of questions like this.

Why can't I stop being a certain way? Why can't I stop sinning? Why can't I stop gossiping? Why can't I stop flying off the handle? Why can't I stop lusting after these certain situations?

Why do I always seemingly want something new every month? It's just kind of a rotation of greed. What's wrong with me?

[15:03] The question is one of power. A lack of ability. A lack of power to do something. We expect change and it doesn't happen.

And so we ask a question like, what's wrong? Now there's a variety of different answers in your Bible to that question. Jesus points to one answer and it's in verse 20.

So the disciples ask, why could we not cast the demon out? And Jesus says to them, because of your little faith. As soon as you read that, when you read that word little, you may be thinking like quantity, size.

But we got to ask, is that what Jesus really means? Because in just a few more words, he says this. Truly I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you.

So it seems like there's a certain kind of little faith that is powerless. And then there's this other kind of little faith, mustard seed sized faith, that can move mountains.

[16:20] that goes for the impossible. What's the difference? The difference is in the object of faith.

The difference is who you're trusting in. The difference is who you're relying on. When Jesus talks about your little faith here, it's not so much a quantity of faith he's talking about.

He's talking about the quality of your faith and very specifically the object of your faith, who you are trusting in. Another way to say it is Jesus is like when he says because of your little faith, he's saying because of your misplaced faith, because of your weak faith, because of your kind of deluded faith.

So what Jesus is putting his finger on is a matter of quality of faith. Now, this past week, I did a little study on that phrase, little faith.

And it was really interesting. I want to share with you what was interesting about it. That little phrase, OU of little faith, it shows up four times in Matthew.

[17:50] And the first time is when Jesus is talking about anxiety. OU of little faith, don't be anxious. The next time it shows up is when the disciples are on the sea and there's a raging storm and he's asleep and they wake him up and he says, OU of little faith, why are you afraid?

The next time it shows up is in Matthew 14, 31 and Jesus has just called Peter to come to him on the water.

And Peter sees the waves and he starts to sink. He cries out. Jesus delivers him and says, why do you doubt, OU of little faith?

Doubt. And then in Matthew 16, Jesus is warning his disciples about the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees. They think he's talking about just kind of logistics and food and stuff like that.

Total misunderstanding. And he says, why do you not understand, OU of little faith? And so when you look at what Matthew says, what's around little faith, there's something competing for one's heart.

[19:05] Anxiety, fear, doubt, misunderstanding. These are the things that vie for your heart and will distract you from trusting fully in your great God.

Not even to mention pride, which is our tendency to rely on ourselves instead of God.

So these are the things that draw our heart's trust off of our great God and sets it on things that cannot deliver, that are impotent and powerless.

And it shows up in questions like, why can't I do this? What's happening? What's wrong? And so Jesus is pointing his finger to this weak, corrupt, deluded, misplaced faith.

It's an impotent faith because it's an imposter faith. It's trusting in something other than God. faith. And then he points us to the real stuff.

[20:14] Faith like the grain of a mustard seed. It's the size of a pinhead. And it's small faith in a great God and it accomplishes much. Our great God is the God of the impossible.

He can do whatever He wants. And when we trust Him in the words of William Carey, the father of modern day missions, he says, expect great things from God and attempt great things from God.

That comes from a heart of faith in the one true living God. Not in something else. The difference between this little faith that Jesus is rebuking and this mustard, seed-sized faith is the object of the faith.

What you're trusting in. It's either something other than God or God. And what Jesus is commending us here is trust God and He will accomplish much.

So, hey, this is the appetizer this morning. This is to stimulate your faith buds. In order to stimulate your faith buds, we had to say, hey, this is what gets in the way of your faith.

[21:33] Things like anxiety, things like fear, things like misunderstanding and pride. And what we do is we turn from those things and trust in our God over and over and over again.

That's what disciples do. They trust in God, in Jesus, over and over again. So, I hope this is stirring up a desire in you to trust God more.

And so now, in light of that, let's move from this kind of base of the mountain and let's move into Galilee a little bit more for the main course this morning.

Jesus has exposed little faith in His disciples and in us and now He's going to focus us, focus our faith on Himself.

Notice, in verses 22 and 23, as they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill Him and He will be raised on the third day and His disciples were greatly distressed.

[22:48] Jesus is focusing His disciples forward on His future work on the cross and resurrection in Jerusalem.

And there's a reason why He's doing it. He's wanting them to set their hearts on what He's about to do. This is the second explicit prediction Jesus makes of His coming passion, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection.

The first one we saw in chapter 16, 21, remember, Peter says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus, right soon thereafter, He clarifies it.

He says, guys, just to be sure you know what the Christ is going to do, I must go to Jerusalem. I am going to suffer. I am going to be killed. I am going to be raised.

Jews of that time, the disciples, they were expecting a political Messiah who would deliver ethnic Israel from the tyranny of Rome to be reestablished in its former national glory.

[23:58] And what Jesus is saying with these passion predictions is that's not what this Christ has come to do. The kingdom that Jesus was establishing, this saving reign of God, it would be established by His betrayal, through His suffering, through His crucifixion, and His resurrection.

That is what would establish His saving reign on earth. The kingdom of God is a kingdom that delivers sinners from their sins. And so in the second passion prediction, Jesus is preparing His disciples for what will come.

We're looking at maybe a month, two months out, and Jesus is saying this is what's going to happen. I'm going to be delivered. They will kill me.

I'll be raised on the third day. Did you see the prediction of His death? Did you see the prediction of His resurrection? But there's something new to this prediction. It's that whole the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.

It's the first time Jesus talked about His betrayal. It's going to happen. And in verse 23, notice how His disciples respond. They were greatly distressed.

[25:23] It's sinking into these guys that they're going to Jerusalem and it's not going to be pretty that Jesus keeps on talking about how He's going to die. But now, someone's going to betray Him?

Makes sense that they'd be distressed. Let me ask you this question. As a disciple living 2,000 years after the fact, when you read these words, should you be distressed?

What Jesus was speaking of in the future tense here of what will come, we speak of in the past tense of what has happened. Jesus is speaking about what He would do now in 2017.

We speak of what He's talking about as what He's done. He's talking about what He will do to accomplish our salvation.

today, today, we declare Christ's betrayal, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection as past historic events that have happened.

[26:32] And they're not distressing news. It's good news. It's gospel news.

His betrayal, suffering, death, resurrection, it was all necessary to Him accomplishing the salvation that you so desperately needed as a sinner.

That word gospel, that word is used in antiquity to describe a heralding of a victorious event.

So just imagine this. Kenosha County, we become our own nation. Lake County in Illinois becomes their own nation. They attack us. We respond.

We send forces down. We defeat them. We're victorious. Do you know what we would do? We would send a runner to the public square of this city.

[27:29] And that runner would herald forth, Our army has proven victorious. We have beaten the army of Lake County. Good news.

Or maybe you're a Cubs fan. November 3rd, 2016, Paul Sullivan, Chicago Tribune, at 12.30 a.m. writes, Chicago Cubs win World Series 8-7.

Good news. God, good news for those under a curse. It goes on to say they did it.

The Cubs did it. It's good news. But that good news in November 3rd, 2016 was temporary good news.

It was good news for that season. Not so much good news for this season. What the gospel of Jesus Christ is, it's good news.

[28:39] It's heralding. It's declaring an event that has happened. That Jesus, the Christ, was betrayed, suffered, died, and was raised. It took place.

And it's not temporary good news. It's forever good news. It's a good news of declaring that Jesus' death and resurrection defeated sin and death forever.

It was a decisive act. It happened. So when we read this second prediction of Christ's coming passion, it's not distressing news to us living on this side in 2017 looking back on what Jesus did.

This is good news. It's refocusing news. It's refreshing news. It's news that should make you want to rejoice. That God in Christ would do this for you.

The Apostle Paul talks about this what Jesus is talking about in the future. The Apostle Paul talks about it as being of first importance.

[29:45] That Christ died according to the Scriptures. He was buried and on the third day He was raised according to the Scriptures. First importance. Jesus will repeatedly speak of this.

His coming suffering, His coming death, His coming resurrection. He repeats it over and over again for the balance of the Gospel of Matthew because it's so important.

It's of first importance. And why is it? It's what God did to accomplish our salvation from sin. The cross is the hot spot of God's work of salvation for the fullness of time.

It's there that He won our victory over sin and death. So this morning as part of taking this kind of Gospel main course realize that what Jesus is speaking of in the future tense we speak of in the past tense.

It happened. And it's through His death and resurrection that secured our justification being made right with God. no more condemnation.

[30:59] It secured our adoption our being brought into God's family. Now by the Spirit we say Abba Father. It secured our redemption being set free from the power of sin.

It secured our reconciliation being made at peace with God Himself. It secured our sanctification being made holy over time.

It secured our glorification that day when we walk into the very presence of Jesus. Terry Johnson knows now being walking into the presence of Jesus without any encumbrance of sin.

What He did 2,000 years ago on the cross and His resurrection secured all of it. Our justification our sanctification our glorification our entire salvation was accomplished through His death and resurrection.

And when His disciples hear Him talking about this in the future they're distressed. When we hear this this is music to our ears. This should remind you of what your great God did for you in order to reconcile you to Himself.

[32:13] and this is what we stand on. This is what we trust in. This is what we believe. This is what we hold true.

This is what we build our lives on. This is what defines us. It's the main dish and it never gets old.

So what Jesus does here He's pointing His disciples to something future but for us who live in 2017 we're reminded of what He did in the past.

He accomplished our salvation. So we've looked at His exposing of our faith and now He's focused us on what He would do what He's done at the cross and now very briefly 24-27 Jesus He encourages our faith.

I'll just read that for you. When they came to Capernaum the collectors of the two drachma tax went up to Peter and said does your teacher not pay the tax? And Peter said yes and when Peter came into the house Jesus spoke to him first.

[33:33] Jesus was anticipating something. What do you think Simon? from whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax from their sons or from others? And when He said from others Jesus said to him then the sons are free.

However not to give offense to them go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.

So now we're at Capernaum which is kind of Jesus' base of operations for His ministry in Galilee. And Jesus and Peter are together and they're approached by two Jewish tax collectors and they're collecting a Jewish tax and it's based out of Exodus chapter 30 when men over 21 had to pay a half a shekel tax and that tax would go to the temple upkeep in Jerusalem and not only that this tax was taken about a month before Passover and so very nimbly Matthew is putting in front of us Jerusalem and Passover are on the horizon and so these tax collectors are kind of reminding Peter hey is your rabbi is your teacher going to pay this tax and Peter says oh yeah he's planning on it now I just want to remind you now that remember back in Luke 2 when Jesus was a boy he was he went back to Jerusalem and when his parents caught up with him and they say hey what were you doing he said don't you realize I'd be in my father's house having said that verse 25 Peter says yes he's going to pay it and then Peter's going to go into the house and he's going to raise this issue with Jesus Jesus what about this two drachma tax knowing that Jesus anticipates it and he says this very interesting thing to Peter what do you think Simon from whom do kings on the earth take toll or tax from their sons or from others another way to say it is this royalty Peter if you're in the royal family are you going to tax people in the royal family or are you going to tax those outside of the royal family and Peter says well those outside of the royal family to which Peter Jesus says then the sons are free do you know what Jesus is saying I don't need to pay this tax I'm a son of the living God this is my father's house I don't need to pay this tax and neither do you Peter because you're with me and then he goes on to say however not to give offense to them and what Jesus is saying there is hey I'm not going to claim this right I've got other more important business I need to do in Jerusalem and so we're going to pay this tax and here's how we're going to pay it and he goes on to sell Peter he says go to the sea cast in the hook take up the first fish that comes and when you open its mouth take out the shekel and give it to the tax collectors and then what happens we don't know what happens Matthew doesn't tell us what happens we're left guessing but you know what a solid guess would be it happened so check this out imagine if you're Peter and your your faith needs some building up your savior just told you to go to the sea of Galilee throw in a hook you go down throw in a hook you're like all right

[37:30] I'll do this for Jesus there's a tug on the line you pull up the first fish that comes what's going on in your heart right now if you're Peter huh I wonder you pull the fish up you open its mouth and when your eyes fall on silver what is going on in your heart in that moment joy delight you're saying things like I can't believe this it's really true and you reach into that fish's mouth and you pull out that Greek stutter that's what it was and you're feeling it in your hands and you're thinking how did he know that and you're walking this Greek stutter worth four drachma so this covers all the tax and you're bringing it to the tax collectors and you're thinking the whole time how did he know that who is this guy he is stinking amazing and you put it into the hand of that tax collector you know what you're thinking man this is just enough just on time and just for me you see how encouraging that would be now if for the sake of the gospel

Jesus is able to provide for his own like this he's going to provide for us too he's going to meet all of our needs out of nowhere here at this church out of nowhere people will send us money and it comes in at just the right time do you know how we make sense of it our Jesus is looking out for us he knows our needs it's like silver in a fish mouth encourages our faith so think about it this way if our God is able to provide for everyday needs in unimaginable ways he's not limited if you provided Jesus for our greatest need he's going to provide for all of our other needs as we seek to follow him it stirs up that William Carey quote again expect great things from God attempt great things from God and we're going to trust he's going to encourage us with what we need right at just of the right time at just enough and just for us he's that kind of God so who is this guy he's the Christ he's the son of the living God he calls us to follow him to deny ourselves take up our crosses and follow him and he is worthy of all of our trust we've had a little appetizer got our faith exposed so we turn from those things and turn to Jesus and then he focused our faith on what he has done the main thing the cross and his resurrection we set our hearts on that and then he encourages us along the way we're going to trust that he's going to just provide what we need at just the right time just for us he's the one he's the one we're going to follow if you haven't started to follow Jesus you can trust him and if you are following Jesus but you've wavered oh you can trust him all the more he's everything you need let's pray God in heaven would you just use these words these words of Jesus to stir faith to strengthen faith to purify faith we pray father that you would make us more and more confident in our Lord Jesus day by day God it's our desire to follow you day by day help us in Jesus name amen