

One with Authority

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 February 2018

Preacher: Rev Donnie G Macdonald

[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7, and we're going to read again verses 28 and 29.

When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowd were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

Amen. The American comedian George Burns was once asked the question, what is it that is the secret of a good sermon?

To which he replied, the secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, and to have the two as close together as possible.

He was saying a good sermon is a short one. I can remember as a student preaching in one place where, like today, I was very nervous.

[1 : 11] And because of that, I spoke perhaps even faster than normal. And the whole thing, and I'm not wanting to get your hopes up, but the whole thing from beginning to end was finished in 45 minutes.

And on the way out, one of the office bearers gave me the strongest handshake I've ever had. And he simply said, blessed are the brief, for they shall be asked back.

A good sermon has a good beginning, a good ending, and the two are as close together as possible. Jesus preached the most amazing sermon in that Sermon on the Mount.

It has the most amazing beginning, the most amazing end. And the two are fairly close together. But boy, is it packed with the most amazing teaching.

He begins by giving to us the recipe for blessedness, for true happiness in our lives. And what he says is really quite arresting and quite shocking in many ways.

[2 : 19] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. And so he goes on. He goes on to speak about righteousness.

People were forever trying to achieve righteousness before God. And they were trying to live such good lives. And they were looking at the Pharisees, thinking that they were the ones who really they should be modeling their lives on.

And Jesus says to them, you think they're righteous? Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees, you'll never see the kingdom of God. He goes on to encourage them to enjoy real communion.

He tells them that every time that they go into their room to shut the door. And as they do so, to realize that they are in the presence of God. And that that God they can call upon as their Father who is in heaven.

And assures them that that Father in heaven knows their very needs before they even come to ask. In the sermon, he comes to the point where he stresses to them the need to get their lives, if you like, in order.

[3 : 28] And to have the right priorities in life. He tells them you're bothered about this, that and the other. But please seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. And all these other things will be added to you.

He exposes something of the nature of hypocrisy. And the ugliness of having a judgmental spirit. He brings to them, some would say, even a bit of humor.

He's saying, you're so busy looking at the speck in your brother's eye. And you've got this huge plank coming out of your own eye. He goes on to speak about the freeness of the gospel.

And yet also the demands of the gospel. He's saying, ask, seek, you'll find. But it's a demanding gospel as well. That it really should control your life.

He goes on to warn about error. About nominal preachers who make nominal profession and so on. And then he comes to the end where he urges a real response to all that he has said.

[4 : 30] What he speaks about doing and fulfilling his words in your life. And being like the wise man who would build his house upon the rock and so on.

And so he goes through this whole sermon. It's the most stunning thing. And now he comes to the end of the sermon. And when he comes to the end of the sermon, he's met with silence.

But it's the silence of astonishment. Because people knew that having heard Jesus, they had just experienced something that was quite unique.

Today what I want us to look at is this unique experience that these people experienced. And we're going to look at just a few things.

First of all, that they had encountered a unique person. A unique person. Jesus in this sermon doesn't give a lengthy kind of diatribe as to who he is.

[5 : 40] Yet in the sermon, he tells us exactly who he is. He presents himself as no one else could do. No one else would dare to do.

Because in the sermon, he presents himself as the Messiah. Chapter 5, verse 17. He speaks about the law and the prophets. And he says that he comes not to abandon the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them.

He is saying the law, the prophets, they were all pointing to someone. They were pointing to me. Because I am the Messiah, he is saying.

I am the savior of the people. I am the deliverer of the kingdom. You can imagine to the Jewish ears that were listening to him.

They would say this is an extraordinary claim. I am the one who fulfills the law and the prophets.

And here I am standing before you now.

[6 : 46] And I am preaching to you. But not just the Messiah. He describes himself as the Lord. He speaks about how there will be a day coming when people will be saying to him, Lord, Lord, did we not do this?

Did we not do that? In your name. This very title, Lord, it's a title that speaks of priority. It's a title that speaks of supremacy. It's a title that speaks of power.

And he is presenting himself as the one who is to be followed. The one who is to be obeyed. The one whose very name can cast out demonic forces.

This is what he is saying. He says, I am the Messiah. The one who fulfills the law and the prophets. And I come to you as the one who is the Lord. Who has all the power and authority in heaven and in earth.

And then he goes on to speak of himself as the judge. The one with whom we have to do. He speaks about how he is the one who ultimately will come to that point where people stand before him.

[7 : 56] And he will say, either sort of come and be with me or depart from me. Again, you have this in chapter 7, verse 23. The one to whom we all must give an account. The one who will decide the ultimate destination and fate of every man, woman and boy and girl.

The judge of all the earth. He speaks of himself as being the son. Again, chapter 7, verse 21. He speaks of God as being my father.

The will of my father. Do you remember this is coming in the back of chapter 3, chapter 4. Chapter 3 in John's gospel. What you have is Jesus being baptized in the river Jordan by John.

Do you remember the heavens open and it's like the spirit of God comes down as if it were a dove. And then there's this voice from heaven that says, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

And from there Jesus goes out into the desert. And there he's tempted by the devil. And do you remember what the devil keeps saying to him, if you are the son of God. If you are.

[9 : 03] And so Jesus comes through these two experiences. With this assurance in his heart and soul that he is none other than the very son of God. The son of the father in heaven.

And therefore it is with confidence and assurance as he preaches. He speaks about my father. And the will of my father in heaven. But you know, the claim that Jesus makes here.

It's not just that he is the Messiah. And the Lord. And the judge. And the son. He makes the claim here, subtle though it may be. That he is God.

Because he speaks of doing the will of my father. And doing and hearing his sins as being one and the same thing.

It really is the subtle claim of deity. He is saying, as he said elsewhere, I and the father am one. And the people who are listening to him.

[10:05] They're well aware of the claims he is making. They are well aware of all the things that he is threading through this sermon. C.S. Lewis, well known writer.

Wrote a number of books that was very much presenting the case for Christianity. Apologetic if you like for the Christian faith. And he says that sometimes people will look at Jesus.

And what they'll do is they'll admire him as a great leader. And as a moral teacher. And that's enough. But he says this. A man who was merely a man.

And said the sort of things that Jesus said. Would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level of a man. Who said that he was a poached egg.

Or else he would be a devil of hell. You can make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God. Or else a madman or something worse.

[11:09] You can shut him up as a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon. Or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense.

About him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. That's where that phrase that is often quoted comes from.

Liar, lunatic or Lord. Because Jesus had to be one of those three. He either was a bad man and was telling us untruths. Or a madman and was just making the whole thing up.

Or else he was who he said he was. And we should bow before him. And worship him as our Lord and as our God. Jesus preached as a unique person.

The one who was the Messiah. The Lord, the judge, the son. The one who himself was God in the flesh. The second thing we see here is that he was a unique preacher.

[12:21] Jesus as he preached was different to anything else. That the people had ever heard before. And they had heard lots of preaching. They had heard the scribes and the Pharisees teaching and preaching in the synagogue.

And in various other places too. They had even heard some of them heard John the Baptist. And the Baptist to himself was a fantastic orator and a powerful speaker. But when they heard Jesus. It was something quite unique. Because Jesus had a different consciousness. When we think of the self-consciousness of Jesus as he was preaching.

What was it like for him? Well he preached as the one who knew that he was the Messiah. The Lord, the judge, the son. That he was God. How different it is for everyone else.

When I come and preach to you even here today. I am very self-conscious. Very self-conscious. Because I know I've preached in both churches before.

[13:25] And a number of years ago. And I imagine that perhaps some of you are sitting there and thinking. My. He's fair put on the weight. Or I'm sure his hair was darker the last time he was here.

That's what Petrie has done to me. But you're self-conscious sometimes of how you look and how you appear. But that's not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is the consciousness of what you have.

Or what's in your own heart and mind. The consciousness you have of your own failings and flaws. The consciousness you have of your own sin. As you seek to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not have these things. He was not self-conscious about his look. He was not self-conscious about any sin. But he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. And there's a different conviction. A different conviction. He was convinced as to the absolute truth and the importance of the message he was preaching.

[14:32] No matter how convincing any preacher you have ever heard speak to is. I do not believe that there is a single one that has not had at times moments of doubts and questions in their own heart and soul.

Even while preaching the word. As we preach. We often have to ask ourselves. Do I believe what I say I believe? Do I believe there is a heaven?

Do I believe there is a hell? Do I believe that a soul without Christ will be lost for all eternity? Do I believe that every man, woman and child is a sinner that needs to know the Lord Jesus Christ?

Do I believe these things? It may sound a bit strange to say it. Jesus did not believe these things. It's not that he believed in heaven or believed in hell.

It's not that he believed that everyone was a sinner and needed to know him as a saviour. Jesus knew. He knew there was a heaven. Knew there was a hell.

[15 : 41] Knew that every man, woman and child needed to have him as their saviour. No reservation. No doubts. And with that conviction he preached to those who listen.

Different consciousness. Different conviction. Different compassion. I don't know if you've ever noticed but the beginning of chapter 5 tells us in many ways the motivation for Christ preaching this sermon.

It says he saw the crowd. He saw the crowd. Went up to the mountains where he sat down. And then his disciples came to him.

And then he began to preach. Christ truly cares. Christ truly loves. He knows the awfulness of a soul being lost.

Christ. And he knows the wonder of a soul being saved. And because of the great love with which he loves us. He preaches with this incredible compassion.

[16 : 53] It is truly from the heart. And you and I know what a difference that makes. You think of preachers that you have heard that preach from the heart where you can tell it means something to them.

It has a bigger impact upon you. Well think of what it was like to hear Jesus preach. When it truly came from the very depth of his heart. For this is the Christ who so loved us.

He even came to give himself for us. He preached with a different compassion. And he preached with a different calling. To everyone that came before Jesus.

They came with a certain calling. The prophets were called of God. And when they came. They came and they delivered their message. And they said. Thus says the Lord.

The scribes believed that they had a certain calling. And they would come. And they would sit with the word. And they would teach what the word of God was saying. By their understanding of it.

[17 : 56] But when Jesus comes. Jesus comes and he says. You have heard it said. But I say to you. It is not thus says the Lord.

But I say to you. He has a mandate. To preach and to teach. So it is not given from another. He has the authority to do so.

In his own right. And you come into the New Testament. You see the same thing. Look through the epistles. What do you see? Paul. How does he describe himself? An apostle of Jesus Christ.

James. The servant of God. And of the Lord Jesus Christ. Simon Peter. A servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Jude. The servant of Jesus Christ.

John. The revelation of Jesus Christ. But this man. Jesus Christ. A different calling. And that is what makes him a unique preacher.

[18 : 58] A different consciousness. A different conviction. A different compassion. And a different calling. A unique person. Unique preacher. And therefore unique power.

We are told that. When the people heard him. They were astonished. It is actually a strong word. It is a word that means. Almost dumbfounded.

And we are told. They were dumbfounded. At his teaching. At his doctrine. They are dumbfounded. At perhaps the content. Of the sermon. We have already seen. How full.

And rich it was. In its teaching. But to be honest. When you look at it. There is little in the sermon. That was new. Much of what Jesus taught. Had to be found.

In the Old Testament. Blessed are the meek. For they will inherit in the earth. It is in the book of Psalms. Stuff about the fatherhood of God. It is threaded throughout. The Old Testament. The teaching on materialism.

[19 : 53] And priorities. And so on. It is threaded throughout. The Old Testament. What was different then? Well partly. As we have said. The compassion. With which he preached. But also.

The emphasis. The clarity. You see. The scribes. The Pharisees. When they were teaching. And preaching. They had the wrong emphasis. They were focusing on.

The trivial. They were focusing on. The kind of. Minute details. And they weren't really. Getting to the heart. Of what. Was the message. That was coming from heaven.

They weren't. Preaching. And speaking with clarity. There was confusion. Jesus was even saying. You go around the world. To make. Some kind of disciple. And you turn them into.

Twice the son of hell. That you are. It was strong words. But Jesus gets straight. To the point. And the things. That are important. So it is in that way. They are astonished. At the emphasis.
[20 : 50] And the clarity. With which he preached. But it was more than that. It was the sheer. The power of it. The authority of it. Never a man. Spoke. Like this man.

He had an arresting authority. That just couldn't. Be ignored. Do you remember. The time when Jesus. With. With the. Disciples. In the boat. And a storm blew up.
And they are. Afraid for their lives. And Jesus. Stands up. And he simply. Tells the wind. And the waves. To be still. And they are. And it is like.
The disciples. Look at each other. And are saying. What manner of man. Is this. Even the wind. And the waves. Obey him. Do you remember. The encounter he had.
With the Samaritan woman. At the well. And as he speaks to her. He seems to have. This extraordinary insight. So that he. As he speaks to her. Is able to recount to her.
[21 : 46] Her whole life. And she goes off. To her village. And she is saying. Come. See this man. That told me. Everything. That I ever did. He has an authority.

And an insight. That was really. Quite unique. That was experienced. Over and over again. By the people he encountered. And certainly was. The experience of those.
That heard him preach. On this occasion. They are saying. What kind of man is this? We have never heard anything. Like this. It has got a power. And an insight. Like we have never really. Encountered before. It made listening. Compulsive. And it made response. Wise. And this same Jesus.
Continues. To speak. Through his word. By his spirit. Have you heard the voice. Of Jesus. Softly.
[22 : 42] Pleading with your heart. Have you heard. His presence. Glorious. As he draws your soul. Apart. With a love.

That's so true. And loyal. Love divine. That ever flows. From a savior. Righteous. Royal. And a cross. That mercy shows.
Have you heard. The voice of Jesus. Granting peace. And pardon. Pure. Father. Have you felt. The balm. Of Calvary.
Binding all your wounds. Secure. Was there ever. Such salvation. Was there ever. Care like this. See. The savior's. Grief. And passion.
Grace. And mercy's. Gentle kiss. Have you heard. The savior. The savior calling. All to leave. And follow him. Have you felt. His person drawing.
[23 : 35] With compulsion. Lives to win. Hearken. To his invitation. To the music. Of God's grace. Like the peace. Of God's salvation.

Full your soul. And love. Embrace. Have you heard. The voice of Jesus. Softly.
Pleading. With your heart. Do you know what. The scripture says. It says. Today. If you. Hear his voice.
Then harden. Not. Your hearts. Because. Today. Is the day. Of salvation. What you have. Before you. Today. What you have. Before you. Any day. That you come. To church. As somebody. Who has. Failed. And flawed. But behind that.
[24 : 31] There is the word. And the spirit. Of Christ. That speaks. To you. Do you hear. His voice. And if you do.

Harden. Not. Your heart. Today. Is a great day. It is a day. Of salvation. And I plead. With you. As you hear.
Jesus calling. All to leave. And follow him. That you just simply. Do so. That you get up. And you follow. It is a good call.