

Love that will not let us go

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[0 : 00] Let us then turn to God's word in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 21, and reading at verse 33. Sorry, 33.

Matthew 21 at verse 33. Hear another parable.

There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

When the season for the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants more than at first, and they did the same to them. Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son.

[1 : 13] But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance. And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

When, therefore, the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? They, that is, the scribes and Pharisees, they said to him, He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who give him the fruits in their seasons.

And Jesus said to them, Have you never read the scriptures? The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on the stone will be broken to pieces.

And when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

[2 : 29] And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds because they held him to be a prophet. And again, Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

Again, he sent other servants, saying, Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, My oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready.

Come to the wedding feast. But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.

The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

Go, therefore, to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. And those servants who went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found both bad and good.

[3 : 50] So the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.

And he said to him, Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. And the king said to the attendants, Bind him, hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few are chosen.

Amen. And the Lord will add his blessing to that further reading of his own word.

Let us then continue praising God and this time in Psalm 51, let's sing Psalms version. Psalm 51.

Psalm 51. Oh my God, have mercy on me.

In your steadfast love I pray. In your infinite compassion, my transgressions wipe away, cleanse me from iniquity, wash my sin away from me.

[5 : 00] To the end of the verse marked 15, six stanzas to God's praise. O my God, have mercy on me.

In your steadfast love I pray. In your infinite compassion, my transgressions wipe away.
Let me from iniquity, wash my sin away from me.

For I know my own transgressions, I can see my sinful plight.
You, you, only I've offended and done evil in your sight.

[6 : 21] So your words are verified and your verdict justified.

From my birth I have been sinful, Such the nature I've received.
Sinful from my first beginning, in my mother's womb conceived.
Through you, for in my heart, wisdom to me you impart.
Cleanse with this, purify me. I'll be whiter than the snow.

[7 : 40] Let the bones you crushed be joyful. May I joy and gladness know.

From my failure hide your face, brought out all my wickedness.
Lord, create a pure heart in me, and a steadfast mind renew.
To live not take your spirit from me, cast me not away from you.
Give me back the joy I had. Keep my willing spirit glad.

[8 : 58] Then I'll teach your way to sinners. Rebels will turn back to you.

Free me from blood guilt, my Savior. God holds merciful and true.

Then I'll praise your righteousness. Teach my lips your name to bless.

Jesus. I'd like us to turn once again to the second passage of scripture that we read. Gospel of Matthew and chapter 21.

Reading at verse 43. Matthew 21 at 43. Matthew 43. Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

[10 : 32] Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

The Lord here is in Jerusalem. And it's the last week of his life.

He rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. And in a similar way, we can say this is our Palm Sunday before your communion services next week.

And so in this last week of the Lord's life, he is a man possessed, a man desperately wanting to try and proclaim one final message to the people around him.

He knows the antagonism. He knows the continual debate he is having with the leaders of the people. And he does on numerous occasions try and win over the chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees.

[11 : 50] He eventually doesn't succeed, but that doesn't stop him trying to win them over to the gospel. At what's called today Dominus Fleuit, the place where Jesus wept, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the city down that hill from the Mount of Olives.

And Luke tells us that the Lord was riding into Jerusalem on that Sunday, the Palm Sunday, the Sunday before which he was to be crucified.

And he's overwhelmed by the vision of the Jerusalem that is going to be destroyed utterly and totally. He sees before him the destruction that is going to be Jerusalem's inheritance for rejecting him.

After the Romans have finished destroying that city in 1870. And he says to them, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you under my wings as a hen would gather a brood. But you would, but you would not. You willed not to come to me. You willed not to hear my words. You willed not to come under the knowledge of the gospel.

[13 : 28] You know, in this chapter of parables, the Lord tells two, in different chapters, he tells two parables that have the same theme. There's a common thread of thought going through both of them.

The tendency of men and women to reject God's overtures toward them. Not just once or twice, but time and again and again and again.

If you think back throughout the Old Testament scriptures, we see how often God turned to his people. How often during the period of the judges, the Lord would come and rescue them from the oppression of the people.

From the oppression of the nations around them. And they would go back after a short period of repentance, a short period of worshipping God. They would go back worshipping the gods of the peoples who surrounded them.

And so here, we have here the Lord uttering this awesome statement. I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you. It will be taken away from Israel.

[14:36] And will be given to a people producing his fruits. He's speaking here about the parable of the farmer and the tenants. And he's saying, you ought to give the fruits to God, the farmer, the owner of the land.

Well, I'm going to, through God, be sent out to a people who will return praise to God and honour to God.

Because they receive the gospel that will be proclaimed to them. And so here, in this first parable, we have a landowner, in verse 33, who leases out his vineyards to tenants and goes to another country.

He does everything. We're told here that he put a fence around, he plants a vineyard, he puts a fence around it, he digs a winepress, and he leases it to tenants.

All the tenants have to do is to gather the fruits. In the same way as the gospel, as is applied to us. He brings the gospel to us.

[15:47] The Lord has sent in the Old Testament dispensation. He sent prophet after prophet, proclaiming the kingdom of God. And the way back to God. I think especially of this prophet Isaiah we read of.

How often that prophet, or the prophecy of Isaiah is known as the gospel in the Old Testament. And there we have that prophecy of Isaiah speaking again and again to people.

Return to me, and I will heal you. Come to me, and I will bless you and forgive you. And again and again they would not. In the same way here as these tenants refuse to give honor and the due to the owner of the vineyard.

We're told at harvest time he sends his servants to the tenants. He sends them to get his share of the fruit. The tenants take his servants.

They beat some. They killed others and they stoned others. Eventually he sends his son. And even the son they killed.

[16:57] They killed a prophecy by Christ himself of what they will eventually do to him. When they feel that Christ has taken over their place and they want rid of him.

In the second parable we have the same theme going through. The king is arranging a feast.

He gave a wedding feast for his son and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast. This is not some surprise invitation.

This is an invitation that has been given by the king at some previous date. Saying to them on this date everything will be ready and you are to come.

This invitation is to you. My gracious invitation for you to come to the feast in the same way. For each one of us we are told.

[17:57] Here we have no continuing city. Let us seek a city whose builder and maker is God. Whose foundation is sure. Let us seek him. And we are told that again and again.

The gospel table is spread out for us and we reject it again and again. And so like these guests who are invited. But they would not come.

He sent other servants saying tell those who are invited. See I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened calves. And everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.

But they paid no attention at all. You think that a landowner whose servants and even his own son had been killed and stoned.

And a king whose blatant invitation is ignored. Would have a very harsh response towards those who have been invited.

[19:02] In the same way as when we hear the gospel. When we reject it. We would think that the Lord would cast off. As it was in the days of Noah.

When he saw the world that it was evil. And he only saved Noah and his family. And he would have been killed. Yet the promise that God made at that time.

The promise that he made that he would never again destroy the world. By flood or by any other general destruction. Still holds true today. He is long suffering.

He is slow to wrath. He is full of tender mercy. A God who reaches out to us again and again. And so here also in the parable. The Lord is foreshadowing the way God is dealing with us. In the message of the gospel. What astonishing love and forbearance.

[20 : 01] And what determination by God to save the people for himself. Even those of us who have been brought to know saving faith.

How often we rejected that faith. In our unconverted days. What it took the Lord to bring us from darkness to light. From the kingdom of Satan. Into the kingdom of God's own dear son. How he had to wrestle with us. And bring us to that place. Even a soul. Why are you kicking against the bricks? How often would we have kicked against the words of God.

The words of God. And the entreaties of God towards us. But no price is too high for God. To redeem his children.

And no effort is too great. Because we are his. And nothing shall ever separate us. From the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

[21 : 02] God will do anything to redeem his own. And God's greatest desire. Is not that men and women.

Should be amazed. At the wonders of the creation. Amazed at what has been achieved. In technology. In science.

And the wonders of the world. Which we live in here. In the 21st century. God's greatest desire. Is that we would be amazed. By his powers.

Of creating. You and me. And the plan. Of redemption. That he has made with his son. The scriptures tell us.

How. God makes his. Possession. Of mankind. Transparent to us. In the scriptures. He loves us. With an everlasting love. Noah saw it. At the time of the floods.

[21 : 59] He saw it in the clouds. He saw it. When he saw the bow in the clouds. God's own sign to himself. When I see the bow. I will pass over. I will never again. In the same way. He loves us. He loves us.

But with an everlasting love. Noah saw it. At the time of the floods. He saw it. He saw it. When he saw the bow in the clouds. God's own sign to himself. When I see the bow.

I will pass over. Not a sign to Noah. Or to his descendants. Or to us today. What God says. When I see the bow. I will pass over. I will never again.

In the same way. When he says to the children of Egypt. When I see the blood. I will pass over. When he sees the blood of Christ. On us. He will pass over.

He will not destroy. No matter what. Abraham felt God's determination.

[22 : 56] To fulfill his promise to him. That his children. Would fill the earth. As the sand on the seashore. And as the stars. In the heavens.

After years and years of waiting. A child is born. Isaac. And then after. Isaac. There was Jacob. And the children of Israel. And the nations. Multiplied. And Joseph. And Joseph. Experienced it. In prison. It didn't seem like it. At the time. But Joseph. Experienced this. That the Lord. Watched over him. Cared for him. Even.

Having to deal with the. The. Spitefulness. And the hatred. Of Joseph's brothers. Towards him. Yet. The Lord works all things. For his own glory.

[23 : 54] And for his own good. And uses Joseph. As a deliverer. For his own people. Pharaoh was subjected to it. When he thought. He would. He would.

Keep the Israelites. Prisoners there. In Israel. He was subjected to God's. Determination. To free his people. Let my people go. God says. To Pharaoh.

Through Moses. And when he would not. Well. Pharaoh experienced. God's determination. His country was destroyed. His people were destroyed. His armies were destroyed.

God. Listen to what. Moses. Said to the Israelites.

And be amazed. He says. Nothing. Like this. Has ever happened before. Look at the past. Long before you were ever born.

[24 : 52] Go all the way back. To when God. Made humanity on this earth. Look from one end of. Heaven. To the other. Nothing.

Like this. Has ever been heard of. No other people. Has ever heard God speak. From a fire and lived. But you have. No other God. Has ever taken for himself.

One nation out of another. But your God. Did this. For you. In Egypt. Right before your eyes. He did it. With signs.

And wonders. And mighty deeds. By his. Great power. And by his strength. Moses. His message then.

And biblical teaching. Throughout the scriptures. Are the same today. God. Will change the world. To reach us. God.

[25 : 51] He is. He is. Relentless. He is. As. One month. Entitled a book. The hound of heaven. Searching out.

And seeking us. Until. He eventually finds us. Listen. Listen. As God. Pleads.

His love for us. How shall I give you up? How shall I. Deliver you? My heart. Yearns for you.

I am the holy one. Of Israel. In the midst of you. The psalms are full. Of God's love for us. As the rest of the scriptures are. Do we.

Really believe that? Do we really believe. In Lord's. God's. Love for us. And determination. To save us. That God.

[26 : 51] Is near us. In. Every situation. Whether it's. In our cars. In our offices. Or our bedrooms. He's there. He's not. Living in some far off galaxy.

That no one. Knows about. He's. Not like. Baal. Who is. In the test. Between. Isaiah.

And the prophets. There. He's not sleeping. Or. On a journey. He's very new. He's involved. In. Every detail. Of our.

Our daily lives. He's. Perforated. The scene of time. And come. To this earth. He became. The incarnate God. Who lived. In this world.

Experienced. All. The. Deprivation. That this world. Had to direct. Upon. Upon. Upon. For us. And for our.

[27 : 47] Salvation. And he says. I will. Never leave you. I will never forsake you. Nothing. Shall. Ever. Separate you. From the love.

Of God. Which is in Christ. Jesus. If we are. Christ's. We are. Christ's. He loves us. For who we are. And what are we? We are his. That's the only reason. He loves us. For who we are. We are.

His. It was his love. That sent Joseph. To Egypt. That raised up. Moses. We are. We are. We are. His. It was his love.

That sent Joseph. To Egypt. That raised up. Moses. And he said. We are. We are. We are. We are. We are. We are.

[28 : 42] We are. And he. Dawits. in Pharaoh's. the Hayen. That vist. Israel. into a nation. That sent.

I. And the prophets. The rapt. In arrow. Fres. In frail. We are. That went.

To Gethsemane. That went. Eventually. To the cross. And Golgotha. At one time, David was so overwhelmed by God's love that he says, Lord God, this is not normal.

God has said to him, when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you and I will establish his kingdom forever.

No doubt David thought he was speaking about Solomon or his children, but he was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. He sets up his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be to me my son.

[29 : 55] Then David went in, sat before the Lord and said, who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house? And yet this is a small thing in your sight.

You have done all these great things to make your servant known. Therefore, you are great, O Lord God.

For there is none like you, nor is there any God beside you, according to all that our ears have heard.

As I said earlier on, the scriptures are full of God's love and mercy and grace towards his children. But then God's love is not normal, is it? It goes beyond the normal. Beyond anything we could ever imagine in our own lives and in our own relationships. It's not normal to love an adulterer and a murderer as David was.

[31 : 02] It's not normal to love a people, children of Israel, who worshipped idols more than they worshipped God.

But God refused to give up on Israel. Think of King Solomon, who during his life departed, and we can read of his experience in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Think of Manasseh, who came to the throne when he was but 12 years of age. He made it his mission to destroy every reform that his father, King Hezekiah, had accomplished. Manasseh, remember, was born during the last 15 years of Hezekiah's life, the 15 extra years he'd been given by God. And Hezekiah is born during that time.

And he makes it his mission to do a great deal of evil. Hezekiah had destroyed shrines and pagan worship. Manasseh rebuilt them.

[32 : 06] He desecrated the temple by putting idols in it. And he even sacrificed his own sons to the god Molech. Manasseh filled Jerusalem with blood from one end to the other.

And it is said that the streets of Jerusalem ran with the blood of his people. But late in Manasseh's reign, he was captured and he was imprisoned.

Humiliated, powerless. He began to pray, confessing his sins, seeking forgiveness.

And the Lord heard Manasseh's prayer. And he freed him and returned him to his throne in Jerusalem. He would have been about the Lord not letting us go.

The love that will not let you go will not let me go. Whatever, he will always, always hold us, always underneath are the everlasting arms.

[33 : 24] Love that on Friday would take him to the cross.

The cross that you will remember again this next Lord's Day. All Old Testament history points towards it.

And all future history depends upon it. The greatest tragedy ever seen is that not Christ on the cross, but man rejecting Christ on that cross.

The scribes and the Pharisees, as he preached these parables, knew that he was speaking about them.

Speaking of them who had ignored sign after sign. God had come to them in Christ Jesus and they had refused to acknowledge him. They asked for signs and he gave them signs.

[34 : 37] He healed the blind and the deaf and the halt and the lame. He raised the dead. He fed thousands as he displayed his power.

Yet none of those signs were sufficient. Even as we think of the rich man and Lazarus. And Abraham says, Even though someone rose from the dead, they would not believe him.

And the same is true today. Christ risen from the dead. He has given ample proof of a resurrection during those times after he was crucified and dead and buried.

And today he sits at God's right hand, a prince and a savior. He's patient.

He's long-suffering, slow to wrath. But if he refused to listen, he says, you are judging yourselves as unworthy of having eternal life.

[35 : 50] The same thing will be true the next Lord's Day. The time comes for the elements to be served. There will be some who will absent themselves from the table.

No one's judging you. You're judging yourselves. The invitation will be made throughout these coming days to make a profession.

But you are judging yourselves to be unworthy of the kingdom of heaven, to be unworthy of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. May it not be so.

You know, there's a painting by a man called Holman Hunt. There's a painting of a door, a strong wooden door surrounded by ivory.

And you can see both sides of the door. There's a man on the outside knocking. and there's a figure on the inside.

[36 : 53] And as you look at that painting, it's a wonderful painting and you can admire it. But unless you know the secret of that painting, you won't understand it.

But it's when you're told the secret you begin to understand. There's no handle on the outside. The only handle is on the inside.

of that door. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone open that door unto me, I will lend it in unto him and sup with him and he with me.

God comes, God stops, God knocks. but we must open the door.

We must let him in. In the Lord's Sermon of the Mount, there are examples there of this whole aspect of our own responsibility.

[38 : 03] ask, and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

We have to do the asking, we have to do the seeking, we have to do the knocking.

There is a responsibility placed upon each and every one of us as we make our lives a long life journey. You know, I came across recently a hymn written by Robert Murray McChain. When this passing world is done, when I sunk that shining sun, when we stand with Christ on high, looking all life's history, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then how much I owe. When I stand before your throne, dressed in beauty not my own, when I see you as you are, love you with unsinning heart, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe. [39 : 32] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.