

God's Incredible Love for Us

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn once again to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 21, and reading at verse 42.

Matthew 21, verse 42. Jesus said to them, Have you never read in 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.

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

That's an awful sentence to be placed upon any people. And yet we can see why the Lord is making such a statement to the scribes and Pharisees.

[1 : 21] Because again and again, they would debate with him and dispute with him about his teaching, and they even want to question his authority.

See, the Jews always had to have an authority to become teachers of the law. They had to go to schools, sit under their professors, sit under their teachers, and when they would be called to the Sanhedrin or called to places where they would serve the Church of God in Israel, they would carry with them a letter of authority that they were licensed or be enabled by the Sanhedrin to preach and proclaim in the synagogues of that time.

And that's really what they're asking here. The Lord has, on the previous day, gone into the temple, and he's cleansed the temple. He's gone in there saying, you have made my father's house a den of thieves, and it should be a house of prayer.

And they are furious. They want to know who's given them authority to do these things, and they want to question why he's doing these things, and what authority he has, as though there's some sort of human authority he's working on.

And the Lord tries to tell them, my authority is not of men. My authority is from God. And so that's why he is in conflict with the men and the rulers of his age.

[2 : 59] He is from heaven. They are from men. He is from God, wanting to lead men to God. And they are from men, wanting to govern men according to their own rules and traditions.

And that's why there is this conflict again and again, as we have in the Sermon on the Mount. You have heard it said of old time, what to do, their laws and traditions and the minutiae of all the regulations that they had enacted.

The Lord says, no, that's not the way, but I say unto you. And he's claiming there the authority to speak as of God. Even as the Old Testament prophet said, thus says the Lord.

So the Lord Jesus Christ is saying those things, but he's saying it on his own authority because he himself is God. Now in this last week of the Lord's life, he is like a man possessed, a man deliberately wanting to proclaim one final message.

Remember as the Lord came into Jerusalem on that journey, he took in on a donkey, on a colt of the Anas.

[4 : 18] And as he came down, he saw Jerusalem spread out before him. If he were to go to Jerusalem, there's a place called Dominus Fleuit, which overlooks Jerusalem.

And there they've built a church or a place of worship where people can gather and remember what the Lord did. And in that place, tradition has it that he looked over Jerusalem.

And he said these very remarkable words. He says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you under my wings as a hen gathers her brood or her chickens, but you would not.

They willed not to be gathered. They wanted to go their own way. They wanted to do their own things. They didn't want to be governed by the laws of God and by the precepts of God.

They had their own ideas as to how God should be worshipped. They had their own ideas as to the traditions that should be uppermost in the minds and the hearts of the people.

[5 : 27] And so that conflict came to grow more and more in their experience. And so, why is the Lord weeping?

Why is he saying, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I would have gathered you as a hen, would have gathered your chickens? Well, he's weeping in the knowledge that the Jerusalem he's looking at is in a short year, a few short years, going to be destroyed.

The Romans are going to come and ransack that city. Not one stone is going to be left upon another. He is seeing the future and he's seeing the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, everything that he himself counts precious because it's the place where his heavenly father resided and where he loved most in the whole of Israel.

That place he saw as a prophet does of all that was going to happen. And so in this chapter of parables, the Lord tells two that have one common thought, one common vein running through both of them.

The tendency of men and women not to reject God only once or twice, but continually. Every time God approaches them, every time God makes his will known that he would have them to be his own people, they reject him and they turn away.

[7 : 04] The first parable, as we read, speaks of that landowner. The landowner, we're told, who built a vineyard, who put a fence around it and he let it out to tenants and he goes away.

And the tenants are supposed to take the fruit of that land and give it to him in due time. So when the servants of the landowner go back there, they are turned away.

At harvest time, he sends his servants to the tenants to get his share of the fruit. But the tenants took his servants. They beat one.

They killed another. And we're told, they stoned others of them as well. The second parable tells of the king.

That's at the beginning of chapter 22. Tells of a king who was going to make a feast for his son. And it's a wedding feast.

[8 : 09] And no doubt the people knew when the wedding feast was going to take place. And so when the feast is ready, the king sends out his servants again to tell them that the feast is now ready, come to the wedding feast.

And we're told that they all with one accord began to make excuse. And some went away to their land, some went away to their property, and they all refused to come.

You think a landowner whose servants had been stoned and killed and a king whose invitation had been so blatantly rejected would receive a severe response.

But no, that's not what God does. God's desire is that he wants his people to be with him, to enjoy his presence.

And both the landowner and the king in these parables send more servants. And the word is just not more numerically, but more noble.

[9 : 25] Those who would be more highly respected. Those who would perhaps figure in the minds of the tenants and the invited guests in a more dignified way.

But these also, they rejected or they took and they killed and they stoned. We'd long since have given up any attempt to try and bring these tenants and these guests to any sense of wisdom. But no price is too high for God to redeem his children. I told that story earlier on about the parents who lost a child.

Just for a few moments. Well, that's the way God is with us, his children. He'll do anything to redeem you and to redeem me.

In Romans, Paul tells us, nothing shall ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Not principalities, not powers, not death, no life, no anything else in the whole creation will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

[10 : 46] And although this text in verse 43 seems so laden with doom it really speaking to those who would examine themselves as to where they are.

What their relationship with God is. Are we listening to him? Are we hearing his desire for us? Are we beginning to hear what God the Lord is saying that he is going to do anything for us?

The scriptures tell us how God makes his position regarding mankind apparent time and time again.

If you go back to the days of Noah, Noah saw it after the flood when the clouds parted for the first time and there was a rainbow. And God says, when I see the bow I will pass over.

The covenant is on his part. The cost is his. He will never again destroy the world by water. And when I see the bow I will remember.

[11 : 58] I will remember what I have done. I will remember what I have promised. And I will never destroy you again. Abraham felt the determination of God in his own experience.

When Sarah bore Isaac. A man and a woman well past the age of childbearing. And yet the promise of God is brought into effect.

The promise of God that he had planned before the world was. Yet Abraham had to wait many years in his own experience but wait until God's time was ready. Joseph experienced it.

Experienced it in his youth as he dreamed dreams. Experienced God's protection and care even while in prison. Experienced it when he was made governor of the land of Egypt and became the deliverer of his own people even his own family as they came to Egypt for grain.

Pharaoh was also subject to God's determination to save his people. When he said I will not let your people go God says let my people go.

[13 : 15] And Pharaoh says who is God that I shall obey him? Well Pharaoh discovered who God was. How much God was determined to save his people and bring them to the land that he had promised them.

Listen to what Moses says to the Israelites and be amazed at what he says. In Deuteronomy in chapter 4 he says nothing like this has ever happened before.

Look at the past long before you were even born. And go all the way back to when God made humans on earth and look from one end of heaven to the other.

Nothing like this has ever been heard of. No other people have 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 the Lord your God did this for you in Egypt. Right before your eyes he did it.

[14 : 26] With signs and wonders with wars and mighty deeds by his great power and his great strength.

Moses' message then and the whole teaching of the Bible today is the same. God will change the world to reach his people.

He is relentless. He is what one author called the hound of heaven pursuing us continually relentlessly in a determined way and he will never let us go.

You heard people quote those words the love that will never let us go. Well that's God's love. God's love in his son God's love towards us.

Listen as God pleads his love for us. How shall I give you up? How shall I deliver you O Israel? My heart yearns for you.

[15 : 35] I am the holy one of Israel in the midst of you. Do we really believe that God speaks in such terms with us or to us?

Do you always seem as someone who's far away? Someone who's only laid down rules and regulations that we should obey and we should walk in them. That's not what Christianity is about.

Christianity is not about rules and regulations the things we should do and we should not do.

Christianity is Christ. It's what he did. All that he accomplished for us and for our salvation.

The love of God manifests to us in Christ. Do we really believe that the Lord Jesus Christ and God his Father are new to us?

Whether in our cars or offices in our homes. He's there. He's always there. He's not living in some far-off galaxy.

[16 : 43] He's not someone who like a group of Christian believers once thought that he appears to be here. But he's really like a clockmaker who's wound up a clock and watching it run down from some far-away place.

He's not. He's perforated on the scene of time. He's come into this world. He's come to make himself known to us that we might be with him.

He's involved in every detail of our daily lives. He says, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.

Why? What's the reason that he will never leave us and forsake us? Well, because we are his.

In the same way those parents were seeking for that child because that child was theirs, so we are God's children. He will never leave us.

[17 : 51] He will never forsake us. He will do everything possible to bring us to himself. It was that love that sent Joseph into Egypt, although for Joseph at the time it didn't seem like that.

Yet when Joseph meets his brothers he can say, and what do you do who sold me into Egypt but God to prepare a deliverance for you.

It was that love that raised up Moses in Pharaoh's palace that built Israel into a nation that sent all the prophets and that wrapped himself in human flesh that took him to Gethsemane and took him eventually to the cross at Golgotha.

That is God's love. Not the love that people somehow imagine. Why doesn't God intervene? Why doesn't God stop all this happening?

Mankind has their own responsibility. Each one of us has our own responsibility for the way we live and act and behave. Yet again and again God comes over that great mound of provocation that we have erected between God and ourselves that sin.

[19 : 25] And he comes to us in love and deliverance. At one time David was so overwhelmed by God's love that he says Lord God this is not normal.

And he says that because of God's promise to him regarding the continuation of his kingship.

There will never cease to be one of your seed who shall sit on the throne of Israel. And that throne is still occupied and it's occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is what the Lord says to David.

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. I will be his father and he shall be my son.

If he commits iniquity, I will chastise him, but my mercy shall not depart from him. Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house?

[20 : 43] And yet this was a small thing in your sight. For your word's sake and according to your own heart, you have done all these great things to make your servant know them.

Therefore you are great, O Lord God, for there is none like you, nor is there any God beside you according to all that we have heard.

The sweet psalmist of Israel recognising all that he is and all his sinfulness and even at the end of his days, he can say, Although my life has not been as it should be, yet you have made a covenant with me.

the one that is sure and steadfast and everlasting. And so God's love is not normal.

It's not normal to love an adulterer and a murderer as David was. It's not normal to love people who will desire stone idols more than they desire God.

[22 : 03] But God refused to give up on Israel. Again and again, he came with prophets. Again and again, he overcame their apostasy.

Think of just one example. Think of Manasseh. Manasseh was the king of Hezekiah, a king who had ruled well for many, many years.

But Manasseh was only 12 years of age when he was made king. And Manasseh did everything he could to destroy the work of his father, Hezekiah.

Hezekiah had broken down all the high places, all the groves, destroyed all the idols. And yet what does Manasseh do? He restores idol worship. He restores the idols even to God's own house.

He even takes his children and offers them by fire to the god Molech. And although he reigned for 55 years, for the first 40 of those years, he was the most evil man that we can possibly have imagined.

[23 : 13] It's said that he made the streets of Jerusalem run with the blood of the innocent. But late in Manasseh's reign, he was captured and he was imprisoned.

He was humiliated and he was powerless. And it is then he began to pray. How often that happens. Think of Nebuchadnezzar after seven years living as an animal. Think of the name's gone, the one in the whale, the whale, who only began to pray.

Jonah only began to pray after he'd been swallowed by that whale and looking up to heaven, even from the belly of the whale, said, I will pay my vows to the Lord.

And the Lord released him. And so late in Manasseh's reign, he was captured and imprisoned. and the Lord heard Manasseh's pray and freed him and returned him to his throne in Jerusalem.

[24 : 22] It's this love that the Lord's describing in this last week of his time on the earth. Love that on Friday would take him to Gethsemane, would take him to the cross, would take him to that place

of dereliction where he feels his whole being is being rejected by his father.

All Old Testament history points towards this time. The future of creation depends upon that time. The greatest tragedy ever seen is man has rejected God. The greatest tragedy the world has ever come across is that man after God's continual desire for him rejects him and seeks after the gods of this world.

As the Lord speaks these parables the scribes and Pharisees know exactly who he's talking to. He's speaking about them. He's speaking about their rejection of God and they refused to let him in. They speak of God's coming to them in the prophets and even by his own son and they refused to accept God and to give themselves up to him.

[26 : 03] Speaking to those who had ignored sign after sign God had come to them and they refused to let him in. For that reason God speaks these most awesome words of verse 43.

Therefore I tell you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. One that as we sit under God's word having it preached to us so faithfully Lord's day after Lord's day even in weekdays whether we accept God's words whether we will turn to him in a day of mercy whether we will accept him as our Lord and our God for his patient and his long suffering slow to wrath but if we refuse to listen he says you are judging yourselves you are judging yourselves unworthy of having eternal life and of the kingdom of God it's not God who's judging ourselves to be unworthy the same way as those who don't sit at a Lord's table it's not a church or a session that is deeming you to be unworthy you deem yourself to be unworthy by separating yourself from the

Lord's people so here the Lord says you are deeming yourselves to be unworthy of having eternal life by equating the son of God with being a liar and a hypocrite and someone who's not really God but perhaps even as the scribes in the Pharisee said Beelzebub himself you know there's a picture by an artist called Holman Hunt and it's a picture with a puzzle in it it's a very famous picture it's a doorway that's covered by ivy secluded and there is a closed door and there's a figure on the outside raised raising his hand in knocking but there was a puzzle in that particular picture and you won't really understand what the puzzle is unless you're told there's no handle on the outside you have to open the door from the inside the words beneath the painting is behold

I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears that knock and opens the door I will come in with him and sup with him and he with me God knocks on the doors of our hearts of our lives but we have to let him in we have to accept him as our Lord and our God Robert Murray McChain had many writings but he was also a hymn writer and there's a couple of verses of one of his hymns I would like to quote when this passing world is done when has sunk the shining sun when we stand with Christ on high looking over 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 Lord love you with unsinning heart then Lord shall I fully know not till then how much I owe maybe each one of us in our own experience come to know how much we owe the Lord for all and that he has done for us let us then conclude our worship singing to God's praise in Psalm 145 and sing Psalms on page 190 at verse 17 Psalm 145 verse 17 the Lord is just and good in all his ways he shows his love to all that he has made the Lord is near to all who call on him to all who call in truth to him for aid to the end of the Psalm three stanzas to

[30 : 55] God's praise the Lord is just and good in all his ways he chose his land to all that he has made the Lord is near to all who call on him to all who call in truth to him for aid the hopes of those who fear in people feels he hears them cry and saves them from distress the Lord protects all those who love his name but stays all those who practice wickedness my lips will bring a sum of thanks to

God my mouth will speak forever in his praise let every creature magnify the Lord and place his holy name now and always and now may grace mercy and peace name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit one God rest on you and abide in you now and always amen