

Old Kings Highway II

Matthew 17 & 18

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Jesus is in the process of praying for us yesterday, today and tomorrow that we fail not, but rather succeed in knowing Him, not necessarily the things we accomplish, but the things in our heart that we would know God. Understanding this we will depart from the normal procedure today.

Geneva Catechism

This is what is found in the Geneva Catechism. A catechism is a foundation for the questions of faith in each group, whether they be Geneva from John Calvin or Westminster, Anglican Church, etc.

The first question was, *“What is the chief end to human life?”* The answer: *“to know God by Whom men were created.”* Pretty good answer. The Westminster short and long catechism asks, *“What is the chief end of man?”* The answer: *“the chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever,”* kind of the same question.

How do we enjoy God, anyway? By doing the same things every day? Or do you expect God to do something different every day of your life? I got up this morning and said, *“Good morning, honey!”* Cheryl says, *“Well I don’t know. I haven’t made that determination yet or not.”* I responded, *“Wrong answer. Every day God makes is new. And, every day God makes is full of surprises and adventure. We just have to find it.”* Those who are seeking God will find it and enjoy Him! Do you believe you can do that? In New York? In prison? According to Corrie Ten Boom’s testimony about her Nazi prison camp experience, anywhere you find yourself you can enjoy God.

Let’s turn to the gospel of Matthew we are studying now. The central theme is that TRUE religion is not about the traditions of men but it is about a relationship with our God. It reiterates the same theme and the first questions of all those catechisms; we need to enjoy a real God and not one who is made up artificially in any way. So, when I was an altar boy in the Episcopal Church, the Father would put on his vestments. The vestments were a spiritual garb, clothing that he would wear. He would wear a different one for every season of the Church. During Christmas and Easter there would be a red robe. During Advent and Lent there would be a purple for penance and preparation. Green for ordinary days. Etcetera.

When you put on these garments you thought you would somehow make yourself spiritual and communicate to yourself and to the world that you are different, outwardly. However, that is not what Matthew is talking about. It isn’t what you say or do outwardly. It is what’s going on in the inward man that

makes the difference. It is the same with God. If we are just looking at creation and glorifying creation, we've missed it. We are just looking at God's vestments, His creation. But He wants us to see His heart, His intent, and His purpose. That's what the gospel of Matthew is about and that is what true religion is about.

Let's review at the end of chapter sixteen where Peter makes the revelation that Jesus is the Christ. Up until this point everything was good to everybody listening. But at this juncture Jesus came to the realization that He was going to the cross and He began predicting it as something His men were not going to like. Peter put his arm around Jesus and told Him it wasn't going to happen. *"You have a very successful ministry here. We won't let anything happen to You."* (If you remember later on Peter tried to interfere with that very thing.) But now Jesus turned and said, *"Get behind Me, Satan. You are an offense to me! You are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men."*

This was a part of the temptation of Christ. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, *"Take this cup from Me if it is possible. If there is any other way, Father, make it happen."* And, of course there was no other way as we talked about it in communion today, but for the sacrifice of THE Lamb of God on the cross. Jesus knew that but the temptation came from Satan right here from His own disciple and He said to Himself, *"This cannot be from God."* Turning He addressed Satan, not Peter, *"That's a temptation that I'm not going to listen to."* Then He said to Peter, *"You are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men."*

Matthew 16 ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

There are going to be times when you will have to give up what you want for the good of what God wants for you and for His life in you. That all has to be couched, totally immersed in the will of the Holy Spirit.

²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

For everybody in the world is trying to find their life, trying to find success, the perfect career, the perfect job. How can I make a difference in this world? Congress is full of people who want to make a difference in this world. But the only way we Christians are going to make a difference in this world, in the eternal sense, is by giving our heart and ourselves over to the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, and in the Holy Spirit alone, can we find the will, the purpose and the intent of God.

I enjoy that. It is a joy in my heart when I respond to that. I know that it really doesn't matter if I make a mistake. If my heart and my intent is correct, God will work together for good all those things that are before me and that I have done. Amen. This is a cause for great joy in my life to KNOW the intent of God's heart. What a wonderful thing.

The Transfiguration of Christ

Chapter 17

The transfiguration of Christ is found when He was walking on the earth as a natural man and then transfigured into something much different, a spiritual person, totally and completely different.

Matthew 17 ¹ Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, . . .

So He was different. He was no longer like a human being.

² He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Well this is cool. Here is Jesus and He becomes this “ghostly” kind of super-creature before them. And then He is talking to people whom they recognize as Moses and Elijah! ! How did they know that? There were no photographs. There was something in their persona that they recognized or perhaps Jesus addressed them as such. Rather than ask them a particular question, Peter said

⁴ “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Isn’t that just like us?! Whenever we have a great experience in God, when God blesses us and we see things, we say, “That’s it! This is the place I want to stay forever!” A Mountain Top experience.

⁵ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; . . .

They’ve already seen Jesus transfigured, Moses and Elijah, now bright cloud!

. . . and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

At that point Peter didn’t suggest building another tabernacle. In fact:

⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

So when you are confronted with the presence of the Father in Heaven in this way and magnitude, your response of making a tabernacle, making a Church, let’s-set-a-tent-here becomes instead, **falling down as if dead!** Afraid. When the voice of God speaks in this way it is a powerful voice that consumes all of our unrighteousness. It consumes everything in its path. There are no dogmas that can exist before the voice of God Himself. None, and that is a fearful thing for the natural man to see. It is even a fearful thing for that which is spiri-

tual in me to see. When I see that kind of power without restraint, my first reaction is to back away a little bit! When you get too close to the sun, what happens? Just a few degrees and we are cooked to a crisp.

But the orbit the earth makes is just right. It is a nice thing to have the sunlight come through the window this morning. We like God on our own terms. But sometimes He likes to break out of our own terms. He likes to break out of who we think He is and comes forth in a voice so real that when we worship Him we say His presence overwhelms us. What does that mean? Overwhelm. It means we cannot handle it emotionally, intellectually, or physically! We fall down “slain in the Spirit.”

⁷ But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” ⁸ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

He touched them. The touch of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing that can heal us from the fear of the power of the Almighty. Did they see a tabernacle? Did they still see Jesus as a super-hero? No. They saw only One, Jesus only. Those words penetrate to my heart, to my spirit. After it is all over, they saw only Jesus.

There is a sect in the Church that call themselves “Only Jesus.” They believe the Father is expressed in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is expressed in Jesus. The only thing you have to know is Jesus. There is truth in that. Absolutely. But I know for sure when I’m fellowshiping with the Lord on a daily basis. He is the one that touches me by the Holy Spirit. However when there is a voice from the Father in Heaven, I can discern the difference. I don’t know how. I cannot tell you the mystery of how you can do the same. But I know when the Father is talking.

*⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one **until** the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”*

So now, His disciples today can tell everybody about this. He is Jesus. He is the *exact representation* of the Father! The Father didn’t want to be alone, the all powerful being. He wanted to be able to touch you with that healing quality that He had while He was on the earth; He wanted to be able to touch us in our spirit, that we would be changed to not just have a religion but we would have a relationship with God.

So when we preach the gospel, we should preach it in just that way. People could say, “Yeah, you’re a religious type person. You are relying upon the crutch of religion in your life.” But you say, “No. I’m not. I just have a personal relationship with Jesus. Thank you.” You see I don’t have vestments on today. I don’t do certain things to make me spiritual when I attend Church. When I’m with you during the week in home group, I don’t do anything different to prepare myself special for when I’m teaching the word on Sundays.

I do something special every day and that's pray and worship my Lord Jesus Christ. He isn't an arch-angel. He is Very God of Very God. And I *enjoy* Him. I enjoy His presence. I can enjoy the presence of angels but they're nothing compared to my Lord Jesus. I really like my guardian angel by the way. However, I like Jesus a lot more! Amen.

Now get this, the disciples are coming down after this really unbelievable experience and what is the first thing they do? What I would do would be so much different from what they do. I remember a story of Carl Sagen, the most renowned physicist in the world, saying once, "*Almost never does anyone ask me about planetary physics. Almost never does anyone ask about the 'black holes'.*" Isn't that weird? If I were with him I'd ask him to explain more clearly his understanding of "black holes"! With Jesus coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration I would have asked Him about, "*What did it feel like? What were you doing? What was the conversation you had with Moses and Elijah?*"

I had my own ideas about what that conversation might have been as He was just talking going to Jerusalem and suffer on the cross. Moses and Elijah were probably there to encourage Him, don't you think!

Well the disciples say:

¹⁰ "*Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?*" (Who cares!)

¹¹ *Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. ¹² But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."* ¹³ *Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

Well so much for the disciples understanding. I pray that I would be able to discern and understand the intent and purpose of God's heart. And I do. Almost every morning when I pray I get the idea and the understanding from the Father that it is about loving-kindness. That is the first word that usually comes to my mind, grace, mercy, loving-kindness. THAT IS HIS INTENT. Out of that intent comes the purposes of my life and I understand His will more clearly.

A Boy Who is Healed ***—Understanding True Faith—***

Understanding true faith is often misunderstood.

Matthew 17 ¹⁴ And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic (a physical disease) and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

It is interesting to note that fire and water were two of the elements of the ancient world. It may have no meaning but this disease was causing this boy harm.

¹⁶ *So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.*”

So they were looking for a cure. Isn't that interesting. They want a solution. So you go to a doctor for a headache and he gives you an aspirin. That is the cure. You take the cure and you no longer feel the headache. The reason for the headache may not be cured, but the ache is gone. Everybody wants to have a cure. That is a natural thing to desire, but Jesus wants you to understand that it isn't just about a natural answer to things. Everything, everything in your life isn't about a natural solution but about a solution in the Holy Spirit, a solution that comes from the throne of grace. His disciples prayed for this child and he was not helped at all. They were trying their best but listen to Jesus' almost mocking answer!

¹⁷ *“O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? . . .*

Where did this come from?! It speaks of the frustration that He had because He knows, the Lord Jesus Himself knows how powerful the Holy Spirit is! He knows the power of His Father and the power of God is able to not just cure but to change things from a natural way to a spiritual way.

*. . . “Bring him here to Me.”*¹⁸ *And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.*

What did Jesus do? He didn't just pray for this child, for this epilepsy, this natural occurrence. But He rebuked the *demon* and it came out of him and the child was cured from that hour. He rebuked the demon. How often we come to the Lord with our problems whether it is in our body with physical disease or the circumstances we find ourselves in, and we ask the Lord for a solution. In the natural He may give it to us but the real solution is to come against the *spirit of the enemy* in the thing first hand. That is what Jesus did then and almost always does when He is found confronting the enemy in the world. Our life is not just a physical life. Our life is a spiritual one; you are spiritual creatures. When you die that is all that is going to be left until the resurrection. You are spiritual.

Well again, there would probably be other questions that I would have liked to ask the Lord about this but the disciples asked:

¹⁹ *Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”*

²⁰ *So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, . . .*

Jesus isn't saying they needed more faith. You only need a LITTLE faith! When you have that seed you can speak to a mountain, a *big-mountain problem*
...

... you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.²¹ However, (This is a Big however.)²¹ However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

So we find the legalists in the Church saying, "I know I have the Holy Spirit but now I've got to pray and fast. And that prayer has got to be a 'spiritual' prayer and that fast, a 'spiritual' fast." Well, we are supposed to be praying and fasting all the time, in whatever opportunity you have. But, what is prayer and fasting? **Talking with God**, finding the intent of God's heart. The result of the prayer and fasting isn't that you are more spiritual. The result of that prayer and fasting is seeing you find the intent of God's heart. And, when you pray for someone with that kind of power and understanding, guess what? It will happen! That's the kind of thing you have to have, not faith in faith but faith in knowing God. Not faith in faith but faith in knowing the intent of God's heart. When you truly know that faith, it can move mountains.

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection before Pentecost

Jesus doesn't just predict His death. Get this point. He also predicts His resurrection. He never really goes and say, "You know I am going to have to go and die on the cross." It is always, "I am going to have to die on the cross **AND I will be resurrected.**" He first told the Pharisees that there was going to be the sign of Jonah. "I am going to be gone for three days, dead in the belly of a fish." Jesus was dead, dead. He went down to the very gates of Hell. There He freed the Old Testament saints. There He made a show of the enemy's power. He said, "You have no power over Me."

We find He was not only talking about His death and resurrection but He was also talking about His *betrayal*. Talk about a prophetic sense!

²² Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men,"²³ and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up."

He also knew it was going to be three days. Now the response of these disciples is still in the natural realm.

And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

They didn't want this to happen. Would you? You experience the physical Jesus every day where He can physically touch you. Would you want that to go away? But in John's gospel we find Jesus saying, "If you really knew what was going to happen, you would be happy that I am going away" (John 14:28). Because He knew as He looked out at the multitudes that no matter how many people He healed He couldn't heal them all because there was only one of Him! But as He went to the right hand of the Father and sends the Holy Spirit, He is

going to be in everyone of us! To lay hands on the sick for healing. To bring forth God's intent and purpose on the earth. That is the Kingdom of God. Amen.

And yet they were sad because they didn't get or understand this last part.

Peter and His Master Pay Their Taxes by God's Provision

I hate paying taxes especially at this time of the year (March). I don't even when working with Turbo-Tax. You have to have the 1099 this and the 1099 that, etc., all the things that bureaucracy seeks to crush down on my soul. I say, *"I just want to be freeeeee of this craziness!"* Interestingly when I go to the store and they have a sales tax it doesn't bother me in the least.

There was a day after the Stamp Act was repealed (1766), and the Sons of Liberty made their showing in Boston Harbor, taxes were not too popular with anyone. There was no income tax; there were no 1099's. In fact, there wasn't a National Bank nor a National Currency. Currency was published by the local banks. If I had a ten dollar bill, it was published by the bank of New York.

Well the economy is just whatever God uses to bless. It isn't there for a curse. The economy of God is there for a blessing. So, when I go to my Turbo Tax or however you want to pay your taxes, I have to remind myself that God's provision will be there.

²⁴ *When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"*

The temple tax?! I didn't know there was such a thing as the temple tax. I understood there was tithe and I knew Caesar had a tax, but now we have a temple tax?! Excuse me! And, how come the people who took this tax pick Peter? Why didn't they go to Judas? He was in charge of the money. But they went to Peter with a negative approach, *"Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"* And Peter responds, *"Yes."*

What is the intent of what these people are saying? Not necessarily the actual words but what was their intent? Again to catch Jesus at something else. Well, Peter came into the house where Jesus was. Jesus is never surprised, anticipating the issue, He taunts His disciple again.

²⁵ *"What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"*

Well in our society, they tax everybody. However in their society and most societies in the world, kings don't tax their sons. They tax everyone else but their sons *receive* the tax.

²⁶ *Peter said to Him, "From strangers." (Who are the sons?) Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free."*

What are they free from? The sons are free from tax. There we go. I don't have to buy Turbo Tax this year. I don't have to pay double tax this year. In a real sense we don't, however here's the reasoning of the Lord.

²⁷ *Nevertheless, lest we offend them, . . .*

Jesus here seems pretty weak. What is it about taxes? The world thinks we should pay. Jesus says we'd better not offend them.

. . . go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

Well, to me this is the most ridiculous scripture I have ever read, *except* when we realize there is a hidden meaning behind it. That is, the provision of God was in the fish for these fishermen. And in the same way, in whatever means you are found, God provides for your life, He will provide for your temple tax. He will no matter what the motivation might be. In the Kingdom of God, tax is trivial because tax is all about the *traditions* of men.

But in the Kingdom of God there is a sense that we are free from all of that. Therefore we pay our taxes but we are *free from the burden* of them because the Lord provides. ***I am free from the burden of tax because the Lord will provide.***

Summarizing What We've Learned

1) So I learned from Matthew 17 to know the will and intent of the Father, to know that Jesus is going to die on the cross. That is the will and intent of the Father so He could bring the Kingdom of God through the Holy Spirit into my heart and your heart today. As we pray for our kids, it isn't some ceremony we are doing. We are fully, actively, really praying for them and really expecting results. Our devotion to Jesus is based on a real relation to Christ not the tradition of religions.

2) I learned from this chapter that we need to discern the heart of God, the power of the Holy Spirit.

3) When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain it isn't enough for us to have a religious experience. We are responsible *to discern who Jesus is really*, not some super-hero but beyond that. Very God of Very God, the One who is not unreachable but One whom we enjoy, spend time with. The One to whom we pray not just because we need to pray but pray because we *like to talk to Him*.

4) We deny ourselves and take up the cross. We understand that our life is no longer just a physical life in this world, but it is a spiritual one. When we pray for those who are sick, we don't pray against a physical disease but we pray against the spiritual context of where that disease is coming from which is from the gate of Hell.

Don't tell me that God created cancer. Don't tell me that God created heart disease. Don't tell me any of those types of things. I don't believe it. Jesus says there is going to be a time when all of that pain and suffering will go away and He will wipe away every tear. What comes from the throne of grace is grace and loving-kindness, not evil intent.

5) God will provide in supernatural ways.

Prayer Summation

If you believe this, I want you to stand up this morning. I want you to commit your heart to the Holy Spirit in you to lead you and guide you in every way possible against the schemes and purposes of the enemy, WITH the purposes and intent of God's heart which is grace and mercy. When you find those who are contrite, even in the world, those who are falling down and they see for the first time that they need Jesus, you will be able to bring them there.

Let's pray: So, Father, we ask You in the name of the Lord Jesus, to go before us, that we would no longer see just in the natural realm., but we would see in the spiritual realm, we would see the power you have given to us and the talents You have given to us in the Holy Spirit. You have given to us the voice of prophecy. You have given to us the voice of prayer. You have given us a voice of teaching and instruction. You have given to us a heart of understanding of the Apostolic ministry of the Church. You are the One who has given us the heart of the Good Shepherd.

Lord God, we reach out to those in our home group, those in our community with that same heart. Lord, break the iron gates that the enemy has put around the hearts of those who are in the world, whether it be the governor of the state or anyone. Break down those gates! Break them in the power of the blood of Christ. We put that blood on the lentil.

We ask You, Lord God, to open up the minds of the Jewish people, that they would be able to see how wonderful You are to bring grace upon this earth! In Your understanding, even before You were crucified, was the understanding of the Father's heart, that You would bring that understanding of grace and mercy to us today in such power in the love of Christ.

I ask You, Lord God, to bring that JOY into our life again. Even in the midst of Winter, we would see the joy of Spring. That is because we know the flowers will bloom again. We know the leaves will sprout out because we are already here. We are the ones upon the earth that You have caused to bloom. We ask You to use us, each one, in the way You would have us, the way You created us. I pray in Jesus's name. Amen.