

JESUS IS GOD'S CHOSEN SERVANT

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Matthew 12:14-21

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INTRO.

-- We're continuing our study through the Gospel of Matthew and are in chapter 12.

Matthew 12 (p. 817)

-- Jesus is conducting the first stage of His public teaching, preaching and healing ministry in His home area of Galilee in northern Israel. Jesus has encountered growing opposition from the religious leaders, and chapter 12 contains a series of conflicts between Jesus and His enemies, the Pharisees, the theological conservatives of the day who taught strict adherence to the laws of Moses as the way to make yourself acceptable to God.

-- Their opposition to Jesus reaches a turning point in Matthew 12:14.

Cf., v. 14

This decision to find a way to kill Jesus occurs about 1½ years before Jesus' Crucifixion.

-- In today's passage Matthew tells us what Jesus did in response to this threat on His life and why that response was significant.

I. What Jesus Did (vv. 15-16)

A. Jesus "Withdrew" (v. 15a)

-- v. 15a, "Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there."

1. The Pharisees who plotted to kill Jesus were probably from Capernaum, the fishing village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which served as Jesus' home base during the Galilean phase of His ministry.

2. Matthew tells us that Jesus "withdrew" from there, meaning that Jesus probably left Capernaum and went to stay in a more remote area of Galilee.

3. An important question for us to ask here is why Jesus withdrew from Capernaum. Jesus did not withdraw because He was afraid of the Pharisees' intention to kill Him. Rather, Jesus withdrew because it was not yet the time for His death.

-- But that raises another question: if God the Father is sovereign and is protecting Jesus, then why would Jesus need to withdraw? Couldn't Jesus just stay there and let the Father keep Him safe?

What we have here is a situation similar to Satan's temptation for Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple.

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Cf., **Matthew 4:5-7** Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

-- For Jesus to remain in Capernaum at the time of a serious threat on His life would have been the equivalent to Jesus' throwing Himself off the top of the Temple and forcing the Father to save Him. Staying in Capernaum would have been intentionally and unnecessarily testing the Father's providential care and provision.

Jesus refused to do that and instead humbly submitted to the Father's plans and withdrew from those who were threatening Him. Jesus gives us an example that we should not take actions that unnecessarily require God to protect and take care of us.

B. "Many followed" (v. 15b)

-- v. 15b, "And many followed him."

-- Jesus' popularity with the people was still increasing, and the crowds, undeterred by Jesus' move to a remote region, continued to follow Him.

C. Jesus' Response (v. 15b-16a)

-- Jesus had a two-part response to those who followed and continued to seek Him out.

1. He healed them. (v. 15b)

-- v. 15b, "He healed them all."

-- Jesus continued to carry out His ministry of healing. In fact, Matthew says that Jesus "healed them all," which was a marvelous preview of the future kingdom when all diseases and disabilities and suffering will be taken away.

2. He ordered them. (v. 16a)

-- Then, after healing them, Jesus did something that seems odd.

v. 16a, "and ordered them not to make him known."

-- This is something that Jesus did repeatedly. So, why would Jesus heal someone and then instruct those healed not to tell anyone? I believe there are at least two reasons:

a. The Purpose of the Miracles

-- One reason Jesus didn't want those who had been healed telling others had to do with the purpose of those miracles. Jesus' miracles were signs intended to confirm His identity as the Son of God and His message about the Kingdom of God. For those who had been healed to go out and tell everyone would have made the healings the primary focus of Jesus' ministry, something Jesus never intended and worked hard to avoid.

b. The Mission of the Messiah

-- The second reason for ordering them not to tell about the miraculous healings had to do with Jesus' mission as the Messiah. Jesus wanted to avoid a common misunderstanding about His mission. The popular expectation in first-century Israel was that the Messiah would deliver the Jews from the power of Rome and would reestablish the glory of David's reign as King of Israel.

-- Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah, but He had come for a very different and far more important purpose - not to deliver the nation of Israel from the power of Rome but to deliver people from all nations from the power of sin.

II. What Jesus Fulfilled (vv. 17-21)

-- Matthew wants his readers to know that how Jesus responded to the threats of the religious leaders and to the needs of the crowds was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah.

A. Isaiah's Prophecy

-- Verses 17-21 are a quote from Isaiah 42:1-4. This is Matthew's longest quote from the OT and is a paraphrase more than a word-for-word quote. Isaiah 42 speaks about the Messiah as the king of all nations - but not the kind of a king that many would expect.

B. Isaiah's Description of the Messiah

1. His Identity (v. 18)

-- This fascinating statement from Isaiah 42:1 presents the ways that all three persons of the Trinity participated in the accomplishing of our redemption.

a. The Son

-- The "servant" is, of course, a reference to Jesus. An interesting thing about the word translated "servant" is that it is not the most common word for servant but a word that often is translated as "son." The idea here is that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who served the Father by executing, carrying out and accomplishing the redemptive plan.

b. The Father

-- Look again at what the Father declares about this Servant Son.

v. 18a

(1) This declaration that the Messiah is the Father's beloved and well-pleasing son is repeated two times in Jesus' ministry.

(a) At Jesus' Baptism

Cf., **Matthew 3:17** and behold a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

(b) At Jesus' Transfiguration

Matthew 17:5 "...and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"

(2) And this "Beloved Son," the one who has been eternally with the Father, is the Father's "Chosen Servant."

-- This takes us back to eternity past, before the creation of the

universe, to the Covenant of Redemption, in which the Father chose the Son to be the agent of our salvation.

The Hebrew word "Messiah" and the Greek word "Christ" both mean "anointed." Anointing was an act performed to indicate that someone had been chosen for a special mission or role.

For example, when God chose David to become king in place of Saul, God sent the prophet Nathan to anoint David.

1 Samuel 16:11-13 Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." ¹² And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.

c. The Holy Spirit

-- v. 18b, "I will put my Spirit upon him"

-- We see this prophecy demonstrated at Jesus' baptism.

Matthew 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him

2. His Character (vv. 19-20)

-- In verses 19-20 Isaiah describes the manner in which the Messiah will minister, and we find two character qualities that will surprise many.

a. Meekness (v. 19)

-- As the Messiah Jesus did not come with rabble-rousing speeches but in the meekness of a village carpenter. He didn't usher in the Kingdom with riots or armies but with the meek quiet of a growing mustard seed or of leaven in a lump of dough.

b. Gentleness (v. 20a)

-- Verse 20 is a vivid and moving image of the gentle way Jesus deals with sinners.

v. 20a

-- A reed is a fragile plant that breaks easily. A bruised reed is doubly fragile. A bruised reed is already injured and bent. Anything other than the most gentle touch will break it completely.

A smoldering wick is on the verge of being completely extinguished. Its bright flame is gone, and all that is left is smoke from a barely noticeable ember. Anything but the most gentle touch will cause it to go out completely.

-- To any bruised reeds or smoldering wicks who may be here today, if you are bent or broken from life's burdens, if you are smothered by life's disappointments and failures, hear the invitation from the meek and gentle Savior.

Cf., Matthew 11:28-29

-- Jesus calls bruised reeds and smoldering wicks to come to Him and promises not to break them but to heal them, not to extinguish them but to give them life. He strengthens the weak, lifts the fallen, gives light to those in darkness and hope to those in despair.

3. His Victory (vv. 20b-21)

-- Matthew closes this quote with Isaiah's promise of the Messiah's victory.

vv. 20b-21

-- In Christ there is salvation and hope for all.

CONCLUSION

Story of the Pharisee and the Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50)

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.
Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive;
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;
He will forgive if they only believe.
Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, awakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;
Refrain:
Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.