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Sermons on Matthew

Behold, My Servant

Matthew 12:15-21

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope
Orthodox Presbyterian Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
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But when Jesus knew *it*, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. ⁻¹⁶⁻ Yet He warned them not to make Him known, ⁻¹⁷⁻ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸ “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; ²¹ and in His name Gentiles will trust.” (Matthew 12:15-21)

Preface

Having thoroughly offended His detractors with claims of having more privilege than King David (Matthew 12:3), being superior to the temple (the center of their religion and piety—Matthew 12:6) and the very Lord of the Sabbath they were accusing Him of violating, they plotted how they might destroy Jesus (Matthew 12:14).

But when Jesus knew *it*, He withdrew from there (Matthew 12:15a).

A Time to Leave

Jesus withdrew, but not from fear. When the time was right He would strengthen His face toward His passion in Jerusalem (Luke 9:51); greater courage no man would ever have. But His time had not yet come. He had people to heal and a message to bring; He had righteousness to fulfill. He would follow the very advice He had previously given His followers: when persecuted, avoid capture and go to the next city (Matthew 10:23).

Christians should not be governed by fear; nor should they be governed by foolish obstinacy.

He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked *man only* harms himself. ⁸ Do not

correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; _rebuke a wise *man*, and he will love you. (Proverbs 9:7, 8)

There is a time for the pleading to end and, at least for a season, prayer to be the sole effort. There are others who will listen and they must receive your attention.

And great __multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all (Matthew 12:15b).

Undaunted Righteousness

Jesus continued healing and was not influenced by the ungodliness which surrounded Him. Jesus was a man, fully man. Let us not underestimate the psychological duress such a minister would experience. His followers, for the most part, displayed ignorance (Matthew 16:23) and selfishness (Matthew 20:21). His religious contemporaries (the ones who didn't approach Him in the dark - John 3:2) sought to destroy Him.

Yet the faithlessness of man did not deter our Savior, for there was a greater joy set before Him. The author of Hebrews calls upon this to encourage believers who become weary and discouraged. We are to

__ . . . lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and __let us run __with endurance the race that is set before us, ⁻²⁻ looking unto Jesus, the __author and __finisher of *our* faith, __who for the joy that was set before Him __endured the cross, despising the shame, and __has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ⁻³⁻ __For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, __lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (Hebrews 12:1a-3)

Christians are exhorted to never grow weary of doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13). The active success of Jesus in this category brought Him to the height of the unblemished sacrificial Lamb. We do grow weary and fail, but never our Savior. And in this our souls take great comfort.

Yet He __warned them not to make Him known (Matthew 12:16).

Don't Tell

I have spoken elsewhere as to why Jesus would quell the proclamations of His works, works which were to be shown first to the priests as those who should have ministered to their people with such glorious news (Matthew 8:4). We can also reasonably surmise that Jesus was seeking to control the amount of anarchy which might surround a genuine miracle-working ministry. Here we see yet another explanation behind His call for quietude; it would be the fulfillment of a prophecy.

...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:¹⁸ “_Behold! __My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved __in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.¹⁹ [He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.²⁰ [A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;²¹ [And in His name Gentiles will trust.” (Matthew 12:17-21)

The nutshell reasoning behind Jesus’ exhortation that He not be made known is found in verse 19—**“He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.”** Let us take this to heart. Jesus would have a gentle, non-violent¹, unobtrusive method of gaining His victory.

A Paradox

Embrace the paradox: the most powerful, eternal, august, life changing, world dominating kingdom does not advance as we would normally understanding how a kingdom advances.

Woe to those __who go down to Egypt for help, and _rely on horses, who trust in chariots because *they are many*, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, _nor seek the Lord! (Isaiah 31:1)

¹ Non-violent in the sense of Him doing the violence; He would be the direct object of great violence.

Behold My Servant

To gain the ultimate victory—the victory which extends into eternity—one must look to the Holy One of Israel; one must seek the Lord. Hence the words of the prophet, “**Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen**” (Matthew 12:18a). Isaiah, as the very mouthpiece of God, writes in the first person singular. The Father directs our eyes to the Son whom He here calls His servant. But why is He the servant of the Father? Did Jesus not say that He came to serve us?

Serving Man

...the **Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.** (Matthew 20:28b)

Serving God

Let it not escape our notice that the Suffering Servant, in a primary sense, is serving His Father.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’
(Hebrews 10:7)

It is because of the great love the Father has for His children that He sent His only Begotten Son (John 3:16). That Jesus appeased the wrath of the Father toward sinners does not mean that the Father was a reluctant Judge. The Judge is also the Father who sent the Son.

And now men are called to behold that Son in His fullness. Our thoughts, hearts, and attention are to be eternally fixed upon “**the Bright and Morning Star**” (Revelation 22:16). When the Father says, “Behold!” and points, as it were, His finger at the Son, it is the height of rebellion and obstinacy for men to look elsewhere. Mankind, like children purposefully avoiding eye-contact with their parents during lessons of wisdom and instruction, are inclined by their own sinful hearts to turn their faces away from Jesus. By the grace of God we are to suppress those dark urges and to continuously be fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (*cf.* Hebrews 12:2).

God's Well-Pleased Soul

The Father has chosen to send His Son in whom His **“soul is well pleased.”** (Matthew 12:18a) Since the alpha and omega of man's dilemma is with the Father, do we dare offer an alternative solution to that predicament than the one which has been declared pleasing by His very lips? Do we suffer another message to take center stage?

The Great Distinction

There may be numerous distinctions between the Christian faith and others religions and world-views, but nothing is more distinct than this. The heart of the Christian faith is that there walked upon this fallen world something—someone—that was pleasing in the eyes of the Righteous Judge of all the earth. Like the only floating life-raft in the cosmic shipwreck of the fall of man, we must abide in Jesus. The finger of God points to Him, and the mouth of God (as at His baptism (Matthew 3:17) and the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5)) declares Him to be pleasing in His eyes.

I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles (Matthew 12:18b).

A Spiritual Declaration

At His baptism (Matthew 3), the Spirit of God fell upon Jesus and His preaching ministry began. His declaration will be one of judgment (_____ - krisis) to the gentiles. What does this mean?

I tend to think we underestimate the level of darkness reached by this fallen world prior to the gospel going forth in the power of the Spirit. Both politically and spiritually—perhaps better put ‘spiritually and therefore politically’ —the entire world lie under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). Inwardly and outwardly, macrocosm and microcosm, immaterial and material, the anarchy of darkness reigned. This prophecy seems to

indicate that judgment—which produces order—would begin to cover the earth².

Again, the foundation of this victorious judgment is found in the utter humility of Christ: **He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets (Matthew 12:19)**. The foundation of this victorious judgment is the judgment of God suffered by Christ Himself. He was

...smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He *was* __wounded __for our transgressions, *He was* __bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His __stripes _we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4b, 5)

Christ the Judge

□

But the full counsel of Christ insists Jesus be presented, not merely as the one who is judged, but also the one who judges. Herein lies the great eternal divide: the judgment will fall either upon Christ Himself or upon those who take rank against the Lord's anointed (Psalm 2). There is a reckoning—the hammer will fall! Will you stand before God naked and guilty, or will you trust in the One who bears the sins of men?

Christ the Merciful

And let us all be comforted by the tender words of Jesus. Lest our Christian hearts melt with fear as we brood over our own sinful estate, we are assured that even though there is a judgment of the ungodly, our Lord makes a distinction between the weak and the wicked.

A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; ²¹ and in His name Gentiles will trust.” (Matthew 12:20-21)

Perhaps there are men in far away countries who stand as oaks and whose faith are aflame of fire; I for one take great comfort in this verse. The weakness of my flesh and the flabbiness of my convictions could easily leave me with a daily fear of being snapped off by God like a dried twig or doused like a smoky, profitless candle. As we continually struggle out of

² Understanding that the reference to the gentiles would infer the nations.

the foxholes of life, we are assured by God that He will not stick His boot in our face.

Those who trust in Christ, though surrounded by judgment, need not give way to fear.

Love has been perfected among us in this: that _we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.⁻¹⁸⁻ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. (1 John 4:17-18a)

Some of you might remember Robert Duvall's portrayal of Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*. How he stood fearless in the middle of an explosive battlefield encompassed by bombs. He perhaps had an undue sense of invulnerability. The Christian has God's assurance that though he is surrounded by judgment, he himself has escaped the judgment; hence the words of Jesus.

_He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

Finally this prophecy leaves nothing to chance. “. . .**In His name the Gentiles will trust**” is in the indicative. It will happen. God truly has a glorious plan—a sure plan—and the victory will be His. He points to His Beloved Son; the victory belongs to those who look.

Questions for Study

1. Why did Jesus withdraw from His persecutors? What do we learn from this (pages 2, 3)?
2. Discuss Jesus' pursuit of righteousness (pages 3, 4)?

3. Why would Jesus warn them not to make Him known (page 4)?
4. What is the paradox concerning the advancement of Christ's kingdom (pages 4, 5)?
5. How is the ultimate victory gained (page 5)?
6. Did Jesus come to serve man or God (pages 5, 6)?
7. Why is it significant that God was well-pleased with Jesus (page 6)?
8. What does Jesus declare to the gentiles (pages 6, 7)?
9. How does Jesus treat the weak (pages 7, 8)?
10. What need not Christians fear (page 8)?