

May 7, 2023
The Fifth Sunday of Easter
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Way Above My Pay Grade-Love Part I

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. As we continue through this Easter season with our “Above My Pay Grade” Sermon Series, we are going to continue to look at how God uses the Holy Spirit to transform us into that which we would think is impossible. Again, today I bring with me my trusty black bag for a little bit of an object lesson to help us with an understanding of what we're talking about today.

But let's first review where we've been. We are called to be filled with all the fullness of God. That can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we are filled with all the fullness of God, and together we make the full body of Christ. We also see that Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth. We are to bring the preservation, the salvation that comes through the gospel message into this world, and we are to be the precious ones who carried it, just like salt was precious. Last week we heard that we are the light of the world, and we are to shine with all the intensity of Jesus Himself because we are the body of Christ, and He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Today we begin a multipart sermon that deals with something that's pretty personal, and a very difficult thing-love. We're gonna start out in the most unusual way. We're going to start with what I personally consider to be one of the most, if not the scariest verse in the Bible. Again, it comes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapter 7 beginning at verse 21. “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven.” And when we hear that our mind probably drifts to thinking about what's he talking about here? He's probably talking about nominal Christians. Sometimes they call them C.E.O. Christians; they come to church on Christmas, Easter, and other special occasions like funerals and weddings. No, that's not who Jesus is talking about. Well, these must be Christians who believe they're Christians because

they believe in God, but they totally forget to think about Jesus Christ. No, no, again that is not at all what Jesus is talking about. Jesus makes the point that they say, 'Lord, Lord.' It's repeated by them, it's an emphasis that they are making. They are saying 'Jesus you are Lord.' These are people who would say I am a Christian with a capital C. In fact, continuing, Jesus says, "on that day," (that would be judgment day) "Many will say to me..." And I have to say, 'time out, yeah, hang on a second.' 'They dare to stand before Christ and talk to Him?' Understand this is judgment day Jesus is speaking about. In the twinkling of an eye, He has returned, all the dead have been raised, the sheep and the goats have been separated, and judgment has been pronounced. Those whose names are in the book of life, salvation. Those whose names are not in the book of life, but in the books of works, are judged by their works. And this is where they speak to Jesus. They're arguing with Him.

Contrast that with what we are told in our epistle this morning in Philippians 2; "So that at the name of Jesus..." Notice this isn't when you're in His presence. No, at the name, the mere mention of His name, every knee should bow in heaven, (that means all the angels-Archangel Michael, the great messenger angel Gabriel, the cherubim, and the seraphim that are in the throne room of God, the guardian angels, every type of angel there is) at the mere mention of the name of Jesus, they are to bow. "Every knee should bow in heaven and on earth." That means every human being, that means all of God's creation, at the name of Jesus every heaven and on earth and under the earth. Even the fallen angels, the demons, Satan and his cohorts, are to bend their knees and fall before Him. And what are they to do? "And every tongue confess." We're not supposed to stay silent. You are to speak out. "Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Why? "To the glory of God the Father, who sent Him.

What we see here in Matthew 7, in the Sermon on the Mount, is total arrogance, and a total lack of understanding. These people will say to Jesus, not bow, not bend the knee, they will say to Jesus; "Lord, Lord." Now listen carefully to what they say. "Did we not prophecy in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name? Did we not do many

mighty works in your name?” Many years ago, one of the Christian apologists asked the question, “If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict?” And that's exactly what these people are putting forth. They're putting forth powerful evidence. They prophesied; to prophesy is to proclaim God's word or claim divine counsel. God says this, which could include foretelling the future in the name of Jesus. And you might say, ‘Oh yeah, Pastor Matt. We do see some of that. If we take a look at Charles Russell, the founder of the Jehovah witnesses; he used the name of Jesus. He foretold the future. He said he had the truth. It was totally wrong. Or Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church, the Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints. The same thing.

But it's far beyond even that. They also point out, did we not cast out demons (perform exorcisms) in your name? They must be Christians right, in fact, could it be anything else? Because I'm sure they would cite Jesus's own words in mark 3:23 to 27 where He says, “how can Satan cast out Satan? A kingdom divided cannot stand.” Satan is not going to give up ground that he has. But then again, I want you to think a second, the kingdom divided cannot stand. And we that Satan's kingdom will not stand. So, what is happening here? So, we have to ask ourselves the question, are the demons being cast out? Please remember Satan is the great deceiver and when he speaks, he speaks his native language by lying. Could demons be pretending that they're being cast out? Could they be pretending that they're being cast out by somebody who's using the name of Jesus, but doesn't really love Jesus? Could they be doing it for show because as they do that, more and more people are brought in saying, ‘look the physical evidence is there. They must be Christians their casting out demons. Couldn't they just be deceiving, and as more people come in more demons are invited into lead them all astray.

When we think about this, we would do well to remember God's Word. Ephesians 6, verse 12 tells us, “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.” We are locked in battle with Satan himself and

he will do everything in his power to deceive people and lead them astray even if it means using the name of Jesus but using it falsely. So, they prophesy, they cast out demons in your name Jesus. remembering they're talking to Him on judgment day. Did we not do many mighty works in your name? We should learn the message of lesson of Jannes and Jambres, Pharaoh's magicians who imitated what God did. These individuals are arrogantly pointing the finger at Jesus and citing evidence. They are contending with Jesus. They are saying 'Lord, Lord, we are right you are wrong, we belong with you.

And Jesus's response is, and then I Jesus will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me you workers of lawlessness.' They prophesied; they claim to have divine a divine council. Jesus declares, the word in Greek is homologous. Homo means same, 'logous' is from the word logos. The Word, that which is used in John 1. "In the beginning was the logos and the logos was with God the logos was God he was with God in the beginning and through him all things were made that were made and the logos became flesh and dwelt among us." There's a huge contrast! We prophesied in your name. I speak in my name. I am the logos. It's the same word that is congruent throughout scripture. that word that says God alone is God he prophesied that He would send the Messiah and Christ fulfilled the prophecy. The Old Testament says God will redeem us. He'll do the work. Christ did it! Throughout the Old Testament, we see both in the law, and in the prophecy, the Messiah would come and justify us, make us right with Him. Not us making ourselves right with Him.

In fact, this is where the black bag comes in. What do I have in here? Something really simple. I think we've all seen one of these before. It's a balance or a scale. And this is what Jesus is talking about. This is what justification is about. Justification is making one right. And so, if we were to put a little bucket here on this side, and we took our sin, all of our sin, and we put it in the bucket; what happens? It goes down. But God sent His son to justify us. What is the effect of that sin? Death. What did God put on this side? Jesus, His only son, who paid the price of our sin and made us right with God. And actually, as I think about it, if you

put all of us here and you take God's only begotten Son and put Him here, really it should just throw us all right into heaven. And that's what He does, we are all destined for heaven. Except for some of us, are hanging on to the bucket and saying, I'm gonna stay right here, I don't want to be flung out of the bucket and made right. It's all about me!

And there's the problem. What's missing? Love of Jesus that is replaced with love of self. Notice what's missing, that love. And what's it replaced with? Self. Did we, did I, not prophecy? Cast out demons? Didn't I do it in your name? Jesus is the afterthought, and it flies in the face of the message of justification and being made right. Ephesians 2:8-9 "Not because of works lest any man should boast." And here we see people boasting to Jesus and saying, you owe us, we did this, we deserve heaven.

Or to put it another way, I want you to just imagine for a moment that you are on a cruise ship and you're leaning over and looking at the dolphins and they are swimming around and you fall overboard. You are fully clothed for the dinner meal. You hit the water, and first of all, when you hit the water from falling off of a cruise ship, Bam! "it knocks the wind right out you," Your clothes begin to absorb the water and it begins to suck you under, but you can't catch your breath because it's been knocked out of you. You have been hit with a traumatic blow! And somebody on the boat sees it happen and they dive off and they enter the water smoothly and it doesn't knock the wind out of them. They are a trained life saver, a lifeguard! They grab you they pull you to the surface, they put you on their chest with their arms wrapped around your chest so you will not go down and they use all the strength they have in their legs to move you back to the boat where a rope is let down, a life preserver is there and they put it around you and they pull you up on board. When that swimmer is finally pulled out of the ocean and brought up, are you going to look at that person and say, "I want you to know, I sure made you look good. I had it in control the whole time. I really didn't need saving, but I just wanted to make you look good. Or are you going to grab that person and say 'thank you so much! I owe you everything!' Because

in your mind you were not going to see your spouse, you were not going to see your children, your grandchildren. It was over.

Or imagine you're in a restaurant. It's good food! You're really getting into it. You take too big of a bite, you don't chew it enough, and it gets lodged right here in your throat. You can't breathe, you're choking. Since you're choking, you can't breathe, you can't talk, you cannot communicate your problem to anyone other than you go like this, the universal sign for I'm choking. And someone sees you doing that. While you're turning blue, they get up out of their chair, they come over to you, come behind you put one hand here, one hand here. With all their might they lift back, and up, and pull, and boom! that piece of whatever goes flying out. You take a deep breath and you come up and you go, 'did you see that? I just spit that thing 17 feet 6 inches! I'm awesome!' No, you're gonna turn to that person, and you're probably gonna weep, and say 'you know I was dying, and I would be dead if it wasn't for you.'

That's the reality for us. We are sinners. We're doomed on our own. We owe the rescuer. The rescuer, Jesus, gets 100% of the credit. And He deserves our total true love. Because I would imagine if any of you were saved in either one of those events, you would probably say, 'do you have anything you need, just ask me, I'll do it for you.'

So, here's the big question now in Easter, the one we are going to explore. Do you love Jesus? He saved you. He rescued you. Without Him, you are helpless. And yet here we are today, in this house today and that rescuer didn't rescue us and walk away. He even comes to us right here, right now in this physical world through the bread, through the cup in Holy Communion. He is a rescuer who stays in contact for all eternity. This is our Savior; this is our LORD. Do you love Him?

In our Savior's Name, Amen.