Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What Keeps Men from Christ?
Scripture: Matthew 8:16-22
Code: 2259

Lets take our Bibles this morning and look for our Scripture lesson to the 8th Chapter of Matthew, the gospel of Matthew and the 8th Chapter. We're having an on going study of this marvelous gospel, the record of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, as seen by Matthew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I've entitled the message this morning from verses 16 to 22, "What Keeps Men from Christ." It could be titled What Makes Christ Refuse Would Be Followers?" In some ways it is utterly incredible, absolutely inexplicable that people continually reject and refuse to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ. In some ways it is beyond understanding that people would reject Jesus Christ as the Savior, the incomparable, matchless, lovely, gracious Son of God, the Savior of the world, who died for men is still despised by men today as He was when He first came.

And as you study the gospel of Matthew it becomes very apparent to you that the unbelief and the rejection of people flies in the face of all that Christ has done, for His credentials are obvious. The proof of His personhood as God in human flesh is beyond any contradiction. His words, His works, His death, His resurrection all of these things speak loudly, they speak clearly, they speak unmistakably of the reality that He is the Christ of God, the Savior of the world.

And though it says in John 1, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not," and though He said in John 5, "You will not come unto me that you might have life," and though they cried out at His crucifixion, "We will not have this man to reign over us," all of those statements about rejection and refusal to acknowledge Christ really go right against the very affirmations that people made when they were confronted with Him. In other words rejection flies in the face of massive evidence.

The world is like a judge in a court who has heard an open and shut airtight case and made the exact opposite verdict from the facts. For example, the authority of Jesus was apparent. In Matthew 7 it says, "The people were astonished at His teaching for He taught them as one having authority." The words of Jesus were absolutely unique. In John 7:46 they said, "Never a man spake like this man. The works of Jesus were undeniably divine. The blind man said to his inquisitors in John 9, "Why here is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He is, and yet He has opened my eyes. If this man were not from God He could not do this." The wisdom of Jesus was super human.

In Matthew 22, they confronted Him with a coin and they said, "Should we pay tax to Caesar?" He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." And the Scripture says, "When they heard these words they marveled." His purity was undeniable.

He confronted them in John 8 and he said, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" and there was dead silence. His truthfulness was beyond question. In John 8:46, He said, "If I say the truth why then do you believe Me not?" His power fascinated them.

In Luke 8:25, they said, "What manner of man is this for He commandeth even the wind and the waves and they obey Him." His provision fed them. He fed them on the side of the mountain and in John 6 they showed up again and he said, "You seek Me because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." His healing removed their sicknesses, "And when the multitude saw Him heal the paralytic they marveled and glorified God who had given such power unto men," says Matthew 9:8.

His love it literally overawed them. They stood at the grave of Lazarus and they saw Jesus as He began to weep and they said, "Behold how He loved him." His dominance over demons shocked them. When He cast the demon out in Matthew 9:33, it says, "The multitudes marveled saying, 'It was never so seen in Israel.'" His judgment was awesome. When He came to the fig tree it died. In Matthew 21:20 says, "They marveled."

His composure was beyond the human. He was silent before Pilate who had the power over His life. He showed no fear. He gave no defense and Matthew 27:14, says, "He answered him never a word so that the governor marveled greatly." His teaching, His teaching was so far beyond any teacher they had ever known, that it says in John 7:15, "The Jews marveled saying, 'How knoweth this man letters never having learned.'"

And as a boy of twelve the doctors in the temple were astonished at His questions. His independence from their legal system made them shudder. The Pharisees marveled that He did not first wash before dinner. He defied their ceremonies. His tender condescension shocked them. The woman who had five husbands, who was living with one who wasn't her husband, a harlot, an adulterous, and He talked with her, and He loved her, and He cleansed her, and it says in John 4:27, "They marveled that He talked with that woman."

You see everything about Him was astounding. Everything about Him was astonishing. Everything about Him was humanly inexplicable. Everything about Him was marvelous, superhuman, supernatural, divine. And they saw it all. Is it any wonder then that in Mark 6:6 it says, "Jesus marveled at their unbelief."

Why? I mean why, how can you be exposed to such an infinite number of convincing credentials and walk away? How can it be? Well for some, for some there's an overt willful love of sin. And in John 3 it says, "Men love, what, darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil and they don't want to come to the light because the light proves their deeds." And some people just love sin and they defy the evidence and they cling to their evil. Those people really never bother to show up. They run the

other way.

But then there's another category of people and they're the kind that see the attractiveness of Jesus, the charisma, the power, and they're attracted to that. They're the thrill seekers. They want to get in on the action and so they so up and they linger and they hang around and the church has them today too. And they may claim to be born again. And they may say, "We follow Jesus," and they're attracted by the wonder of His person, but they're just as lost as the ones who turn and run from the light. And we're going to meet three of them in this passage.

But to begin with let's begin at the beginning, verse 16. Matthew has just recorded three miracles, three miracles that may well have happened on the same day. Jesus concluded the marvelous masterful Sermon on the Mount in Chapters 5 through 7. People were astounded at His authority. The very teaching itself attracted a crowd. He had already performed thousands, no doubt, of healings and so the crown was massive by now following him around Galilee. It may well be that these three miracles were performed on the Sabbath Day and now the Sabbath Day is over and we pick it up in verse 16.

"When the evening was come," and by the way the evening, the setting of the sun, marked the end of the Sabbath, and until that time the Jews would not do anything to break Sabbath law, but once the evening had come, "They began to bring them, those who were possessed with demons and He cast out the spirits with His word and healed all that was sick." As soon as the Sabbath had come to a close they began to come with all the sick and all the demon possessed and they began to press against Him with all of these people who needed Him, and He healed all, He healed all. It was always that way. You don't have to look and scrape and scratch to find a miracle, thousands of them. He healed everybody. If their disease and disorder was spiritual, related to the possession of demons He healed that. If it was physical sickness He healed that. And He healed all of them. It wasn't a question of their faith. It wasn't a question of their circumstances. He healed them all. He was giving evidence of His Messiahship and His deity that is beyond question.

In Matthew 12:15, "And when Jesus knew it He withdrew himself from there, that is from the council of the Pharisees, and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all." Matthew 14:14, "He saw a great multitude. He was moved with compassion toward them and He healed their sick." Unqualified, unlimited healing! Luke 5:17, "It came to pass on a certain day as He was teaching there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by who were come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem and the power of the Lord was present for Him to heal them." In Chapter 9 of Luke also, I think it's in verse 6, you have a similar statement, "And they departed and went through the towns preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." As I told you last week, for all intense and purposes Jesus banished disease from Palestine. Incredible, immense, voluminous were His miracles.

Now beloved, when someone is marching through the countryside doing this he tends to attract a crowd and that is exactly what happened. Even phony healers today can draw crowds, and even the people who go away as sick as they were when they showed up insist on trying to find another healer, so often. Jesus healed everybody and naturally the crowd got larger and larger and that's what we find in verse 16, this massive crowd.

Now why did He heal them all? Well we could say it was because of His compassion and we would be right. He had compassion on people. He despised disease because He knew disease was a result of what, sin. That doesn't mean that every time you're sick is because you committed a certain sin. What I mean by that is because there is sin in the world; there is disease in the world. Because there is sin in the world, there is death in the world. So He despised sin and death and disease. And so in compassion toward people He healed them.

But there is more than that. He healed them, I think, another reason, He healed them because He was giving them a preview of His kingdom. You want to know what will happen when Christ sets up His eternal kingdom? There will be no more death. There will be no more sorrow. There will be no more pain. There will be no more sickness and here He comes banishing disease from Palestine, raising the dead. These are all previews of His eternal kingdom. Just as on the Mount of Transfiguration when He pulled back His flesh and revealed His glory, so does He give them visions of the coming glorious kingdom when disease is banished forever.

But there's yet a third reason why He healed and it is given in verse 17, and this is that to which the Spirit speaks. He did this in order that, it's a purpose clause, for the purpose of fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. Now the Old Testament had predicted that the Messiah would come and the prophets had said many many things about the Messiah, about the Christ of God, about the Savior of the world, about the Lamb of God who would take away sin. The Scripture said many things, and Jesus when He came was the fulfillment of all of those things, and among all of the sayings of the prophets was the statement of Isaiah 53:4, "That He would take our infirmities", you see it in verse 17, "And bear our sicknesses."

One of the things the Messiah would do would be to deal with disease and sickness. Jesus was going to do that. In fact, listen how wonderfully Jesus was going to set up a kingdom in which He would totally eliminate all sickness, all death, all disease, and all sin. And here He is giving them a taste of that.

Now when it says in Matthew 8, "He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses," that is from Isaiah 53. Now that's an important chapter in the Bible because it's the prediction of the death of Christ. Let me just read you several verses to help you get the context. "Surely he hath born our grief's and carried our sorrows." Now that's the statement that Matthew quotes. "He's born our grief's

and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem Him, stricken smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Now notice He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Jesus died for our sins, get that, our transgressions, our iniquities, our sins, and when it says, "With His stripes we are healed," it is not referring there specifically of physical healing, but of the healing of the disease of sin. But listen, indirectly when you heal sin you heal sickness, because sickness is a result of sin.

People say is there physical healing in the atonement? The answer is yes, there is physical healing in the atonement, but watch this, it isn't for now, it's for later. I'll put it this way: when Jesus died on the cross did he take away our sin? Yes. Do you, as a Christian, have any trouble with sin? Yes. He dealt with sin, but the fulfillment of that is yet future in its fullness, right? When He died on the cross did He remove and destroy the enemy death? Yes. Do Christians die? Yes. The full fulfillment is yet future. When He died on the cross did He deal with disease? Yes. Do we still get sick? Yes. That's still future too.

Yes, there's healing in the atonement just as there's deliverance from death in the atonement, just as the fullness of restoration to the glorious position of the believer before God in eternity is in the atonement, but still we wait till that day. And people who want to come along and say, "Well Christians should never be sick because there's healing in the atonement; you shouldn't have a cold, you shouldn't have cancer, you shouldn't have paralysis, you shouldn't have anything if you're a Christian because there's healing in the atonement," then logically have to say neither should a Christian ever sin, neither should a Christian ever die. That is not a proper teaching to say that Christians should not be sick anymore than that Christians should never sin, or they should never die. Even the people who teach that die, which must be a little hard on them.

Beloved, Christ died for our sins not our sicknesses. The gospel is good news about forgiveness, not health. Christ was made sin, not disease. Christ took away our sin not our sickness. He died on the cross for our sin. And we would never interpret Isaiah 53 any differently. We'd just say Isaiah 53 means He's healed us from sin if it weren't this use here in Matthew, because in Peter's, I Peter 2:24, when Peter says, "By His stripes we are healed," he says that having said who bore in His own body our sins." Peter's talking about the spiritual healing from sin. But Matthew opens up to us the fact that the statement, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases," extends from the sin problem to the sickness problem. Yes there's healing in the atonement. Yes there's wholeness there, but only in so far as it comes to us in the fullness of salvation, the redemption of our bodies when we're glorified in His eternal kingdom.

And so we see here that what you have really is just a taste of the kingdom, just a preview of the kingdom. Yes, someday He will bear our sicknesses away. Someday He will carry our infirmities all the way and this is a taste of that, which was said by the prophet Isaiah. You see? The great word!

Now there's a lot of other ways you can look at this. How did He bear our sicknesses? I think in a sense He bore our sicknesses because He felt sympathetically the pain. See Christ was omniscient. The Bible says He knew what was in the heart of man. He could read the mind. Nicodemus, you remember, came to Him and asked Him a question and He didn't answer that. He asked a question Nicodemus had in his head, but never asked. He did that a lot, cause He knew what was in a man, and if He's omniscient then He knows everything you've ever felt and thought, and if He is fully omniscient He knows it to its extremity, therefore, He can understand every pain you ever feel.

That's why the Bible says He is a sympathetic high priest who is touched with the feelings of our, what, infirmities. Same word. I believe He's born our sicknesses in the sense that He sympathetically feels the pain that we feel. You know He saw the crowd, didn't he, in Luke as I read to you and He was moved with, what? Compassion. That word means to suffer with. He felt their pain, you see, and He's a sympathetic high priest. He didn't get our diseases, but He fully felt our pain.

So there's a sense in which He took our infirmities and took our diseases by feeling with us the pain that they bring. Secondly, I think there's a sense in which He took our infirmities and took our sicknesses in that He felt the root of them. I think when He saw disease He felt the power of sin. For example, He stood at the grave of Lazarus, beloved Lazarus, He'd been in their home many times, the brother of Mary and Martha. Lazarus had been dead now many days and so Jesus stood by the grave. The Bible says He caused himself to groan in His spirit. He literally was writhing in agony in His heart and the next verse says He wept. Why? What was He groaning about? What was He weeping about? You say, "Because Lazarus was dead." No. No, because He was about to change that. He was about to call him out of the grave. He wasn't weeping for that. He wasn't groaning for that. For what then, because whenever He saw sickness He experienced the bitter vicarious reality of Calvary. He knew what caused all this pain and all this heartache, and all this sorrow and mourning and sadness was the evil of sin and He lived His life in the shadow of the cross and he never saw sickness without feeling the pain of sin. He hurt because He knew that it was sin that did it.

That's why in Matthew 9, there's a very important verse: verse 5, He said, "Which is easier to say, 'thy sins be forgiven thee; or rise and walk?'" The answer is neither is easier. They're both the same. If you have eliminated sickness you have eliminated its cause, sin. If you've eliminated sin you've eliminated its results, sickness. Which is easier? Neither is easier. Listen, anybody who can deal with sickness can deal with sin because sickness and sin are inextricably tied with a curse.

So Jesus came and dealt with the root and the fruit. But I think most supremely of all He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses means that when Messiah comes and goes to the cross He will deal with sin in such a devastating way that ultimately all sickness and all disease will be carried away and these healers that you see are simply a preview of that marvelous day. The king was there and He was offering His kingdom and He was previewing its elements. He was on display and so very clear was the evidence that a wayfaring man, though he be a fool need not err.

Now there were many Pharisees who hated turned and walked away. They loved their sin. They loved darkness rather than light. But then there were others who were attracted to Him. The magnetism of His personality, the thrill seekers, and they came, but in each case something kept them from genuine conversion. Let's see what it was. Three classic classic cases: Number one, personal comfort, personal comfort, verse 18. "Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, he gave commandment to depart to the other shore." They were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The crowd was becoming so massive; the Lord was weary in His physical body. In face on the boat ride across He fell asleep down in the hole of the boat on the wood planks. He needed time for prayer and refreshment. He needed time for respite, for meditation and the crowd could put pressures on Him, that were not necessarily in the plan of God, so He said, "I think we'd better leave, go to a new place, commanded them to depart to the other side."

Now when He did that immediately it pressed the issue of commitment with certain people because by then He had a lot of people following Him. In fact, Mark tells us that when He went on His little boat a bunch of other little boats went behind Him like a little flotilla following along. So some people were at the very crux of decision, do I get in the boat or do I stay. What do I do? And we meet these three people in our lesson this morning.

The first man was so interesting, but he never came to true salvation because he wanted personal comfort more than he wanted Christ. Verse 19, "And a certain scribe came and said unto him, 'Master, I will follow Thee where ever Thou goest.'" Oh man that sounds good, doesn't it? You could sing that song: Follow I will follow Thee every passing day. Wonderful. Hey we've got a live one, Lord, and guess what, he is a scribe. You know what the scribes, the scribes were the authorities in the law. The scribes were the ones who had the official sanction in the Pharisees. The scribes were qualified by Jewish authority to teach. The scribes were highly educated. The scribes were loyal to the system. They were the teachers, they weren't the followers of teachers, and the scribes were generally hostile, weren't they, to Christ. They generally joined the Pharisees in their antagonism and opposition, so when you get a scribe you've got a live one. A scribe! And he says, Master, *didaskalis*, teacher, rabbi, master, what an affirmation. I will unconditionally continuously follow you wherever you go. You got me for good. What a tremendous statement of dedication, permanent commitment. I'm sure the scribe thought Jesus was the greatest teacher he'd ever heard. They all marveled at that. I'm sure that when he saw these miracles he said, "This is of God. This is something else. This is unbelievable. This is attractive. I want to get close to this guy. Man wherever this guy is going I want

to go. He's irresistible."

Now if this guy showed up today we'd say, hey, great, we take you in. We're real eager to do that, but Jesus wasn't so eager. Listen to what He said to him. What a strange statement. I don't know was it just out of the blue, at first appearance, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Huh? What's that? Try that one again! The foxes, how did they get into this? The birds, you know what, this is a proverbial saying. It simply means the basic comforts of life that even wild animals have I don't have.

John 7, it says, "Every man went to his own house and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." He didn't have a house and He spent the night lying on the ground in prayer with the Father. In Luke Chapter 8, it lists for us the dear ladies who were hospitable to Him. How often it tells us that He stayed in the little house in Bethany. See He didn't have any personal comforts. He didn't have any worldly possessions. He didn't have anything to offer this guy. Well you say, "Why did He bring that up" because He could read his mind and He knew what the guy's hang up was. The guy was saying, "Man, my life is full and rich and I got all I want and my lifestyle satisfies me and I just want to add you to my lifestyle. I just want to take my whole gig and drag it along and follow you." Jesus refuses to cash in on a moment's popularity.

You remember back in John Chapter 2, He had done these same miracles in Jerusalem? And it says, "Many believed in His name." And then it says, "And He committed Himself to none of them because He need not have anybody tell Him what was in man, He knew what was in man." You know what that means? It means that He had no faith in their faith. He knew it was shallow, superficial, thrill-seeking. In fact, He classified these people in the parable of the seed. He said, "There's some seed you throw it and it gathers a little root and it springs up and as soon as the sun comes out it burns and dies." There are those people, you know, who want to jump on the band wagon and they look like they're alive for Christ and as soon as the persecution starts, as soon as it's not comfortable any more, as soon as you don't have a nest or a hole, as soon as you don't have the basic commodities of life then you want out, sun scorches it and it dies.

This scribe saw Jesus and he was magnetized. But Jesus knew human nature. He knew it was fickle. He knew it was instable. He knew it was self-centered. He knew that human nature hungered for sensations. The crowd, the miracles, the excitement, the scribe was fascinated. As Lenskey said, "He sees the soldiers on parade. He sees the fine uniforms. He sees the glittering arms and he's eager to join and he forgets the exhausting marches, the bloody battles, the graves, perhaps unmarked. You see for Jesus he's too ready, he's too eager, he's too complete in his offer. He's like a seed on stony ground, it grows quickly, it lacks root and it dies under the blazing sun of the price that has to be paid. You see this man never understood the basic principle of discipleship and that is self-denial; that is sacrifice; that is suffering. So Jesus hit him with it. He said, "I just want you to know one thing: you're not going to get any comfort out of this."

You know what the next verse says? It doesn't say anything about him. You know why? He isn't around. He left in the white space between verses 20 and 21. The Lord nailed him right where he was. He's gone. Isn't Jesus unlike us? We sugar coat the message. We want to make it so everybody can get in as easy as possible. He makes it so hard to keep them out, unless they have a genuine commitment.

I love the statement: "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The Son of man first appears in Daniel 7:13. Daniel prophesied that the Messiah would be Son of man, and Jesus came and said I'm Son of man. Do you know how many times that's used in the gospels? 80 times! Jesus affirmed He was the Son of man. What is it? It's a term of humiliation. Son of God speaks of deity. Son of man of His humiliation. He's saying, "In my humiliation I don't even have what foxes have, and the foxes were very common in those parts of the world in those times, and they would burrow little holes in the ground. And birds were everywhere and they had their nests, and He said, "I don't even have that." In my humiliation I don't have the basic comforts of life and if you're going to follow me you're going to have to be willing to give that up.

In Matthew 10:16, He said, "Now I'm going to send you forth." Later on He tells His apostles, "I'm going to send you forth. I'm going to send you like sheep in the midst of wolves." Now that's not a very inviting thing, is it? You're going to send us out like sheep in the midst of wolves? And just remember beware of men. They're going to deliver you up in councils, and scourge you in synagogues, they'll be brought before governors and kings, and they'll deliver you. Don't worry I'll give you what to say.

Verse 22, "You'll be hated of all men for my name's sake." Verse 23, "You'll be persecuted." Verse 24, and don't think you're going to be above your teacher. I've been getting it and you're going to get it." In John 15, He said, "Don't be surprised when men hate you. They hate me." Don't be surprised when they kill you and think they're doing God's service. Persecution, in this world you shall have tribulation. He said it to them. "All that will live godly," II Timothy 3:12, "All that will live godly in this present age will suffer persecution."

Matthew 5, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake." Hebrews 11, they just suffered and suffered all those heroes of the faith and at the end it says, "Of whom the world was not worthy."

There's a price to pay to be a Christian. This guy wasn't willing to pay the price. He just wanted to add excitement to his life. He was a potential Judas and nobody needs more than one of those. So, Jesus drove him away. It's like a young man who comes and expresses a desire for scholarship and we have to say to him, "Good, but are you prepared to scorn the delights of the world and study diligently to attain your goal?" Or an explorer who wants to gather a team to explore some uncharted portion of

the earth and everybody wants to line up until he gives a little speech about the snow and the ice, the searing heat, the swamps, the wild animals and all of a sudden the troops start disappearing.

But the young person who wants to be a great athlete and the trainer says to him, "Yes, but are you willing to make the sacrifice that it takes to be great?" You see we do Jesus a grave disservice if we lead people to believe that the Christian way is an easy way. It is not an easy way. I agree there no thrill like the way of Christ. There's no glory like the end of that way, but Jesus never said it would be easy. He always said that you had to take up your what, cross.

You see people who want personal comfort, they want to do their thing, they want to have their cake and eat it too, they just want to add Jesus to their already established life pattern, He refuses them. That's right, He refuses them.

There's a second person in this chapter. The first one didn't get entrance into the kingdom because he wanted personal comfort. The second one wanted personal riches: verse 21. Now watch this: "And another of His disciples." Now the word disciple is not an official word with a capital D. It simply means learner, follower, and at this particular point He's got a lot of people following Him of all different levels. And another one of these followers said to Him, "Lord, permit me to go first and bury my father."

Now you say, well I mean that sounds like a reasonable request, right? Can't leave the old guy just lying around dead, got to get him in the ground, certainly proper. The Jews didn't embalm so when somebody died you really had to get him in there fast. And on the other hand the Jews used to teach you needed to mourn for your father and mother thirty days when they died, so maybe he's talking about just need a month to get my act together and by the way in Genesis it tells us that the last responsibility of a son in his final act of devotion to his parents was to make sure that he cared for their burial. It's a very lovely thing to do. And so it sounds like a very reasonable request. I mean the man knows the Lord is on the move. He's going to get in a boat and leave and he says, "I just can't come, but I'll try to catch you later after I bury my father."

But there's a lot more here than meets the eye, because the phrase I must first go and bury my father is a colloquial phrase that appears in the Middle East even in contemporary times. Recently a doctor Waldmeyer was conversing with a Turk, Waldmeyer is a missionary in the Middle East, and he was talking with a rich young Turk and he advised this Turk to go on a certain trip to Europe and along with him, the missionary, and he thought he could disciple him and accomplish certain things with him, and after he finished his education to go along, to which the Turk replied, "I must first of all bury my Father." And the missionary Waldmeyer said, "Oh, young man, I had no idea he'd died. I'm just am so sorry. I hope I wasn't insensitive." He said, "Oh no." He said, "He isn't dead. He's not dead. That's just a phrase we use. My father is very much alive. I just have to stick around and fulfill my responsibility till he passes on. And then, of course, I will receive my inheritance." Oh, I see. I must

first go and bury my father who isn't even dead means I've been waiting a long time for my inheritance." Can I just hang around? The guy is tottering at this point, and when I get it all, think of how I can be used in the movement, see. The guy had the money on his mind. He was playing with trivia and it took the courage and commitment out of his discipleship. His father wasn't even dead.

Jesus said to him, "Follow me and let the dead bury their dead." Now again that's a sharp statement. At first it seems non-sensical. How can dead people bury dead people? Obviously dead people can't bury dead people unless the first kind are spiritually dead, and that's what he's saying. It's a proverb. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the spiritually dead bury their physical dead and then Luke adds in the parallel passage, "Go thou and preach the kingdom of God." What he's saying is look, this is a proverb again just like the one about the foxes and birds. The first one meant look I don't have any personal comforts. This one means let spiritually dead people bury their dead. Let the secular world take care of its own issues. You have been called to the kingdom of God. See the difference? What he's saying is you are functioning on the wrong level.

In other words let the system take care of itself. He's not saying Christians are forbidden to go to funerals. He's not saying if you're a Christian you're not supposed to make sure your father or mother get buried. It's a proverb and what he means is the world's passing affairs, the coming and going of people, the passing of fortunes from one to another is all part of a dead system. You are called to a living kingdom, go and preach the kingdom. You see the man's priorities are fouled up. Secular matters belong to the people who are secular. The human system takes care of itself, but this man what does it say he did? It's not there either. He left somewhere between verse 22 and 23. He disappeared. Why? Personal possessions were the big thing to him. He had waited a long time for his piece of the action. He wasn't bailing out now. Hey, he liked the thrill and the charisma and the wonder and the miracles and this was fabulous stuff and he wanted to get on the bandwagon, but there was no commitment there. He wanted his money.

It reminds me of another man in the 19th Chapter of Matthew who came to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" You say, "Oh isn't that wonderful?" Oh he says what will I have to do attain eternal life? And the Lord says to him verse 21, "If you would be perfect go and sell what you have and give to the poor, that you should have treasure in heaven and come and follow me." He said go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor. Is that how you get saved? You get saved by selling everything and giving all the money to the poor? No. But, if your money stands in the way and the money is the god, you're going to have to get rid of the money in order to get saved. That was the issue. You don't get saved by unloading your money, you just get the obstacle out of the way so you can get in the kingdom. Your money is in your way.

Here comes this young man and he says, "Oh I've kept all the law, I want eternal life." And Jesus says to him, knows exactly what's going on in his life. He's omniscient, knows every detail, He says, "All right take everything you have and give it to the poor, and He hit him right at the weak spot. The

next verse says, "The young man heard that, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions." He was sorry, sorry he couldn't get in the kingdom because he wanted to hold on to his money. What a fool, but a lot of people are like that. How sad it is. Personal comfort, personal riches, keep Christ from accepting people who come to Him. They're attracted, they're astounded, they're overwhelmed and they walk away forever because the price is too high.

There was a third guy who came that day only Matthew doesn't tell us about him, Luke does. Luke 9, very quickly, Luke 9, this is fascinating. Third guy, and Luke gives us basically the same story but he adds this third one. In the 61st verse of the 9th Chapter, it's a long chapter. "And another also said, here's the third one, "Lord I will follow Thee, but let me first go bid them farewell who are at home at my house." Well you say, "Why go on and say goodbye. Kiss your mother and shake hands with your dad and sure.

"Jesus said to him," and he gives him a proverb that went clear back to 800 B.C. It was originated with a man named Hessed. It was a very common proverb in the day. "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." What he basically says is it's very difficult to plow a straight furrow when you're looking backwards. I would guess that's fairly true, wouldn't you? I'm not accustomed to plowing furrows, but I can imagine that if you're trying to plow a furrow looking this way you would tend to get a little bit off. That's what He's saying.

Now what did Jesus know about this young man? Oh He knew a lot more than is on the surface. I'll follow you, let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home at my house. It's not his wife and kids, it's his mommy and daddy. Does that give you a little hint? Apron strings? You've heard about those? He was under the pressure, power, influence, domination of his parents and Jesus knew that if he went back there the malingering apron strings, the intimidation of the family, the pressure of being ostracized, the emotional pleas to stay and he would never come back. There are a lot of people like that. They'd come to Christ but they're afraid of what their family might say, what their family might do, what their father might say. They're afraid to be alienated and so they stay in a false religious system, or they keep back from Christ out of fear. Maybe they just show up now and the at church, just kind of peek in and they're trying to plow a furrow looking backwards.

Listen, it comes down to this people, Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set," listen to this, "set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." You get it? If that holds you back from full commitment, you are not fit to enter the kingdom of God. This is not talking about Christian service, people; this is talking about salvation. You can't get saved with those kind of strings. You're not fit to enter My kingdom. Half a heart is no heart.

The issue is not service; it is salvation. Because he could not commit all, Jesus offered him nothing, nothing, no halfway discipleship, no halfway anything, nothing. Personal relations, personal riches, personal comfort, all stand in the way. Sad! You say, "Well doesn't it say in John 6:37, 'Him that commeth unto Me I will in no wise, what, cast out?" Yes, but you say, "These people came and He cast him out." Yeah, but you see if you keep reading in John 6 you find out more. "Him that commeth unto Me I will in no wise cast out." And then you read later in the chapter, "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part with Me." What did He mean by that? You either take all or you get nothing.

And it says from that time many of His disciples walked no more with Him. They weren't willing to make the full commitment, and He turned them down. "Him that commeth unto Me I will in no wise cast out," if he comes on My terms, full surrender, with a beatitude attitude, a beggar in his spirit, mourning over his sin, meek before God, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, crying for mercy, and willing to be persecuted, hated, and reviled for my sake.

The master came to the slave one day and He said, "You have a joy and a happiness that I wish I had." He said, "What is it?" He said, "It's Jesus Christ." He said, "I want the Christ that you have." The slave said, "Then go put your white suit on and come down and work in the mud and you'll meet Him." He said, "I wouldn't do that. It's beneath my dignity." A year later he came back to the slave and he was in deeper problems and he said, "I want what you have." He said, "What I have is Jesus Christ." He said, "Well how can I know Christ like you do?" He said, "You put your white suit on, you come down and work with us in the mud and you'll meet Him." He said, "I won't do that."

In desperation some time later he came back a third time and he said, "I have to have what you have." And he said, "Well you know how, you get your white suit on and you come down and you work with us in the mud and you'll meet Him." And the master said, "I'll do it." The slave said, "You don't have to." "What do you mean you don't have to?" "You just have to be willing, that's all."

You see the Lord may not want to take away your personal comforts. He may not want to take away your personal possessions. He may not want to take away your personal relationships, but you have to be willing to let him if He wanted to, you see. That's the affirmation of His Lordship in your life. If you come saying, "I'll come but I'm hanging on to this, I'm hanging on to this, I'm hanging on to this and you give Him half a heart you get nothing. If you offer Him everything He may allow you to keep the portion. He may give you more than you have. It's the willingness that is the issue.

These three walked away and William MacDonald puts it so aptly, "They left Christ to make a comfortable place for themselves in the world and to spend their rest of their lives hugging the subordinate." What a statement. Are you a true disciple? Have you looked at the evidence? People through the centuries have marveled at Jesus' authority, His words, His works, His wisdom, His

purity, His truthfulness, His power, His provision, His healing, His love, His dominance, His judgment, His composure, His teaching, His independence, His condescension. They've marveled, they've been overwhelmed, they've been astounded, but they've walked away lost because they never came on His terms.

Listen to this in closing: Bishop Rhyle said, "The saddest road to hell is the one that runs under the pulpit, past the Bible, and through the middle of warnings, and invitations." I hope you hear what the Spirit of God is saying.

Father, thank you for our time this morning in Your word and in worship. Thank you for the music. The beauty of it still lingers in our hearts. We do pray, Lord, that You would bring to bear upon our lives this Your truth. Make us people that know how to cut the cord with the system and let the secular world have its own. Help us to live for the eternal. Help us to go and preach the kingdom. Help us to know the priorities. Give us the willingness to give up everything we have knowing full well You may give back to us more than we ever dreamed of having, knowing that it's not what we have but it's the attitude we have toward what we have.

Oh God may there be no disciples here who walk away from Christ because of personal comfort, personal possessions, personal relations. Father we pray that we might be contemplating how Your Spirit applies this to our own lives first before we think of others. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

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