

Meeting With Christ

Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pasteur Eric Chang

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THE SON OF MAN IS LORD

Matthew 12:1-8

Today, I would like us to fix our eyes on the glory of the Lord Jesus. We want to fix our eyes on Him and pray that God will help us to see some measure of that glory. We want to learn to enter into a deep fellowship with the Lord Jesus so that we can see more of that divine glory.

The glory of Christ

And for this, let's turn to Matthew 12:1-8. As I read this passage, just fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus and think about what you can see of that glory. Matthew 12:1-8.

Matthew 12:1. At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions;

4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent?

6 "But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here.

7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

8 "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

In this beautiful passage, we find that it begins with Jesus walking through the grainfields. The disciples were hungry and they took some of the grain of the corns. They plucked the heads of grain, rubbed the grain in their hands, blew away the chaff, and ate the grain. We saw in a previous lesson that in doing so, the disciples were perfectly within the bound of the law. They were not doing anything sinful.

But, it was a Sabbath day. And the Pharisees were there. They said, 'Look at your disciples. They are doing something that is against the law.' Eating is not the problem. The problem is about reaping the grain. Because it is work. And you are not supposed to work on the Sabbath. That was the charge of the Pharisees.

The religious person

I would like you to see the vast difference between being religious and being spiritual. To be religious is to be like the Pharisees. Religious people seem to be very petty about all kinds of small things. There is something repulsive about religious people because they are always behaving in terms of not breaking this law and not breaking that law. It seems that you are always displeasing God whether you go in one direction or another.

So one of the traits of the religious person is the negativeness. Everything is 'don't do this' and 'don't do that.' One has the impression that the religious person is always in bondage. His life is defined by the restrictions that he has or that he puts on himself. He is always on the defensive, fearing that he would pollute himself in some way or other. And so, everywhere he goes, he has to move in small circles because anything outside of that circle would be breaking the law.

It is a life that is so tiring. That's not the kind of life that God wants us to have. The Lord Jesus said, *Come to Me ... and I will give you rest*. When you fellowship with a spiritual man, you sense that he is relaxed, spiritually relaxed. That he has freedom and power. That his soul is at rest in his relationship with Christ.

The freedom of the Christian

And this brings about another element. The religious person always gives the impression that he has no great enjoyment in life, that he doesn't enjoy life very much. Life is a burden. He has to be constantly so careful about not breaking this law or that law. Paul says that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. I'm sure that if you had fellowship with Paul, you would feel in this man a great sense of freedom and liberation.

And it is the same with Jesus. When you look at Jesus, do you see in Him a sense of freedom as He moves through the fields and through the villages? Very often, He was involved with people and in situations that were considered as unclean by religious people. One amazing thing about Jesus is that wherever He advanced, the darkness retreated. He was not on the defensive against darkness. He advanced into the darkness and the darkness left.

Glory and power

We can learn to do the same thing when we are in close and deep fellowship with Jesus. That is why in Acts, we see that the people took knowledge of the apostles, these ordinary fishermen. They were different because they have been with Jesus and their lives have been completely transformed. Their lives struck even the Sanhedrin, these learned Bible scholars, as something very unusual. This transformation happened because the disciples learned to commune with Jesus. That's what made the difference.

Now, we are expected to do the same thing. A Christian should be able to go to a place, wherever that is, and make the whole place different by his very presence. You are not constantly defending yourself from being crushed by the world. On the contrary, your life should shine with such power that it goes out and conquers the others for Christ. That's the power that is available when we carry the name of Jesus.

Now you cannot talk about power without talking about glory. Power and glory are closely related. Listen to this relationship. As a Christian, you will have power when you show forth the glory of Christ. I repeat. You will have spiritual power when you show forth the glory of Christ.

In this passage, there are three things that point directly to the glory of Christ. And I would like to show you, one by one, where we see them and in what way they speak of the glory of Christ. When the Pharisees condemned the disciples of Jesus, the first thing that the Lord Jesus says in v. 3 is this: ...*Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions...*

Jesus and David

This incident about David and his men eating the showbread, the consecrated bread which is lawful only for the priests to eat, you can read it in the Bible in 1Samuel 21. Now, the point of quoting this passage has a purpose. It provides the basis of a comparison between Christ with David, and us with the disciples. For what is permitted to David, it does not automatically follow that it is permitted to us. Just because David could do it without being punished doesn't mean that anybody can do it.

Remember what was happening at that particular time in 1Samuel 21. David has been anointed by God as king of Israel. But he was not the king yet. Saul was still the king. However, God has rejected Saul as king. Because of his disobedience to God, God had to put Saul aside. It was a period of transition in the leadership of Israel. And so, in replacement of Saul, David was now appointed and anointed as king of Israel.

But at this point, he was only a refugee and an outcast. He was hiding in the mountains and in the caves because Saul and his army were looking for him with the intention of killing him. Before God was going to make David the true king of Israel, He was going to put him through many years of suffering in mountains and caves. And it was at this time that David wrote many psalms, psalms written in the midst of suffering.

Jesus, David's Lord

Now notice the comparison between David and Christ. At this time, David was a refugee in the mountains. At the time when Jesus was on earth, He was preaching the good news of salvation but the world does not recognize Him. The Lord Jesus is as it were an outcast, despised and rejected by men. The Lord Jesus is also God's anointed, despised and rejected by men. And just as Saul's men were looking everywhere for David to persecute him, to kill him if possible, so here we find that the Pharisees were doing the same thing. Anywhere Jesus goes, they are behind Him, looking for an opportunity to kill Him. And in the end, they did. And so, the comparison is this. Just as David was going about the task of establishing a new reign in Israel, so now Jesus is going about establishing a new kingdom, the kingdom of God. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matthew 3:17).

There we see the beauty of this parallel between the Lord Jesus and David. But there is a difference. Jesus is not David. Jesus is David's Lord, and therefore He is greater than David. Many times in the OT, you will find that David is spoken of as a messianic title. It is not referring to the David in history, but to a David who will come later on. For example, you will notice that the prophet Ezekiel is speaking about David in chapter 34. How can he still be speaking about David when David has died and gone already? Well, because the prophet is speaking about another David, a greater David, the messianic David, who will establish a kingdom that will last forever. That is why the Lord Jesus can quote this passage and apply it to Himself and His disciples. He is showing that He is fulfilling a prophecy of the prophets. And He is also showing that God's anointed ones and those who fear Him are found to be blameless when they have their needs met even by using the bread of the altar.

Greater than the temple

So the first point that demonstrates the glory of Jesus is the fact that Jesus is David's Lord. The second point is even more explicit. It is the fact that Jesus is the Lord of the temple. This is the next thing that He says in this passage. Matthew 12:6

*Matthew 12:6. But I say to you, that **something** greater than the temple is here.*

Notice this interesting word. The Lord Jesus says '**something greater**', not 'someone greater' than the temple is here. In the Greek text, this one thing is a neuter. What is this 'something' that is greater than the temple? Some commentators will say that Jesus Himself was greater than the temple and they will prefer the translation that the New King James Version offers, ...*there is One* (with a capital O) *greater than the temple*, the word 'One' obviously referring to the Lord Jesus.

Now, that is quite true, but not accurate enough. In expounding the Bible, it is important for us to be very accurate otherwise we might miss some important points that God wants to tell us in His Word. The Greek language of course has a masculine. If the Bible wanted to say that Jesus' person was greater, then it would have used the masculine, not a neuter. If the neuter is used here, we have to look for the reason. Here the Lord Jesus is referring to something very specific. The reason why He wants to use the neuter is because He is referring to His own body. You see, in the Greek, the word for 'body' is a neuter. And in John 2:19, the Lord Jesus speaks about His own body as the temple. He says, *Destroy this **temple**, and in three days I will raise it up*. Two verses later, we read the explanation that *He was speaking about the **temple of His body***. Jesus' body was going to be crucified but on the third day, He will raise from the dead.

Something is greater than the temple. The temple was at the center of Israel's religious activity. It was a place of atonement and reconciliation. And Jesus makes this striking statement, that He is greater than the temple. How can that be? Because all the blood of bulls and goats inside the temple could never atone for the sins of man. That's what Hebrews 10 tells us. ...*every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices* (Hebrews 10:11)... *but it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins* (Hebrews 10:4). But now, the Lord Jesus, with His own blood in this temple, takes the sins of man. Hebrews 10:10 tells us that *By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ one for all*. That is why Jesus is greater than the temple. That is why Jesus is the Lord of the temple.

Lord of the Sabbath

So Jesus is David's Lord. Jesus is the Lord of the temple. And the third thing, we read it in v. 8. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. He is greater than the Sabbath. Now think about it. This is a staggering statement to make. Because it implies that He is greater than the law since the Sabbath is part of the law. Who can be lord of the law?

What is revealed here is that Jesus is Lord in the sense that He is the lawgiver. Nobody else can be Lord of God's law unless He is God Himself. And this is exactly what we see in the Sermon on the Mount. We read several times, *It was said to you before, **but now I say to you***. Only Jesus could say that. Because He is God, He can say it with the same authority than the One who gave the law.

The Son of Man is Lord. He is the Lord of David. He is the Lord of the temple. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. Do you see the glory of Jesus in this passage? The world doesn't see it. The world does not recognize Jesus as Lord, just as David was not being acknowledged though he was anointed king of Israel at that time. But one day, David became king of Israel. And the day is not too far when the Lord Jesus will be Lord in this world too. One day, the Bible tells us, every knee in this world is going to bow to Jesus.

This process has already started. And we, as the disciples of Jesus, play a key role in this process. Because if you are truly a servant of the King of kings and of the Lord of lords, even the worldly person will see and notice it. You carry on your person a certain strange fragrance from heaven, a certain strange majesty and glory, strange in the eyes of the world. And this is what draws people.

As I said earlier in this message, people took knowledge of these simple men who were with Jesus. They noticed that there was something about Jesus in these fishermen. And this fragrance from heaven comes from communing with Jesus. Here we need to know what it means to commune with Him in spirit. And I will conclude this lesson with this topic.

Learning to commune with God

We can define four kinds of contact with people. There is a **physical** contact. When you shake hand with someone, you have a physical contact with that person. There is also a **mental** contact. You have a mental contact, for example, if you are discussing something with somebody. Then there is an **emotional** contact. When you share the same emotions as your spouse or your best friend, you have an emotional contact with him or her. So there is a physical contact. There is a mental contact. There is an emotional contact. But there is also a **spiritual** contact. Do you know what it means to have a spiritual contact? This is where we go blank.

When a child first grows up, he is mostly physical. The most immediate need that he has is food. But gradually, as he grows up, we see a change. He looks at his fingers, he recognizes people, he laughs when you laugh. And as he goes on, he becomes more and more sophisticated.

It is the same with spiritual activity. When we are born again, when we have the life of Christ coming into our soul, we begin to have spiritual activity. We begin to communicate with God. Of course, don't expect to make a speech to God. Our communication with God is a very elementary one at the beginning. At first, it sounds more like noises. But then, you are able to say a few words. If you can just say, 'Abba, Father', I tell you, in God's ears, it sounds so beautiful. It's like the baby who says 'mommy' or 'daddy' for the first time. Spiritual activity is about what comes straight from the heart to God. When you commune with God, you don't have to make a long speech. Just say something from your heart to God, even if it is only one word that comes from the depth of your heart.

Without being too dogmatic about it, we can say that physical contact has to do with my body. Mental contact has to do with my mind. Emotional contact has to do with my heart. Spiritual contact has to do with my spirit. When we pray to God, these four kinds of contact can be active at the same time. But I think that the most active one should be the spirit.

Praying with the spirit

Paul says in 1Corinthians 14:15, ... *I will **pray with the spirit** and I will pray with the mind also* ... Notice that the difference between praying with the spirit and praying with the mind is clearly stated. These are two different things. Do you know when you are praying with the mind and when you are praying in the spirit? We tend to pray only with the mind because our spirit is undeveloped. Like the baby's undeveloped mind, our spirit is very undeveloped. And so we make incoherent spiritual sounds. And from there, as we advance more and more spiritually, we begin to say words and sentences that make sense. We are able to communicate with God at a much deeper level.

And when you learn to communicate with God in spirit, you will also learn to receive His response. There are things of God that you might not understand at this moment. But as you go on, as

you commune with Him, God begins to make more and more sense to you. So the key to a sweet fellowship with God is to learn to pray in spirit.

And as you commune with God in this way, God will empower you with His righteousness. People will begin to see the beauty, the majesty and the glory of Christ in you. And when they see that, our hope is that they will come to acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.