

16.11.25 am

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[0 : 00] And if we could turn now in our Bibles, please, to Matthew chapter 17.! Matthew chapter 17.

As we continue going through Matthew, we come to the section from verses 14 down to the end of verse 23.

We looked last Sunday morning at the Transfiguration. Jesus calls the disciples, or three of the disciples, Peter, James and John, to the top of a high mountain.

They receive the most amazing experience. They know blessing like they've never known before as they see the glory of Jesus. But then they have to come back down from the mountain.

And when they get back down, reality hits very quickly as they're in amongst suffering. So this is God's Word. Matthew chapter 17 and at verse 14.

[1 : 06] And when they, that's Jesus and Peter and James and John, came to the crowd, a man came up to him and kneeling before him said, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and suffers terribly.

For he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples and they could not heal him. And Jesus answered, O faithless and twisted generation, How long am I to be with you?

How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, Why could we not cast it out?

He said to them, Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there.

And it will move. And nothing will be impossible for you. As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.

[2 : 17] And they will kill him. And he will be raised on the third day. And they were greatly distressed. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

We'll sing again now to God's praise. And we will sing from Psalm 23. And we'll sing the first two stanzas of the Psalm in Gaelic.

Verses 1 to 4 as it's marked in the English. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie in pastures green. He leadeth me the quiet waters by.

My soul, he doth restore again. And me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness, even for his own name's sake. These two verses of Psalm 23, we remain seated to sing to God's praise in Gaelic.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll be seated. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll be seated. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll be seated.

[3 : 23] The Lord's my shepherd, I'll be seated.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll be seated.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll be seated. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 19] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. hearts that they would be trusting you Lord Jesus from the earliest of years and as we pray for the young we pray for the old those who may desire to be with

us today but who are in their homes listening at a distance we pray that they may know also that you are with them and we pray that you would give them and all of your people the strength to keep on keeping on for all the days that you've put before us so hear our prayers help us Lord we ask we pray for the congregations around us every denomination where Christ crucified is preached we pray that you would continue Lord to to bless them to build up your people to build your church Lord Jesus and we pray for congregations that we're connected with for visitors with us Lord that you would bless the places that they've come from we pray for those who have served you overseas who are back here with us and as we are thankful for that we remember those that they have left behind and those who may meet in quiet places that they would know that you are with them we ask now Lord that you would continue with us and help us as we look to you we ask this in Jesus name Amen as we go through Matthew Matthew's gospel as we've been doing so over the last while our focus as the sign above my head says our focus is on on Jesus we focus on Christ we fix our eyes on Jesus but as we look to Jesus in the gospel narrative we get to know the disciples those that he called to be to be with him and these disciples were the first ordained men we're talking about ordination to to eldership today the disciples that Jesus put around him were the first ordained men the ordination takes place in Matthew chapter 10 J.C. Ryle commenting on Matthew 10 says here is the record of the first ordination which ever took place in the church of [9 : 53] Christ the Lord Jesus chooses and sends forth the 12 apostles so we have that in Matthew chapter 10 and then in the chapters that follow these men who are ordained who are sent out they go out in Jesus name and as they do so Jesus teaches them sometimes he teaches them in in private study sessions sometimes he teaches them through their mistakes which were not just one or two but were peppered all through the gospels but Jesus through private study through sometimes catastrophe teaches these men how to follow him and how to serve him well and today as we prepare for Scott's ordination I want to look at this passage with with that in mind I want to think about this passage where Jesus teaches those whom he sends out in his name both back then and still today Jesus teaches them he teaches us what we are to do as we seek to follow him and what we're to do as we seek to lead others to follow Jesus five very simple lessons from the verses that we have lesson number one is serving Jesus will have highs and it will have lows so point number one serving Jesus will have highs and lows now if we just think about the the last section that we were in in Matthew 17 and if we isolate just for a moment

Peter and James and John those who were closest to Jesus let's just remember where they've just been they've just been as we read in verses one through two verse 13 they've just been up on a mountaintop with Jesus and on that mountaintop they had an experience which was literally out of this world they saw the the glory of Jesus as the curtain was pulled back just for a moment so they could see with their eyes who Jesus really was in all his celestial light they received a blessing such as they'd never known before and so this experience that they had gone through in the transfiguration was a spiritual high such as they could never have imagined and Peter whom we love and have so much in common with

Peter when he's on the top of this mountain he is just loving it he's having the time of his life and Jesus well Peter makes clear to to Jesus that he just liked to stay up on the top of this mountain he says I can get the toolbox I can start building some tents let's just all stay up here it's wonderful up here he didn't want this high that he's experiencing to to end and so he says to Jesus why why don't we just park up here for a while but Peter's calling was not to lead Jesus was to follow Jesus and so just as Peter had followed Jesus up the mountain soon after that Peter has to follow Jesus down the mountain and when they get back down things have gone from light to dark there's a crowd who are at the bottom of this mountain and in that crowd there's a boy a young boy verse 15 who is suffering terribly we'll think about that more in a minute and there's the father of this boy who is understandably distraught as he sees his son suffer and there's disciples who are stressed and the reason they're stressed is because they have been asked to help this boy who's suffering and they've tried to help they've tried to heal him and it's been a big fail they've not done anything positive actually they've made the father and the boy just feel worse so the disciples as a group of 12 and especially the three they have gone from a high point to a very low point and that's the nature of the Christian life and that's the reality of what it's often like to follow Jesus and serve Jesus it's a bit like being on a roller coaster there are highs and we're thankful for the highs when we get them there are the mountain top experiences there are the times of blessing that we need and we so much appreciate and then there are the lows and the lows can be hard and dark and

difficult but the important thing for the disciples to learn and the important thing for us to learn if we are following and seeking to serve Jesus is that through the highs and through the lows we keep looking to Jesus we keep listening to Jesus we keep following Jesus so that's lesson number one serving Jesus will have highs and lows second point lesson number two is that serving Jesus following Jesus involves being with Jesus and also being with people serving Jesus involves being with Jesus and being with people look at verse 14 and 15 and 16 and when they came to the crowd a man came up to Jesus and kneeling before him said

Lord have mercy on my son for he has seizures and he suffers terribly for often he falls into the fire and often into the water and I brought him to your disciples and they could not heal him so again just again just thinking about about where they're at Peter and James and John specifically they have been with Jesus in an amazingly intimate way and they're still with Jesus that was their calling Mark chapter 3 verse 14 the calling of the disciple is to be to be with him but Jesus didn't take the disciples out of the world and away from the people Jesus didn't allow Peter to set up some kind of spiritual retreat on the top of the mountain where they can learn yoga and practice mindfulness he takes them down from the mountain and he takes them he takes them again and again into the crowds he takes them right into the middle of large groups of broken and lost people where they could see and feel the compassion of Jesus as he reached out to these broken people and where they would also have opportunity to bring lost and broken people to Jesus so we see this boy here and he's suffering greatly and this suffering is physical spiritual but it's not just physical and medical it's also spiritual we'll learn that as the verses go on

J.C. Ryle makes this comment he says we are told of the evil spirit pressing in pressing him on to the destruction of body and soul so there's this little boy we're told says Ryle of the evil spirit pressing him on to the destruction of body and soul it is painful enough says Ryle to see the bodies of those we love wracked by disease how much more painful it must have been to see body and mind completely under the influence of the devil so there's a dark influence behind this scene there is a dark satanic power that is pressing in on this young boy so what does the boy need and what does the father of the boy need well they need Jesus they need

[20 : 14] Jesus and that picture that we see in this little section here it's replicated over and over in the scriptures and it's replicated over and over in our world today there are so many people who are broken and who are lost and who are distressed and they're outside and they're inside because as much as we tell each other that we're fine nobody's really fine what do the people outside and inside need what do we need who do we need we need Jesus like sheep without a shepherd often we are lost not sure which way to go and we need

Jesus and our calling if we are Christians if we are disciples of Jesus is still to be with Jesus not just week by week but day by day it's our calling it's our responsibility it's our privilege it's the main thing in our lives more than we need food for our bodies we need Jesus to be with him so that we can ask him day by day sometimes hour by hour to give us the strength and the grace that we need to follow him to serve him and having received the grace that Jesus gives to us what are we supposed to do next we're supposed to go out into the world so that we can bring others who don't know where to go to Jesus having felt the touch of

Jesus his compassion his grace we're supposed to go out to other people so that through us hopefully they can feel something of the compassion and the grace and the love and the kindness and the mercy of Jesus and having looked to the one who is the way and the truth and the life we are called as Christians to point lost people to the one who is the way and the truth and the life serving Jesus involves being with Jesus and with people so Scott maybe just a very short practical word for you and for me as we are called to serve the Lord

Jesus we are not to neglect our time in the quiet place in the study where we can be with the Lord and speak to him in prayer and listen to him as he speaks to us through the Bible but our calling is not to lock ourselves away there in the study in the quiet place having spent time with Jesus you and I are to get out of our studies and to get amongst people that need Jesus and who needs Jesus everybody everybody needs Jesus that's lesson number two serving Jesus involves being with Jesus and being with people lesson number one serving Jesus will have highs and it will have lows mountaintops and then ground level ground zero experiences third lesson serving Jesus requires faith the disciples were learning this the hard way so at the end of verse 16 there's a father who says

I brought him to I brought my son to your disciples they could not heal him and then Jesus responds in verse 17 and answers oh faithless and twisted generation how long am I to be with you how long am I to bear with you bring him here to me and Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him and the boy was healed instantly then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said why could we not cast it out he said to them because of your little faith for truly I say to you if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed you will say to this mountain move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you the disciples of Jesus were learning here that they were not called to be social workers they were called to be supernatural workers they had been sent by [26 : 25] Jesus onto the front line of a spiritual battle and for them to survive and for them to thrive in the work that Jesus had called them to do they needed faith and that seems to be lacking in this episode the boy who was suffering was under attack by a demon there was a spiritual oppression disciples tried to cast out this demon they tried to help to heal the boy but they couldn't do it and so we find them at this point and they're scratching their heads they're throwing their hands up in the air they're utterly helpless and humiliated actually because they can do nothing and the boy is still suffering and the father is totally distraught and they're stressed out and they don't know what they've done wrong because they've seen other people being healed they've seen other people being released from a demonic oppression and so

Jesus tells them in verse 20 the reason that this has been a total failure it's because of your little faith because of your unbelief Warren Weerspey the commentator speculates might not be true but he speculates as to what might have been happening in the experience of the nine who were left at the bottom of the mountain Peter and James and John at the top having the time of their lives nine at the bottom saying I wonder what they're doing so Weerspey says the nine were perhaps jealous because they had not been called to go to the mountain top with Jesus during the Lord's absence they began to grow self indulgent they neglected prayer their faith weakened then when crisis came they were unprepared we don't know that for sure but it doesn't seem too far fetched certainly what we know is that their faith levels had gone from high to low unbelief had come in and unbelief is like a weed that chokes effective service of

Jesus unbelief is like a virus that makes the servant of Jesus sick and unable to do anything Ryle says faith is the key to success in the Christian warfare unbelief is the sure road to defeat so serving Jesus requires faith and Jesus increases their little faith as he speaks to them and yes Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith but then he encourages them with this picture of being able to move mountains not literally but he's using a picture to say you can do amazing things when you believe in me and still today whether we are in ministry or eldership or whatever Jesus has called us to do still still today serving Jesus requires faith because often times Jesus asks us to go to places and do things that seem!

impossible! Neither Scott or I are the kind of people who stand comfortably at the front of a church there isn't a Sunday morning that we both don't say this just feels totally impossible but our calling whatever it is that Jesus has called us to do that's our calling all of us is to trust him and to obey him and to go forward often fearfully but in faith believing that he is able to use us in whatever he's calling us to do and when our faith levels are low what are we to do?

[31 : 48] we're to do the same as what the disciples did and that's listen to the word of Jesus 99 out of 100 times when I speak to people or when I look at my own life and I know that faith levels are low 99 out of 100 times this is the reason it's closed we're not reading the word of God we're not taking time to be with him so if our faith levels are low we are to take time to listen to the word of Jesus Romans 10 17 says faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ serving

Jesus requires faith that's lesson number three lesson number four very briefly is serving Jesus requires prayer and fasting and some of you will see this and some of you won't see this because you're using different Bible versions for those who don't take a Bible and just depend on the screen this will pass you by it's why it's good to have a Bible but you'll see there's a variation in the biblical text in terms of verse 21 if you have an ESV and an NIV in your hand in front of you look for verse 21 and you'll be looking for a while because it's not there but if you've got King James version you can look for verse 21 and you'll find out right away there's some debate by the scholars as to whether it should be in or whether it should be out for verse 21 in the

ESV footnote it says this some manuscripts insert verse 21 but this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting and so lesson four I can't remember if I said it serving Jesus requires prayer and fasting and whether the verse should be in Matthew or out of Matthew I'm not enough of a biblical

scholar to really know it's debated but if you go to Mark chapter 9 verse 29 and he gives us the parallel account and it's Peter that's telling Mark what to write it's very clearly there in that account that serving Jesus requires prayer and fasting and this sheds light on why the disciples were struggling and why they can't do very much and why their faith levels were low it was because one they weren't listening to the word of Jesus but two because they were not praying and fasting so Jesus says the reason you can't cast this demon out the reason you failed in this encounter is because you weren't praying and fasting so the very simple application is serving Jesus requires prayer and fasting and it might not be that we should be fasting food we think about fasting always as food it might not be that we should be fasting food I certainly wouldn't recommend that Scott would spend any time fasting food I'm just jealous of his waist fifteens but fasting for us might be fasting our phones for a while it might be fasting social media might be fasting Netflix it might be fasting an extra hour in the morning fasting time that we don't really need to be sleeping through but we sleep through anyway might be fasting time in the garage or the golf course or the croft or whatever the discipline of fasting which Jesus expects from us is a discipline that always involves freeing up time and the time that is freed up should should be used to pray to ask for the strength to serve

Jesus so that was the lesson for the disciples back then and that's a lesson that we have to keep on learning today serving Jesus requires prayer and fasting final lesson serving Jesus requires a focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus look at verse 22 as they were gathering in Galilee Jesus said to them the son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him and he will be raised on the third day and they were greatly distressed so Jesus he has the twelve around him and he says to them the son of man that's the name he used for himself he's about to be delivered I'm about to be delivered says Jesus into the hands of men and they will kill me and I will be raised on the third day and the disciples understandably are greatly distressed because this isn't the first time that Jesus has said this this is the second time the first time came as a shock if you go back to verse 21 of the last chapter

[38 : 00] Matthew 16 verse 21 it says from that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised and he said that to the disciples and Peter he's just realized who Jesus is that he's the Christ he's the son of God and Peter's on a high and then Jesus says this and Peter says never Lord that can't happen no suffering for you no dying for you and Peter is rebuked by Jesus he tells him to be quiet he actually tells Satan in him working speaking through Peter to be quiet but it was a point of great distress that Jesus said to the disciples I will suffer I will die I will rise first time Matthew 16 second time here third time

Matthew 20 we'll get there some point verses 17 and 19 again Jesus tells the disciples that he will die and rise he will suffer and soon after Jesus said these things everything that he predicted was fulfilled that came to pass and he did suffer and he did die and he did rise but as we finish we need to just ask the question why this focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus especially why the focus when it's so upsetting how does Jesus keep saying this when he can see it's upsetting the disciples well the reason that there's this focus on the death and resurrection of

Jesus is because without it without the cross without the death and resurrection of Jesus there's no hope for sinners without the death and resurrection of Jesus there is no prospect of salvation so he came to suffer he came to die he came to rise he spoke about it he predicted it and he did it we often sing because the sinless saviour died my sinful soul is counted free for God the just is satisfied to look to look on him the resurrected Jesus and pardon me so if we are to be saved and it's likely there's somebody here who yet isn't saved if we are to be saved from our sin it's not about what we do it's not about how many

Sundays we sit in these chairs years it's not about putting our hand up in a Billy Graham conference a thousand years ago it's not about how many religious works we can do if we are to be saved it's about the work of Jesus the fact that he suffered for our sin he died to pay the price of our salvation he rose to make it possible for us to have life that is eternal so to be saved we're to believe in him and all that he's done and if we are to be involved in the ministry of saving souls we must stay focused on the death and the resurrection of

Jesus so lesson one serving Jesus will have highs and it will have lows lesson two serving Jesus involves being with Jesus and it involves being with people lesson number three serving Jesus requires faith lesson four serving Jesus requires prayer and fasting sometimes to make time for

prayer lesson five serving Jesus requires a focus a focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus because that's the only way that anyone can be saved so may

[43 : 53] God enable us to follow and serve the Lord Jesus we'll pray for a moment Lord Jesus we thank you for these lessons which are not closed and private but have been included in the scriptures that we may benefit from all that you shared with your disciples and we confess that we make every mistake that the disciples made we confess that we often are helpless and confused and exasperated and not knowing what we did wrong and yet we thank you Lord that you tenderly keep bringing us back to the fact that we are to come to you and to abide in Christ to spend time in your word to spend time in prayer and as we wait upon you we thank you that you give us the strength to serve you in the places and the ways that you call us to we thank you

Lord Jesus for the fact that you came to this world in order to suffer that you were bruised for our transgressions that our iniquities were placed upon you we thank you that you died to pay the wages of our sin and you rose from the dead and said because I live you too shall live and we know that that's the promise that is given to us if we believe so give us faith having listened to your word we pray that you would give us faith that we would believe that we would be saved that we would follow you closely and that we would serve you well and we pray this in Jesus name Amen