

The Power of the Kingdom Overcomes the Terrifying Hold of Sin

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Date: 14 June 2020

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn to our Bibles now and to our Bible reading from today and you'll find that in the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew and in Matthew chapter 8.

Last week we began to look at Matthew chapter 8 at the beginning. We'll be with it this week and also next week. And here is a long section where we're reading about Jesus demonstrating the life and indeed the message of his glorious liberating kingdom.

Demonstrating it in his mighty works, each of which pictures something wonderful about what his gospel is really all about. And Matthew is showing that to us in the way he's placed these things together right after the Sermon on the Mount.

And last week we looked at verses 1 to 22 of chapter 8. We're going to pick up with the next little triad of stories at Matthew 8 verse 23.

And we're reading through to chapter 9 verse 17. When Jesus got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves.

[1 : 11] But he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, Save us, Lord, we're perishing. And he said to them, Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?

Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea. And there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, What sort of a man is this, that even the wind and waves obey him?

And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, that is Gentile people, two demon-possessed men met him coming out of the tomb, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

And behold, they cried out, What have you to do with us, O son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time? Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them.

And the demons begged him, saying, If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs. And he said to them, Go. So they came out and went into the pigs.

[2 : 21] And behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city, they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed man.

And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region. Getting into the boat, he crossed over and came to his own city.

And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven.

And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, This man's blaspheming. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?

For which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[3 : 30] And he said to the paralytic, rise. Pick up your bed. And go home. And he rose and went home.

And the crowd saw it, they were afraid. And they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew, sitting at the text booth.

And he said to him, follow me. And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many text collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with text collectors and sinners? But when he heard it, he said, Those who are well have no need of a

physician, but those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast?

[4 : 44] But your disciples do not fast. Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment. The worst tear is made.

Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst, and the wine's spilled, and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins.

And so both are preserved. Amen. And may God bless to us this his word.

Well, it will help greatly if you'd turn with me to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8, and to the passage we read there, chapter 8 and 9. We saw last time, I think, that Matthew's careful structure makes it clear that these chapters, 8 and 9, are one unit with one clear message.

[5 : 57] And it's all about the transforming joy that Jesus and his kingdom bring to this world. In the Sermon on the Mount, in chapters 5 to 7, Jesus is teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom in words.

And then in chapters 8 and 9, he is, we're told, healing every disease and every affliction of man, wherever he goes. And so he's demonstrating that wonderful joy for everybody to see vividly.

He has come to regenerate the whole universe, to reverse the curse of sin in every manifestation of it in this whole world of humanity and this whole world of nature.

And it's all part of Matthew's exposition, his opening up of the work of Jesus Christ, which began right at the beginning of the Gospel, chapter 1, do you remember?

In the angel's declaration to Joseph, you'll call his name Jesus, he said, because he will save his people from their sins. So right from the start, it's sin and it's righteousness that is the issue that explains the coming of Jesus Christ into this world.

[7 : 15] By the way, that's why it's astonishing to me when liberal Christians sometimes say differently. They say, no, no, no, all that stuff about sin comes later on. It comes from the nasty apostle Paul who invented all that sort of things.

But if you read the Gospels, oh, what you see there is Jesus' priority. He's not interested in sin. He's not interested in repentance. What Jesus is really interested in is being a social justice warrior.

Well, all I can say, friends, to that is that if you really think that, you can't possibly have read through the Gospels. Read them. The very first Gospel word announcing Jesus' imminent arrival from John the Baptist in Matthew 3, verse 1 is repent.

Repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That's what he shouted. What he meant is, therefore, judgment is coming for sin. Jesus' own first word, Matthew 4, verse 17.

Exactly the same. Repent because the kingdom of heaven is coming. Not riot and bring about the heavenly ideas you think you want, repent, but repent.

[8 : 26] Because heaven's real values are actually about to confront you face to face. Perhaps that's quite a pertinent word for our world today, isn't it? Jesus does, of course, speak about revolution.

But the revolution he brings and the revolutionary life that he teaches about in the Sermon on the Mount is not the abolition of law, certainly not the abolition of God's law.

It's the glorious fulfillment of it, just as the prophets had promised. In the perfection, at last, of the whole world. And in the perfection, at last, of human nature.

Which we see, of course, in Jesus himself. But that can happen only where there is a decisive dealing with the root problem of this world.

The root problem of human nature. And that is the problem of sin. Somebody said to me this past week that the problems we're seeing around the world at the moment with these demonstrations, the problems, the real problems, are not with people's skins, but with people's sin.

[9 : 35] And the real solution comes not from race, but only from God's grace. And here in Matthew chapter 8 and 9, we have a marvelous display of Jesus' absolute power and authority over sin in all its manifestations.

All its consequences. All the multifarious miseries that it brings in this world. including all the horrible displays that we still see all around us in the world today.

We saw last time in verses 1 to 22 of chapter 8, the tragic hopelessness of sin and its power to exclude from human life as life was meant to be.

Life in all its fullness. Life that's truly whole. Life that is at home in the presence of God and his people forever. But Jesus reverses that hopelessness.

He reverses sin's power to exclude from life. He brings the outcasts home. We saw that. Home to himself. In completeness of fellowship with him.

[10:45] The unclean leper brought into Jesus' presence. The untouchable Gentile. The unnamed woman. All of them. Recipients of his grace and mercy.

But here in the next three stories, and in Matthew's application of those, that's the chapter we're looking at this morning, verse 23 of chapter 8 to verse 17 of chapter 9. Here we see another acted out word showing us Jesus' authority.

Jesus' power and his kingdom overcomes the terrifying hold that sin has over us. It liberates men and women from sin's power to enslave human life.

Now we need to understand something important here. The Bible teaches us that the real truth about sin is not just the fruit of man's rebellion against God.

It's not just our sins. It's not just the things that we do and the consequences of these that lead us into guilt before God. Sin is far more than that. Sin is, in fact, a mighty power.

[11:55] Sin is, in fact, a mighty power. It's a personal power that has become the ruler in this whole cosmos. God created man, you see, in the beginning to be his image, to rule the cosmos, the world, the creation.

But our rebellion as human beings has allowed that dark power of evil to get a hold over the whole wide world and a terrible hold on the very heart of man himself.

So that we're not just hopeless and excluded from God. We are enslaved in a dominion of sin.

We're ruled by dark powers, by sinister powers. That's what Paul speaks about if you read Romans chapter 6. Sin is a dark power. He likens it to a monarch, to a slave master, to a general, to a brutal employer.

And, in fact, the very first mention in the whole Bible of sin, back in the word, comes first in Genesis chapter 4, verse 7, in the story of God speaking to Cain.

[13:05] And sin is portrayed there as a power. Sin is crouching at the door. And its desire is to have you, to dominate you. And that's the deepest truth about sin.

And that's what explains our world. That's what explains the brutality, the inhumanity, the evil, the horror, the wickedness that we see in our world. The world and the people of this world are in bondage, in slavery to the power of sin and evil.

But the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus declares Jesus' authority over all the powers of darkness, all the things that bring slavery to human life.

And that's exactly what Matthew is showing us here in these stories. That's what Jesus is acting out in these stories. First of all, look at verses 23 to 27, because they show us that Jesus rebukes with authority the powers of sin and evil over creation itself.

He got into the boat, the disciples followed him, and behold, there was a great storm on the sea.

And the boat was being swamped by the waves. But Jesus was asleep. They went to him and woke him and said, Save us, Lord, we're perishing.

[14:30] And he said to them, Why are you afraid, you have little faith? And he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea. And there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, What sort of a man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Jesus rebukes with authority the powers of sin and evil. Over creation. We all know this story very well, I think.

But perhaps we haven't quite grasped the full significance of it. Because it's not just Jesus' power over the natural world that's being displayed here. It's evidence of his power over the supernatural world of the powers of evil.

You need to understand the imagery that the Bible uses. All through the Bible, the sea and storms are there to represent the forces of evil and of chaos. Think right back to the very beginning, Genesis chapter 1.

God rebukes the darkness and the waters. And brings light and creative beauty into the world.

Think of Psalm 46.

[15 : 40] Just one of many psalms that speak in this way. Where the fear is of the whole world collapsing under the powers of darkness. And waters foaming and surging and so on. That language represents the powers of evil in the world that work against God's people.

That's why when you get to the very end of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 21, we're told that the beauty of the new creation will be there'll be no more sea. Don't worry if you're a sailor or a fisherman.

It doesn't mean there'll be no more water. It doesn't mean there'll be no more beaches. It means there'll be no more dark powers. No more evil. It's picture language. It's a language. Revelation chapter 13, we're shown the beast, the great representation of evil arising out of the sea.

But in the end, there will be no more sea of evil in God's eternal kingdom. And that's what we're being shown here in this picture. Verse 26, that's why we're told Jesus rebukes wind and waves. Why is he rebuking them? Well, because they are rebelling against their rightful Lord and Master. Not so much because he's their creator, although of course he is.

[16 : 53] He's God. But rather, because he is the true man who has lordship over creation as God meant him to be. God made Adam, didn't he? To be the Lord over all creation.

But Adam rebelled and fell. But here at last is a new Adam, a true Adam, the true man. That's why in verse 27, I think we're shown that.

What sort of a man is this, is the question. And the answer is, here is a man as man is meant to be. As the true image of God. As the ruler over all creation.

Even the dark powers of evil. Man is restored. Nature is no longer enslaved to the powers of darkness. Darkness defeated.

Eden restored. In the presence of Jesus Christ, the true man. It cannot overcome him, even when he's asleep. And when they attempt to do so, he silences them.

[17 : 55] Rebukes them with authority. Jesus Christ has the power and the authority over the power of sin to enslave our creation.

There will be no more earthquakes. No more tsunamis. No more so-called natural disasters in the new creation. No more pandemics of tiny invisible things that can floor the whole of humanity. No. Because the true humanity will be ruling the cosmos once again. The gospel of Jesus, friends, is not that God has in Jesus made the world a bit of a better place for all of us.

No, no, no. He is making a whole new creation. Forever. Second, look at verses 28 to 34.

Not only does Jesus rebuke with authority the power of sin. Jesus removes with authority the personality behind all the world's evil. That's what this story about the demons is telling us.

[19 : 01] He came to the other side. Two demon-possessed men met him coming out of the tombs. Fierce. No one could pass by that way. And they cried out, What have you to do with us, O Son of God?

Have you come here to torment us before the time? Then we have this well-known story of Jesus casting them out and the demons going into the pigs.

See, what we're being told, the Bible is clear. Behind the power of sin lurks the dark personality of the devil himself. He is the one who holds humanity in darkness, in blindness, in bondage.

But look at verse 32. Jesus has the power to conquer him with a word. Notice, by the way, that as we often see in the gospel, it's the demons who actually have the best theology.

Verse 29. They recognize he's the Son of God. Just as the devil himself, back in chapter 4, in the wilderness, tempted him and called him the Son of God. They know who he is. They know why he's come.

[20 : 10] They speak there in verse 29, don't they, about the time. The time of their judgment. The time of their destruction. They know that time is coming. But what they're shocked at here is that it seems to have begun now.

Have you come to torment us before the time? Before the last judgment? I find it very comforting that the devil and his evil followers don't know God's timetable.

They're not privy to God's great story of salvation. They're just creatures too. They're not equal with God. They're in the dark. And Jesus surprises them here.

Because Jesus coming and Jesus kingdom signals that already the writing is on the wall and that time of judgment has begun.

And now is the time of rescue of human beings from that terrible hold of the power of the devil.

Later on in Matthew 12, Jesus goes on to talk, doesn't he, about binding the strong man and

emptying out his house.

[21 : 18] And that's what the gospel of Jesus does. That's what it still does. The truth, said Jesus, will set you free. Free from the bondage of that terrifying hold of sin.

Paul says, my gospel, the gospel of Jesus, shines light into the eyes of those who have been blinded and held bondage to the devil. Because Jesus and his kingdom has authority over the power of sin in evil in this world and over the personality that is behind it all.

He came, says John, to destroy the works of the devil. And I've seen people, many people, and so have you, liberated from the powers of darkness, transformed with that terrifying hold of sin being stripped off them through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But there's a third dimension here, isn't there, to Jesus' destruction of sin's hold. And that's what we see in verses 1 to 8 of chapter 9. Jesus releases with authority from the penalty of sin and evil.

He rebukes the power of sin. He removes the personality of sin. And he gloriously releases us from the penalty of sin. Which is what gives the evil one his power and his hold over us in our lives.

[22 : 42] That's what this story of the forgiveness of this paralyzed man is all about. Verse 1.

Getting into a boat he crossed over, came to his own city, and behold, some people brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed.

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Take heart, my son. Your sins are forgiven. Now, I'm stopping there because naturally, our attention goes to the healing of this man's paralysis, doesn't it?

In fact, even the section heading in the ESV has that. Jesus heals a paralytic. What a terrible heading. But that's because we idolize health, don't we?

And we tend to think that the worst possible thing that could ever happen to us is something like what this man suffered from, to be paralyzed, to be in a wheelchair all your life. I think that's why in this country we, and we've seen it certainly in recent days, haven't we, we so deify in a bizarre way our National Health Service.

Any visitor who is coming from out of space and going around our nation at this time, seeing all the shrines in people's houses, and the hearts and the rainbows, and the, we love the NHS, they would be forgiven, wouldn't they, for thinking NHS must be our goddess and this must be our religion.

[24 : 01] And we've got to be careful as Christians. Because we can give so much value to health and wholeness in a bodily way, can't we?

Very often it is our most frequent prayers and our most fervent prayers that are for bodily healing of loved ones, of people we know, perhaps for ourselves.

Isn't that right? Even Christian prayer meetings. But what we see here is that Jesus' priority is not this man's bodily healing.

The whole point of the story, the whole reason Matthew puts it here is to show us that Jesus' priority is to release this man not from the paralysis of sickness, but from the penalty of his sin.

Verse 2, your sins are forgiven. And verse 6 is almost an afterthought. It's a sign, isn't it, to the scribes that Jesus does have this authority on earth to do what only they knew God in heaven can do, forgive sins, to release from sin's penalty.

[25 : 06] Which is the overriding need of every single human being on earth. And even utterly eclipses the temporary healing of such a terrible deformity as this man undoubtedly had.

To release him from far worse paralysis, from guilt before God. Far, far, far more crushing than any physical ailment that you could possibly have.

Even, yes, the coronavirus. So are we getting Matthew's message here? Jesus Christ has power and authority over every power of sin to enslave humanity.

He bursts the fetters. He breaks the terrifying hold of sin. He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoners free. That's the gospel.

That's the transforming joy of Jesus and his kingdom. And that's why, you see, Matthew then applies this in verses 9 to 17 to explain the character of true discipleship.

[26 : 13] What being a Christian really does mean. And he does it by giving us his own personal testimony. Matthew himself. A man who's touched by Jesus and made holy new.

And called into a holy new life altogether. Verse 9. Jesus passed on from there. He saw a man called Matthew sitting in the tax booth. And he said to him, follow me.

And he rose and followed him. And he goes to his house and has a wonderful feast. With all of these other tax collectors and other sinners. See, it's a story of liberation.

He's called out of his tax booth. Out from being a slave to the Roman powers to follow a completely new master. Jesus Christ. He's liberated. He's liberated from isolation.

As a tax collector, a despised sinner in the eyes of others. And brought in to fellowship with the Son of God himself. Verse 10. And you see in his house.

[27 : 15] Fellowship with all these other people of Christ. They're all now in his home with Jesus. Full of joy. All because of the victory of Jesus. Over all the powers of sins.

And of sin. And of Satan. All those powers to destroy. To enslave human life. And the joy of feasting at Jesus' table. It reflects the joy in heaven.

It reflects the great victory feast. It's a foretaste of what Jesus spoke of in chapter 8 verses 11 and 12. We saw last time. The great messianic banquet. It's a foretaste of what the apostle Paul speaks about in Romans chapter 8.

The freedom of the glory of the children of God. When the whole of creation at last will be set free. From its bondage to decay. Because man has been brought back from the power of Satan and sin. Into the presence of God. And that's what it means to be a disciple. That's what it means to be a Christian. Not just to be forgiven from sin's guilt.

[28 : 19] But to be liberated therefore from sin's power over our lives. To enslave us. To become a Christian means not just that a little bit of something new and better is added to your life.

To your old life to make it better. No, no, no. It's a whole new life that Jesus gives. Whole new people. For a wholly new world.

And that's what being a Christian really is. And that's the point, isn't it? Of verses 16 and 17 here. Where Jesus talks about new garments. And about new wineskins. And new wine. What he's saying is Jesus hasn't come into the world to do sort of patch up job on humanity.

He's come to make all things new. To liberate from sin. To give new clothes altogether. The clothes of his own glorious righteousness.

Or is it just a little bit of a new experience that Jesus comes to add to our old lives. No, no, no. It's not like putting a bit of new wine into the same old wineskins.

[29 : 22] It's a whole new life altogether. He says it's new wine for those whole new wineskins. And that's me, says Matthew. That's why he's giving us this testimony.

I'm a new man. Look at me. I'm set free from sin. I've been transformed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. I'm rejoicing. In the presence of the bridegroom is my new master.

My savior. The Lord Jesus. That's what it means. To really be a Christian disciple. We're new people. We are made new.

We are liberated. For a new world. For the great regeneration that's to come. That's what Jesus calls it in Matthew 19 verse 28. The regeneration.

The new world. But of course the tragedy is that some people just can't see that. And that's plain here, isn't it?

[30 : 18] There's such a gulf between the people of the new world and the people of the old world. In verse 10 you see the people of the new world. Full of joy and feasting in the presence of Jesus.

Yes, a motley collection of saved sinners. But full of the joy of Jesus. Feasting. Well, look at verse 11.

The men of the old world, you see, are fasting. The Pharisees. Why are you feasting with sinners, they say. Verse 14. Even John's disciples. Why aren't you fasting, they say.

They can't understand the joy of these liberated sinners. But on the other side, look at verse 15. You see, there will come a time, says Jesus, when the people of the new world will fast.

When Jesus returns to heaven. Because they'll be longing for his coming again. But then, of course, the people of this world, who are quite satisfied with this world, they're quite happy to be rid of Jesus.

[31 : 18] They're not longing for his coming. They're quite happy and joyful without him. They'll be feasting away. That's so true, isn't it? There's a vast gulf between new world people and old world people.

We know that we're living in that time of fasting. Now we're waiting for all the joy of the kingdom that Jesus has promised when he comes again. But in the meantime, the people of this world, well, their horizon is just on this world.

There's no future. There's no longing for that. So their only goal is to feast on the material things of this world. Their possessions, their education, their advancement, whatever it is.

But no, no, no, the true Christian believer recognizes that now is the time of fasting. Now is the time of waiting for that full salvation still to come. The resurrection of our bodies.

The transformation of the whole universe. The glory at last. When every last vestige of sin's power is gone. Banished forever. In the permanent presence of our King, Jesus, here again forever.

[32 : 27] That's what we're longing for. And yet, of course, even now, we have the great joy. Don't we have so many foretastes of that day? Just like Jesus' disciples had a foretaste of it then in his presence in Matthew's home.

We have the joy of fellowship with Christ and his people even now, don't we? We especially have the wonderful joy when we see other people being liberated and being made new by the message of Jesus Christ and its transforming joy.

The world can't understand that. Of course it can't. It never will. When we're feasting and rejoicing because people have come to Jesus Christ, they say, what on earth is this all about? You're a bunch of fanatics. Why are you happy about this motley crew of people, these unimpressive people, these foolish, deluded people?

That's what they see when they look at the Christian church. They look at our joy and they think we're fanatics. Sometimes you see that, don't you? Parents, when a young person is converted, maybe at school or university or life, later they become a Christian.

The first thing their parents are saying to them is, don't become a fanatic. And what they're saying to one another is, well, we, unto their friends, or well, he's going through a phase. We hope he'll grow out of it. Don't become a fanatic.

[33 : 43] Worst of all, of course, if that young person then tells their parents, I want to give up the profession I was going into and I want to devote my life to Christian ministry. Oh my goodness. You're full of joy.

You're full of excitement at that possibility. And your parents, they want to fast. They want to mourn. There's such a gulf, isn't there, between the people of this world and the people of the world to come.

Sometimes you see it in a church that's never really actually had a gospel ministry before. And then it gets somebody who comes to bring the gospel to that church. And there's a violent reaction often between those who simply can't fathom what's going on, who hate it.

Especially if all sorts of other undesirable people have been drawn into the church through that message. And there can be, can't there, a kind of, I suppose we could call it an evangelical nominalism.

It's just as bad. It becomes fossilized, becomes hardened. And there's nothing worse than dead orthodoxy when it's dead. That is a very deadly thing.

[34 : 54] When people can't understand anymore the joy of Jesus, the joy of the angels in heaven over a sinner who repents and is made new. When all they can see is the mess and the trouble that that's going to bring to the church with these messed up people coming in among us.

These undesirable people coming in among us. That was the attitude, wasn't it, of the elder brother in Luke chapter 15 who refused to join in the joy of the Father's house.

But Jesus people, new world people, they see the power of sin and its slavery being broken and banished. They see the liberation that characterizes true disciples of Jesus Christ.

And they rejoice. They rejoice with the angels in heaven. Because they see new people, new lives. Yes, they're within a lot of sometimes very messed up exteriors and scars.

But those scars now only speak of a past that's been left behind, that's gone, that's been made wholly new forever. And so they rejoice when they see that happening to somebody.

[36 : 09] And we need to ask ourselves, don't we? Is that what we do? Is that you and your reaction? Is it mine? It can be that elder brother-ish attitude, can't there, of the religious insider.

And that's what exposes you for what you really are. Actually, just an inhabitant of this world. And not really somebody whose true home is being at home with the Lord of the world to come and the people of the world to come.

People who really understand the joy of Jesus. And know the meaning of feasting and rejoicing with him and among his people. Don't know anything about the great joy of having a home open to other Christians.

Needy Christians. Messed up Christians. They just don't know anything about that rich fellowship with others after a church meeting or something. They just don't know anything of that deep joy of

sharing when a sinner repents and joins the joy of the Master and is made new. Friends, this world can't see that joy. It'll never see that joy. It just can't understand the grace of God poured out towards sinners.

[37 : 35] But nor can the hardened religious heart see that sometimes. And that's what Jesus exposes here with the scribes and the Pharisees in verses 12 and 13.

And there are many churchified people, alas, who are like them. They are like verse 13. They value sacrifice. And not what Jesus wants. They value religious performance and not mercy. They value the outwardly acceptable, the outwardly lauded things, the righteousness that the world wants. But they despise the unacceptable.

They despise the awkward. They despise the misfit. They despise the sinners. The religious moralists just can't stomach those that they see as tax collectors, as sinners, whatever it is in your particular view.

[38 : 44] Those kind of people make a terrible mess of their very nicely honed moral boundaries, don't they? And we've all got to be careful. We're all prone to that elder brotherishness.

But Jesus says he came not to call the righteous, that is the self-righteous, but sinners. And that means that the character of real discipleship must be rejoicing in the fellowship of bad people, messed up people, people with a history.

But people who are made new and liberated through the gospel of the Lord Jesus and the power of the Lord Jesus. Who have been brought in to share in the joy of his household.

Outwardly, maybe for a long time, they'll still look to polite society like tax collectors and sinners. For a long time, there might be a lot of mess, a lot of ragged edges around their lives.

There might be a lot of mess around sexual relationships that have to be cleared up. Around messy addictions that have to be cleared up. Along messy language and all sorts of things.

[39 : 52] That takes time to clear up. But make no mistake. Jesus, when he touches people like that, is not just doing a patch-up job.

Not just a charity job. When he has called them, he's made them new. They're a whole new garment for a whole new world. They're new wine and new wineskins.

And yes, in this time of fasting, of waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus, they may not look like much to the outsiders in this world. But one day, one day they're rejoicing in the joy that will be revealed when the bridegroom returns.

That will declare to all creation that these saved sinners are the honored guests at the table of the king of the universe forever and ever.

People who belong in the Father's house of joy. Friends, the truth is that sin has a terrifying hold over the people of this world.

[40 : 57] But Jesus Christ has the power and the authority to liberate forever from that power of sin.

Sin's power at work over creation. He rebukes with authority. Be gone. Be still. Sin's personality. The devil. He removes with authority.

A word. Be gone. And from sin's penalty, he has released us with authority by his words of forgiveness.

Your sins are forgiven. And in doing all of that, he has made and is still making a new people for a new world and for a new master forever.

And only those who have experienced that, who have really experienced that, like Matthew, will understand the joy of that liberation. The world and the world of dead religion, dead virtue signaling.

[41 : 58] So common today. It'll never understand it. Look at verse 34. It's terrible, isn't it? After seeing the wonders he did, what do they say? Go. Go. Leave our region.

When the terrifying power of sin and evil is overcome by the wonderful power of Jesus.

That's what these people say. Same in chapter 9, verse 3. Go. You're blaspheming against our traditions, they say. Verse 11.

Why are you inviting such undesirables into your house, they say? Why all of this focus on outsiders? We're the ones who've been in the church for decades.

Why can't we be the focus of all of this? Sometimes what you see, isn't it, and hear. Even in churches that call themselves gospel churches.

[42 : 51] We've been here. Why can't we be the focus of the pastoring? Which really being translated means, why can't we be the focus of all the pandering to us? And when that's our

attitude, Jesus says to us the words of verse 13, doesn't he?

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Friends, don't ever let us lose the joy of the true liberation that the gospel of Jesus and his kingdom brings.

True liberation from the power of sin's terrifying hold. Let's pray for it. Let's proclaim it so that we'll witness it in the people that we know and the people that we love being transformed and liberated. And let's rejoice always in the fruit of it. Whenever we see it. Even as we do long for our bridegroom's return, when at last everyone will see it together in the joy, the glory of a new world that he's called us to.

[44 : 06] Jesus Christ destroys the terrifying hold of sin. Amen. Let's pray together. Amen.

Take heart. Your sins are forgiven. We thank you, Lord, that that is the word not only of acquittal from the terrible burden of the guilt that crushes us, but it is the word that through that acquittal opens the prison door and leads us out into a liberation, into a new life, into life as it was truly meant to be and shall be forever in the presence of our glorious King.

May the joy of this true gospel fill our hearts and minds, we pray, motivate us, that it might overflow from our lives to the lives of many others, and guard us and keep us in this joy all the days of our life, we pray.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.