

Title: My Servant
Text: Matthew 12.15-21
Theme: The character of Christ
Series: Matthew #66
Prop Stmtnt: Christ is truly an amazing Savior!

Read Text:

Have you ever had someone target you in order to destroy your credibility? Have you ever had someone seek to make life miserable for you? Some of you work in hostile settings. There are people who are committed to your failure. They want to see your demise. They rejoice over your flaws. They ridicule any virtue and magnify any weakness. And due to their ability to intimidate and coerce, they are often skilled at influencing others, which means they are able to turn others against you. It can seem as if you have no advocate, no recourse, and no way out. You do not want to quit because you do not want them to win, but neither do you want to work day after day after day in such an oppressive atmosphere. This is exactly what Christ is experiencing, only worse.

Christ endured inequities in order to fulfill God's Sovereign plan. It was God's will that he was accused of doing the worst evil while he was actually accomplishing the greatest good. And while Christ was fully God, he was also fully man. He was tempted in every way, like we are. So, think on this. He came to his own. His own did not receive him. His own not only did not include him, did not let him in, did not accept him, they organized a plan and executed it in order to kill him in about the most gruesome and humiliating manner that you can imagine. Wouldn't he be tempted, at this point to quit? What really is the point? Why should you bother to care more about people than the people care about themselves? Imagine that you are a surgeon. You and your family are at a restaurant in order to celebrate your daughter's 16th birthday when you get a call from the hospital. It is an emergency. So you leave and spend the next 6 hours in surgery, only to have the patient overdose on drugs 3 months later and die. What does that do to you? Was it worth it, missing your daughter's birthday dinner to save the life of someone who didn't care? Some of you teachers go the extra mile for students. You talk with them, tutor them, encourage them, give them extra attention only to have them completely blow off the final exam, or major project because "they didn't feel like it." So, why should you even try? Why should Christ give up everything to come to a people who not merely apathetic; they are antagonistic? I read this text and realize that I am nowhere close to reflecting Christ. He is absolutely amazing! Christ trusted in the sovereignty of God. His response to the plotting of the Pharisees reveals the depth of his trust.

There are two things that I want you to consider as we work through this text: 1) There is a group of people who are actively working for the destruction of Christ. As this event is taking place, these enemies are meeting, discussing, plotting and conniving that they might eliminate him. 2) There is a group of broken, disenfranchised and needy people who are following Christ. But, look at them. They have no power to stop the first group. So what good would it do for Christ to help them? What can they bring to the table?

What can they do protect Christ? What good are they going to be? These are the outcasts! Why is Christ spending time on them?

Wouldn't you expect Christ to put his ministry on hold? Does he really have time for needy people when his own life is at risk? Shouldn't he be plotting a defense plan? Shouldn't he be fighting fire with fire? If this were truly a political issue, he would need to go on the offensive. His reputation and poll numbers could not sustain the barrage of accusations. He needs to set the record straight, right? He needs to find out what they are planning to do. He needs to get a mole on the inside. He needs a new marketing strategy.

I am amazed by and continually attracted by the complete lack of political posturing on the part of Christ and the incredible mercy that he shows to the people who have nothing to help his cause. He withdraws. He is not trying to make a spectacle of himself. He heals all of the diseases that the people have and asks them not to make a big deal about it. How can Christ remain so calm in such a situation? How can Christ focus so clearly upon the needs of those around him when his own condition is moving into the danger zone?

1. **He knows what the real problem is.** (15-16)

a. **They hate him because they hate his Father.**

Jesus was aware of their conspiracy, their plans and their motivation. He knew the extent to which they would go because he knew what was motivating them. Go back with me to last week's text. What was it that Jesus did that caused them to respond with such evil? I think we have an example of that from this past week. American journalist, James Wright Foley was savagely executed this week, even though he personally had not threatened nor attempted to destroy any of the ISIS terrorists. James was an American and ISIS did to him what they want to do to America. Again, the rejection and execution of Christ was a rejection of God. In response to their planning, Jesus withdrew.

b. **His withdrawal is more judgment for them.**

The withdrawal of Christ accomplished two things: 1) He laid low. He was not belligerent, but was humble. At the same time, 2) his withdrawal was an act of judgment. When the Word of God is continually rejected, God will leave. The worst thing that can happen to any person or people is for God to withdraw his presence of mercy and his speaking. Here, Jesus leaves. This helps to set the stage for what happens in chapter 13 when Jesus begins to speak in parables.

c. **They are to be mourned more than Jesus is to be pitied.**

It is tempting to become angry at others and at what they are doing, until you consider what their judgment will be. This guards us from being eaten alive with bitterness, and instead we are filled with pity at what their future holds, apart from the gospel. We have to remind ourselves of this. Christ knew it. He knew that he would be vindicated. He

knew the future of the Pharisees. Later on, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because he knew what the cost would be for them to reject him.

2. **He knows what the Scriptures say.** (v.17)

Matthew says (once again), *“this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.”* As we have seen, Matthew often quotes from the book of Isaiah. This is the longest quote that he uses and this one is from the section of the Servant Songs. Isaiah wrote 4 “Servant Songs” and these verses are taken from the first one. Jesus is the ultimate servant. He was predicted and he knew it. He was planned and here he was fulfilling that plan. He knew what Isaiah 42 said. He also knew what Isaiah 53 said. The entire ministry of Christ was planned for, predicted and announced by the prophets, because it was planned by God. Jesus knew what the Scriptures said about him. He knew that he had a mission to fulfill. His confidence in the plan of God kept him on course in the midst of the adversity. But, let’s look at what God said, through the prophet Isaiah about God. Let’s see what God the Father says about God the Son. In fact, think about this now, since this is taken from the first of the four Servant Songs of Isaiah, we are actually reading not only what the Father said about the Son, this is what the Father sings about the Son. Jesus knew that his Father loved him. Jesus knew that his Father said these things and sang these things about him. Jesus experienced this kind of a relationship with his Father. These verses (this song) teach us that ...

3. **He enjoys life with God.** (18)

Ok, this is where I want you to pull out a chair and take a front row seat. This is rather amazing. We are aware that the Pharisees hate Christ and want to destroy him. They are plotting his destruction. Look at the contrast. God the Father loves his Son. The Father delights in his Son. The Father is pleased with his Son. Verse 18 is one of those statements where the more you understand it, the more you are overwhelmed by it.

a. **Christ is loved, perfectly by the Father.**

*“Behold, my servant (pais, not doulos) whom I have chosen, my **beloved**...”*

That is an incredible thought. There are times when we witness an amazing relationship and we think, what would it be like to be in a relationship like that? What would it be like to be perfectly known, perfectly understood, perfectly loved, perfectly trusted, perfectly delighted in, etc. what would it be like, not only to be loved like that, but for someone to write a best-selling song about it? That would be such a delight! But that is not enough, is it? It is not enough to be loved perfectly; we would want to love back perfectly. We want to love faithfully, purely, completely and intentionally. When you delight in someone, you seek to learn everything you can about that person so that you are able to anticipate their desires, surprise them with thoughtfulness and bring them joy. That is what Christ does to his Father. Christ is not only loved perfectly...

b. **Christ pleases perfectly.**

“with whom my soul is well pleased...”

Christ lived with the knowledge and the satisfaction that he perfectly pleased his Father. His Father is overwhelmed with satisfaction and joy because of the faithfulness, love, trust and obedience of his Son. The Father cannot get enough of his Son. What makes the Father, the Father, is the Son. The Father is never without the Son, but like a lamp, it is the very nature of the Father to shine out of his Son. But that is reciprocal. It is the very nature of the Son to be the one who shines out from his Father. The Father and the Son enjoy a relationship that is so full of joy that the Father’s pleasure is as food to the Son. Imagine your ultimate meal perfectly prepared and served to you. Imagine eating that meal in a setting of breath-taking beauty with the most important people in your life sharing it with you. The delight that you get from that food is a small example of the delight that the Son gets from pleasing his Father. It really is his sheer delight to do as his Father says. The Father is portrayed in the Scriptures as being the lover and the Son is called the Beloved (as it is again in this text). But, there is more.

c. **Christ is anointed perfectly.**

The Spirit is involved as well. And not only that, but the Spirit is involved as well. Here in this verse we have the Trinity. The Father is the lover, the Son is the beloved and the Spirit is poured out on the Son by the Father. Do not forget our context. Do not forget that Jesus is being rejected and evil men are plotting for his destruction. This is the greatest injustice that has ever occurred in the history of the world. All of the injustices in the history of the world cannot compare to this. And yet, even as this is taking place, Christ is calm, loving, giving, sensitive, and merciful. We are trying to figure out why. And Matthew is telling us. In quoting this text from Isaiah, Matthew tells us that why Christ is responding this way. So, let me try to put this together. God has revealed himself as Father, Son and Spirit. He is one God in three persons. You cannot confuse them, but neither should you separate them.

The Father demonstrates his love for the Son by declaring his love for him and by giving him the Spirit. But, while the Spirit is sent by the Father to bless, anoint, affirm and encourage the Son, the Spirit, at the same time excites the delight of the Father in the Son and excites the delight of the Son in the Father. The Father loves the Son and loves to exalt the Son and the Son loves the Father and loves to please the Father and the Spirit loves for us to see the Father and Son and witness the love that they have for each other.

Let me press this a bit deeper so that you will grasp the remainder of this text. Whenever we read passages that God’s greatest passion is for his own glory and that everything that God does, he does to magnify himself, we instinctively recoil a bit from that. It sounds, well, it sounds egotistical. And it would be, if God were not the essence of perfect AND the essence of love, which HE IS, because he is TRINITY! This changes everything. God has, from eternity past, been loving as the Father has loved the Son in the Spirit. Our God is not essentially lonely. He is full. He is satisfied. He is pleased. He has from eternity

past been sourcing life and love and pouring it out to his Son. Colossians 1.15 describes Jesus as the firstborn over all creation. In that text Paul connects that with the idea that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. What this means is that, just as Jesus shines and radiates out from his Father, he reveals to us what the Father is essentially like. The Father is amazingly, overwhelmingly generous. The Father loves the Son SO much, that he made the entire universe as a gift for His Son. Did you ever see that in Colossians 1.16? “All things were created through him (Christ) and FOR him.” The Father designed and created the universe as a gift for his Son because he delights so perfectly in his Son.

Therefore (and this is a big therefore), Jesus, knowing that he is perfectly loved by the Father, and knowing that he is perfectly pleasing his Father and being reminded of that and affirmed by the Spirit, is free from the threats of the Pharisees. He is free to love because he himself is perfectly loved. He is free to seek to please others because he knows that he perfectly pleases the Father. He is free to lay down his life if need be (and it needs be) because he knows that his Father will raise it up again. He has, for eternity past been loved by and has loved the Father and that relationship is never, ever, ever, ever in doubt.

Now, as amazing as that is for us to observe, we get to do more than pull up a front-row chair and look at this love. We are invited to join in. We are reading Matthew’s gospel. This is the account of how Jesus came to this earth. Do you know what is going on here? The Father has sent his Son to go and to lavishly spread upon every one of his followers the love that the Father has for the Son, so that we are set free to love him back. When God says that he loves the world so much that he sends his own Son, he means that he desires to capture us and bring us into the loving fellowship that he enjoys with the Son. That means that because of Jesus, we can know the Father as our Father and my Father. And, think of this now, because of Jesus, we can be sons. Because of Jesus, the Father treats us, loves us, delights in us, accepts us, and will raise us up, just like he did Jesus! When you repent of your sin and trust in Christ, you get Christ as your Savior which means you get the Father as your Father.

Since, Jesus is so fundamentally secure in his relationship to the Father and the Spirit, he is free to serve even when threatened. He is free to serve, even when hated. He is free to serve, even when rejected. He is free to forgive, even when he is sinned against. And when you trust in Christ as your Savior, you are as fundamentally secure in your relationship with God as Jesus is. Now, what follows are the results of Jesus’ security and position. How does Jesus use his position of authority, power and security?

4. **He deals with the proud.** (18d)

“and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles”

Again, this is in complete contrast to how the Pharisees used their positions of authority and power. They were pursuing injustice. They were using their authority in an effort to condemn and kill an innocent man. Jesus uses his authority to pursue justice. Isaiah says that he will proclaim justice. But, what good does a proclamation do, if you do not

enforce it? Please understand what is going on. Jesus is going to enforce it. His announcement like his announcement of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 3 is a comfort to the afflicted and a warning to the proud. Your days are numbered. I know who you are and what you have done. You will not get a way with it. He is announcing that a time is coming when every injustice will be addressed.

5. **He is patient.** (19-21)

The Pharisees went out and conspired against him, while Jesus went away and ministered to broken people. He did not fight with them or organize a tactical response. He is not concerned about defending himself.

a. **He is not boisterous.** (19)

There are times when he answers the questions of his opponents, but he does not retaliate against them, or make threats against them, or send people to go advocate for him. He actually heals people and tells them to keep it quiet. This is in amazing contrast to what we are used to from leaders. Hitler was a master at whipping a crowd into a frenzy. We witness the same thing in other terrorist leaders today. They speak defiantly, angrily, bitterly in an attempt to intimidate and engage support. Jesus makes no speeches, and rallies no support. He simply goes about his business.

b. **He is humble and tender.** (20)

At the end of chapter 11 Jesus said that all those who are weary and are burdened can come to him. Here we are reminded that when we come to him, acknowledging that we are broken, that he will be tender with us. He will not break a bruised reed. A reed is a plant that is vulnerable to being bruised in the wind. A smoldering wick he will not quench is a reference to the frailty of the wick whose flame is about to go out. This means for those who are abused, broken, taken advantage of, that he will not be dismissive of their plight, nor calloused by their story. He is moved with our needs. He feels our hurts. He has pity upon us.

c. **He finishes the mission.** (21)

He will bring “justice to victory and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

You get the sense that as Matthew wrote his gospel account and discussed with others these events and re-lived them himself and discovered back in the OT the prophecies about Jesus, that Matthew saw and experienced their fulfillment, that he wrote with a sense of awe that he was part of something so much greater than what he understood even at the moment. Even this event was incredible, not because Jesus was healing again, but because of everything that was going on. Jesus, it seems is always where you do not expect him, doing, what you would not think, he would be doing.

“Many followed him” (15) but this was not for discipleship, this was for healing. They wanted their fix. They wanted their immediate needs met. Do you realize what these events were like? This was not an ER, where security guards cleared you, where secretaries signed you in, where nurses assessed the acuteness of your need and then asked you to sit quietly and wait your turn. These scenes were chaotic and frenzied. People were demanding. They were needy. They were diseased. They were infected. They were smelly. They were dirty. They were neglected and the probably did not wait in line. And in the midst of this dirty, demanding, defiled, and diseased mob, was Jesus, treating each one so tenderly and carefully and personally and sacrificially. It was as if, he had nothing better to do, than as the King of the Universe to attend to the personal needs of what appeared to be nameless nobodies. And the truth was, he didn’t have anything better to do. Behold your King! He came for them. He came for us. Do you believe him? Do you trust him?

Today, we are praying for Jerry and Kellie as they return to Ukraine. Instinctively we may ask, couldn’t you do something else? Why do you go? This morning, I think we have the answer. This week, perhaps even today, you will experience both rejection and the opportunity to minister to those who are rejected. The experience of rejection, the experience of betrayal, the experience of loss will tempt you to crawl into a hole. The knowledge of who your Father is, and who your Brother is, will compel you to respond. By his grace you will so that your world will behold, the King.