



# **MATTHEW**

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

## **The King's Mercy!**

**Matthew 17:14-23**

Message #48 of 80 – S1081

**Sermon given on January 21, 2024**



**Sunday Morning Service**

**Pastor Rick Lancaster**

# The King's Mercy!

***Matthew 17:14-23***

## Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 17**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The Savior-King and His Kingdom**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

## Teaching

- **The King's Mercy!**
- In the last message, Jesus was up on a high mountain where He was transfigured and Peter, James, and John saw Him in His glory.
- He then tells them not to tell anyone about it.
- That must have been hard for them to do.
- Jesus had an appointment with the cross.
- That was the most important thing they needed to focus on – not the glory – that came later.
- This account today is a vivid example of what sometimes happens as believers.
- We have this intense spiritual experience.
- We might refer to it as a mountaintop experience.
- But then we come down from that mountaintop and life starts happening.
- That's what happens with Jesus and the three disciples.
- **Matthew 17:14-16**
- At first, this sounds like another human need that Jesus will take care of.
- But there is more going on than what Matthew records (**Mark 9:14**). **And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.**
- The other nine disciples are arguing with the scribes.
- The sense of Mark's account is that this father's need is at the center of the dispute.
- It is hard to imagine how desperate this father is.

- We see a little later in the text that the man's son has a demon.
- Demon-possession is still happening in the world, though we don't see it so clearly as this.
- This father knows he is helpless to do anything about his son's condition.
- He hears about Jesus and what He has done and decides to bring his son to Jesus.
- When he gets there Jesus is up on the mountain and so he asks the disciples to do it.
- The disciples had experience casting out demons (**Matthew 10:8**). **Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.**
- But for some reason they couldn't do it with this one.
- Jesus' response is strong.
- **Matthew 17:17**
- It is not clear who this rebuke is directed at – the father, the disciples, or the scribes – maybe all of them.
- He'll address them again a little later.
- **Matthew 17:18**
- Mark's gospel records a fascinating aspect of this miracle.
- Jesus challenges the father's faith (**Mark 9:22b-24**). **But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."** <sup>23</sup> **Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."**
- <sup>24</sup> **Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"**
- This father believed that nothing is impossible for God, but He was not convinced that God would do it for him.
- This is a great prayer when you are struggling with your faith.
- Do your best to believe God and then pray and ask Him to help with any gaps or weaknesses in your faith.
- The disciples had cast out demons in the past (**Luke 10:17**). **"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."**
- They want to know why they weren't able to this time.
- **Matthew 17:19-20**
- It was an issue with their faith.
- I wonder if it had something to do with them disputing the scribes.

- It is very difficult to do spiritual things while you are in the flesh.
- Jesus reminds us that a tiny amount of faith can accomplish mountains of things.
- Nothing is impossible for a person with the smallest amount of faith.
- But unbelief is the surest way to failure.
- Faith is the root upon which our entire spiritual life springs forth.
- If we don't have faith, our entire life begins to crumble around us.
- As a quick aside, some have taken verse twenty to mean that if we have enough faith that we can have anything that we believe we can.
- Just because I have the faith to move a mountain doesn't mean that God wants the mountain moved.
- **Ivor Powell** said something that I think we should all meditate upon. **If God does not remove our mountain, then perhaps He wants us to climb it.**
- If you pray and ask God to move a mountain and it doesn't move, He might be leading you to do something else with that mountain.
- God allows circumstances in our lives so that we can grow stronger in our faith and grow to be more like His Son Jesus.
- While this is not immediately obvious within this text, I believe that the reason why the disciples were not able to cast the demon out of the boy was because the nine disciples had gotten into the flesh.
- They had neglected their spiritual lives to the point that they were not able to do something that they had already done on numerous occasions.
- This can happen to the most spiritual people.
- Life sometimes will become so crowded or difficult that we begin to neglect the spiritual things that keep us strong.
- With Jesus gone up on the mountain with Peter, James, and John, the other nine disciples may have been overwhelmed by the needs of the ministry.
- Combine that with the incessant hassling of the scribes and you can see how they got distracted.
- And then sometimes, the things God brings to us are just plain hard to do.
- Jesus tells His disciples that there are some demons that take a more concentrated effort to be cast out (**Ephesians 6:12**).

**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.**

- It is not explained what made this demon unique, but it was going to take more effort to drive it out than others.
- Jesus tells them that this kind of demon takes extra effort.
- **Matthew 17:21**
- We need to be careful here that we don't adopt a works-based theology that says that we have to follow some certain ritual to see the power of God work in our lives or in the lives of those that we pray for.
- I don't believe that is what Jesus is teaching us here.
- Every enemy that we fight against in the spiritual realm is stronger than we are.
- The Bible also teaches that there are some of these demonic forces that are stronger than others.
- For us to defeat them we need to have our spiritual armor on and have Jesus where He belongs in our lives.
- Jesus is telling His disciples and us that to be able to do the hard things in life we must have a closer walk with Him.
- Prayer and fasting are spiritual disciplines that help us to do that.
- If we are going to do the hard things that God calls us to do, we must take our faith more seriously.
- **Jon Courson** said something about this verse that I like.  
**Prayer attaches us to God; fasting detaches us from our flesh.**
- What hard thing is God calling you to do?
- It is always wonderful when life is sweet and there are no issues in our lives.
- But then sometimes things happen.
- Our kids get sick. Or they grow up and do things that are not good for them.
- Sometimes choose a pathway that is far from God and maybe even resent your relationship with Christ.
- Maybe you are taking care of an aging parent – that can be hard.
- Maybe your spouse is a source of tension and strife in your home.

- It could be job things or money things or health things – something!
- And maybe you have prayed about it, but for some reason, that issue is still there.
- It is a mountain in your life, and you prayed, and God hasn't moved it.
- And instead of peace and joy, there are negative feelings of frustration, worry, anger, fear, discouragement, or hopelessness.
- These negative feelings are evidence of a problem of faith.
- I have no doubt that you believe and trust God, but in those things that are producing the negative feelings, emotions, and behaviors, you don't believe or trust God the way you should.
- You are like the father of the boy, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"
- Even as a pastor who teaches and preaches on these things, I can't tell you how often I catch myself and can almost hear the Lord saying to me, "Where is your faith?"
- Brothers and sisters, this is a call to take our faith more seriously and to take the things God brings into our lives more seriously.
- And just like the father in this account – we bring our things to the Lord.
- We do our best to believe and then do what we can to grow our faith.
- Matthew includes a quick reminder about what Jesus was doing here.
- **Matthew 17:22-23**
- We often take the issues of life so personally that we forget to put them into the perspective of the cross.
- There is nothing or no one that the cross of Jesus doesn't address.
- If I am struggling in my relationship with Kelly – I can take it personally.
- I can choose to believe that she is doing something out of disrespect, or selfishness, or bitterness over some real or perceived wrong I have done her.
- Or I can see her through the cross of Christ.
- I believe she is a blood-bought daughter of Christ and He has forgiven her of all her sins.
- I believe she is indwelt by the Spirit of God and He is doing a work in her right now and every day.

- I believe that any wrong she has done to me or that I feel like she has done to me is washed away by Christ's blood.
- I believe that Christ loves her with an infinite love.
- And because I believe in the finished work of Christ, I choose to believe all those things are true about her.
- And if there are any negative feelings in my heart or wrong thoughts, I know the problem is in me, not her.
- And then I imagine myself at the cross and I pray, first asking Jesus to forgive me for the wrong things in my heart and mind.
- And then I pray and ask Him to give me the faith I need to act like the husband He calls me to be.
- I don't ask God to change her – because if there are wrong feelings or emotions in my heart or in my thoughts – the problem is in me – I need to change – and only God can change me – if I will let Him.
- Absolutely everything can be taken to the cross.
- It is there that faith is born – it is there that faith grows – it is at the foot of the cross that faith sees impossible things made possible.
- Let's pray and ask God to do something impossible. **Pray!**
- Worship Team comes up to play the last song!