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The Gospel According to Matthew

The Terrible Blinding of Unbelief

March 17, 2019

Sermon Text: Matt 13:51-58

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:16-30

Last time we considered the *infinite value* of the Christ and His kingdom. The pearl of great price and the hidden treasure parables. We saw that anyone who is not willing to give up all that he has in this world in order to press into the kingdom is a fool, blind to the glories of the New Heavens and Earth.

Listen to the Apostle Paul speaking of his unspeakable vision of heaven:

2Co 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know,

God knows. (3) And I know that this man was caught up into paradise--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- (4) and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

And this is at least one reason why he could say:

Rom 8:18-22 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (19) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Now, let's apply this. As you grow older in this present life, many things

happen, one of which is that people and things and experiences you have enjoyed *pass away*. It is not wrong to miss those people and places and things. It is right to have fond memories. That favorite old fireplace room where the hunting and fishing stories were told. Old friends now long gone. The Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings. Those days when the kids were little. For many of us, those were good things and we miss them.

But here is great encouragement when sadness seems to overwhelm us.

Col 3:2-3 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (3) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Your life. What you were really created for. It is yet to come. It is hidden right now, but the day is coming when you will see it. *And as good as your life here may have been, you will see it as nothing compared to what is coming*. You are not going to spend your days in eternity sensing loss of what you once knew. No. The good times are coming. Really good times! Your true home is there, not here.

With those thoughts in mind, let's move on to our text for this morning:

Mat 13:51-58 "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him,

"Yes." (52) And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

(53) And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, (54) and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? (55) Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? (56) And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (57) And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." (58) And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

We commented last time on verses 51-52 and this matter of a scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven being enabled to "bring out new treasure along with the old." This shows the agreement of the Old and New Testaments and in fact demonstrates that the Old Testament is only rightly understood as pointing to Christ and His kingdom.

And we also applied this text to the fact that down through the history of the church, including in our own day, *unconverted teachers and preachers are blind to the real message of the Bible*. And so you have in those kind of churches, *the blind leading the blind so that all fall into a pit*. Christians must take great care to ensure that they are being instructed by true shepherds who truly know Christ and are led and taught by His Spirit. Much of the grief and stumbling experienced by Christians today is due to the fact that their shepherds who claim to be sent by Christ are false shepherds whom He has not sent at all.

Familiar Contempt and Unbelief

We have all heard the saying, *familiarity breeds contempt*. Sometimes it needs to if we are dealing with a wicked person who is a wolf in sheep's clothing. But I think fundamentally that this saying is speaking of being so close to someone that their little foibles begin to wear on us. At a distance someone might seem to be flawless and perfect. But up close, well, we all have our glitches.

In Jesus' earthly life, his hometown was Nazareth. We know really virtually nothing about those years in his life other than the time his parents had to go search for him and found him at the temple instructing the

theologians. But that is enough to tell us that people in his home town would have noticed that this boy was not "normal."

[There are of course some fables as is always expected when there is a lack of information that people are curious about. Wikipedia gives us this information:

The rarity of information about the childhood of Jesus in the canonical gospels led to a hunger of early Christians for more detail about the early life of Jesus. This was supplied by a number of 2nd century and later texts, known as infancy gospels, none of which were accepted into the [biblical canon](#), but the very number of their surviving manuscripts attests to their continued popularity.

Most of these were based on the earliest infancy gospels, namely the [Infancy Gospel of James](#) (also called the "Protoevangelium of James") and [Infancy Gospel of Thomas](#), and on their later combination into the [Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew](#) (also called the "Infancy Gospel of Matthew" or "Birth of Mary and Infancy of the Saviour").

Here is an idea of some of the content:

The **Gospel of James**, also known as the **Infancy Gospel of James**, the **Book of James**, and the **Protoevangelium of James**, is an [apocryphal gospel](#) probably written about AD 145, which expands backward in time the infancy stories contained in the Gospels of [Matthew](#) and [Luke](#), and presents a narrative concerning the birth and upbringing of Mary herself. It is the oldest source outside the New Testament to assert the [virginity of Mary](#) not only prior to, but during (and after) the birth of Jesus.

The **Infancy Gospel of Thomas** is a [biographical gospel](#) about the childhood of [Jesus](#), believed to date latest to the 2nd century or earlier. It does not form part of the [biblical canon](#) in any form of Christianity.

The Infancy Gospel of Thomas is thought to be Gnostic in origin. Early Christians regarded the Infancy Gospel of Thomas as inauthentic and heretical. ...While non-canonical in Christianity, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas contains many miracles and stories of Jesus referenced in the [Qur'an](#), like Jesus giving life to clay birds.^[1]

Disregarding then these false accounts, we can still assume that as Jesus grew up in Nazareth as the carpenter's son, people there surely would have seen "something different" about this son of Joseph and Mary. And yet, here is the point we want to get a firm hold on this morning,

The unbelieving, hardened human heart is so blind to the glory of Christ that even if the Son of God grew up in your own hometown and you personally knew him and his family, or even if you were his own brother or sister, you would not believe that He is the Christ.

In some sense we might phrase this as *especially if he grew up in your own hometown*. The familiarity of unbelief, you see.

This phenomenon as we might call it is seen in other parts of Scripture:

Joh 6:41-42 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." (42) They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

And you have it here as well as told by Luke. Initially his hometown group marveled at His teaching, but in short

time they were trying to kill him and drive him out.

Luk 4:22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

A very similar kind of unbelief can be seen in the account of Korah's rebellion against Moses:

Num 16:1-3 Now Korah the son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men. (2) And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 chiefs of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men. (3) They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! **For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?**"

Listen to William Hendriksen's comment on the people in Nazareth:

"Matthew pictures Jesus in the act of teaching the synagogue audience: 'he was teaching the people.' Result? Astonishment. *Where did he get this wisdom, they asked, and the power to*

do these miracles? The wisdom revealed in his teaching was evident right then and there. As to the miracles, they had had opportunities to hear about them, for ever so many of them had been performed in Galilee. As these people saw it, however, Jesus was not supposed to reveal such wisdom and such power, *for he had not enjoyed any 'higher' education, and besides he was merely one of their own.*"

There are sober warnings for everyone here. Consider, for example, the Bible. Think about how people respond to it.

- Oh yes, my mother's old Bible. She read it all the time. I keep it around as a keepsake.
- The Bible was written by men. It is just another human book written by people like us.

And Hendriksen continues:

"The very wisdom which he here revealed and the mighty works which were constantly being reported should have persuaded these townspeople that Jesus was indeed what he claimed to be, namely, the fulfillment of glorious Messianic prophecies, but their pettiness and probable envy prevented them from admitting the truth. So they begin to run off a list of the speaker's relatives, as if to say, 'Who does he

think he is anyway? Isn't he the son of the carpenter?' And they took offense at him. His humble origin was for them a sufficient reason to reject him."

Let's think carefully about this. *Who do we think the Lord is going to use to bring His saving Word to us?* Is it not most frequently a mother or father or someone we know well? Some friend? Not always, but frequently such is the case. Now, take care. Particularly young people and children – take care. You know your mom and dad. You know your brothers and sisters. You are familiar with them. But it is very, very probable that it will be through THEM that the Lord speaks to you, to call you to Himself. *If you do the same thing that these people in Nazareth did, then you will not hear the Lord.*

Look what happened to these people:

Mat 13:57-58 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." (58) And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

How many of you have experienced this very thing among your own family members? The Lord saved you and you are excited to see your parents and brothers and sisters and cousins saved too. What is their response? It is the

same as Jesus experienced here. They despise you *even though the gospel you share powerfully impacts them and they know that it is true.* Such is the hardness of the sinful human heart.

Let's close with these words from J.C. Ryle:

"It had no effect on the people of Nazareth. They were 'astonished' but their hearts were unmoved. They said, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?' They despised him, because they were so familiar with Him. And they drew from our Lord the solemn remark, 'A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.'

We are all apt to despise mercies, if we are accustomed to them, and have them cheap. The Bibles and religious books, which are so plentiful in England, the means of grace of which we have so abundant a supply, the preaching of the Gospel which we hear every week, - all, all are liable to be undervalued. It is mournfully true that in religion, more than in anything else, 'familiarity breeds contempt.' Men forget that truth is truth, however old and hackneyed it may sound, and *despise it because it is old.* Alas! By so doing, they provoke God to take it away.

Do we wonder that the relations, servants and neighbors of godly people are not always converted? Do we wonder that the parishioners of faithful ministers of the Gospel are often their hardest and most impenitent hearers? Let us wonder no more. Let us mark the experience of our Lord at Nazareth, and learn wisdom.