

If You Agree

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(Transcript of Tape)

Will you turn please to Matthew 18:19-20. This morning I am approaching the Scripture from a textual relationship rather than an expository position as last week.

“Verily I say unto you... That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the Midst of them.”

We have pointed out in the past that our Lord in the book of Matthew is describing in detail the new thing that He is going to do, namely His church. In the beatitudes He describes the kind of people who shall be in it. We read in Matthew 16, the foundation upon which it shall be built, namely, the Christ. In the latter part of that portion He said, “If any man come after me, let him take up his cross...” We are told the church is to be built of people who have an experiential union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. In this portion in Matthew 18 you will notice that they are to be an “agreed people” and there are to be at least two or three.

The location of the church geographically has ceased to be of importance by the time our Lord speaks. In John 4:5-30 our Lord speaks to the woman by the well and utters some of the most profound truths that He had to say. You will recall she began the conversation by saying, “Our fathers say we ought to worship in this mountain (Samaria) but you Jews say we ought to worship in Jerusalem.” Our Lord’s reply was this: “It is not the place where you worship that is of great importance, whether it is in this mountain or in Jerusalem.” Up until this time it has been, for God has been related to the temple in Jerusalem and not to the mount of idolatry in Samaria. However, something is taking place. Our Lord is doing a new thing, and in this new thing the primary aspect will not be geographic but attitudinal, the attitude of the people who meet there. The location of the church in the Old Testament was the tabernacle in the wilderness and later the temple in Jerusalem. This was the place where people met with God. Where the church meets is not territorial. It is not where they meet, but how they meet... anywhere, any number, (two or three) IN HIS NAME. That is the key.

We frequently think that all this means is a little appendage to a prayer “In Jesus Name”, as a little halo we put over our actions indicating that we are doing this action for the sake of the Lord. It is far more than that. When two or three are met in the Lord’s Name they are met by His call. He’s brought them together for His own purpose. They’ve heard His call and followed Him.

Now what is the call of the Lord that draws His people together? I’ve heard people say that they have had a “call” to Africa, or India, or China. In 1941, the mission society to which my wife and I had applied posed the question, “Do you have a call to the mission field?” After careful thought, my response was, “No, I do not have a call to the mission field. There is only one call that I recognize in the Scripture and that I have had. The call is to follow Christ, to submit to the sovereignty of Christ, to live in obedience to Christ, to walk constantly with one purpose, that this is to glorify Christ. I have not had a call to Africa. I believe that God is clearly, unmistakably leading me to Africa, but I allow the possibility that in His sovereign purpose He may lead me out of Africa into some other ministry. My call is to follow Christ, not to a geographical area, not to a place.”

I have tried to impress this truth upon young people in the past. Christ gives a uniform call, “Come, follow Me!” The call is to yoke yourself to the sovereign will and purpose of Christ. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Therefore, His people are men and women who have heard His call. It has been a call from something to something. It has been a call from self will, from ruling one’s own life, from self gratification, to an entirely new government. This is the call. It is a call to turn your back upon the past and commit yourself to Christ as the governor of the future.

So His people have been called by Him, but they have been called to Him. This is a call to Christ, not to a church or a doctrine or a ceremony or a ritual. It is a call to a Person. “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28-30) Tragically there are those today who are trusting in the plan of salvation for rest. They have learned the truths concerning the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection of Christ. They have learned that men and women who believe in these truths are saved. They have intellectually consented to truth, but they have stopped there. It has been a call to truth and not a call to a Person. The plan of salvation does not save; it only directs us to the Saviour. “He that hath the Son hath life.” (I John 5:12) The Bible does not say, “He that hath the ‘truth’.” Salvation is in a Person; the Lord Jesus Christ.

Years ago, in a southern city, a man came forward in response to an invitation given in a revival meeting. A personal worker assigned to talk to him asked his name and address and why he had come forward. The man replied, “To be saved.” The personal worker opened his Bible to the verse, “He that hath the Son hath life,”

“Do you believe that?” The man said that he did. So the personal worker wrote down “saved.” “Are there any questions that you have before I give this card to the pastor?”

“Yes, one question. You asked me if I believe the verse you read. I replied that I did. I have this question: how does one get the Son?”

The personal worker had made the mistake of assuming that because the seeker believed the verse that he had the Son, but the man knew that there had been no change in his heart or in his life. Salvation is not in a scripture verse, it is not in a doctrine, it is not in a decision. Salvation is in a person. Our call is to the Person of Christ. It is a call not only to come to Him, but it is a call that results in His coming to us. It is Christ in you, not Christ above you, around you, beside you, before you, and behind you. It is Christ in you "the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

Also, we are a people who have been called from something. Paul writing to the church at Thessalonica said, "You have turned to God, from idols, to serve the living and true God." The idols we recognize in the Old Testament are Baal, Ashtaroth, and Moloch. In every community was an altar to Baal. Evil spirits must be placated in order that one could be prosperous. Therefore, the people sacrificed to Baal. A modern counterpart is duplicity in business, lying, cheating, stealing, or otherwise misrepresenting products or services. Do we find worshippers of Baal today? Of course, we do. And some even propose to be Christians. As in ancient Israel there are those who "feared the Lord, but served Baal."

The worship of Ashtaroth was to satisfy the appetite for sex and sensual indulgence. It is prevalent in today's society...the lust of the flesh.

The third type of worship in the Old Testament was that of Moloch, who when properly placated, could give to the worshipper position, power, influence, and authority. So Moloch was worshipped expressly for the purpose of promotion in the eyes of ones fellows. The modern counterpart of the pride of life is the use of means other than the perfect submission to the will of God to acquire ascendance over ones fellows.

So the call to Christ is to turn to God from idols, to renounce the right to secure by any other means that which one wants, and to live within the will of God in respect to it. It is to turn from the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. To summarize, it is a call by Someone; it is a call to Someone, and it is a call from something. To meet in His Name means that one has heard the call by Christ, and the call to Christ, and the call from the world. Thus, the call is answered by that response to Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

What does this mean? I am proclaiming with my lips that I have made a transaction in my heart that from this moment on, as long as I live, Jesus Christ shall be the undisputed sovereign of my life. Result of heart faith is a saving relationship with Christ. Christ comes in to bring life.

So, these who meet in His name are people who have been broken, people who have been crushed, people who have been slain by the revelation of their sin, and have been healed by the nail pierced hand of the Son of God. These are "the two or three" who gather. We are not referring to the person who views Jesus as a figure in history, in theology, or sociology. We are referring to the person who believes Jesus is the Son of God, that He lived and died, and rose again. Our modern churches have an intellectual response without any interior change. Churches are filled with people who are going to miss salvation, miss heaven by eighteen inches, because their salvation is intellectual not experiential. (Matthew 18:19-20)

Let me illustrate. There is a difference between agreeing and touching. Four people are praying for the salvation of a man. He is a father, a husband, an employer, and a prospective church member. The wife is praying for him because he has begun to live in such a way that if this lifestyle continues separation is inevitable. She loves him but she doesn't want her home ruined. Her prayer is, "Oh God, save my husband, so we can continue in a happy home." The little girl is praying, "Save daddy because I don't want to be in heaven and have daddy in hell." The employee is praying, "Oh, God, save Bill because he would be so much easier to work for if he were a Christian. He is so hard and cantankerous now." While the pastor is praying in this fashion: "My, how we do need Bill. What a great influence he could be and his tithe would be a great help in lifting the financial load."

So, all four of them are agree about the salvation, but they are not in agreement as touching it. Each has a personal interest, a personal motive in this matter. How would they agree "as touching it"? When the wife can acclaim that regardless of what happens in her home, she wants to see her husband saved for the glory of Christ. When the daughter can say that she wants her father saved for the glory of God's dear son. When the employee can say that he wants his employer saved that Jesus Christ should receive the reward of His suffering, regardless of the change in the work environment. The pastor should be able to say that regardless of the church that Bill should attend and support he wants him saved that our wonderful Lord Jesus should receive that which is His due. These are common grounds of agreement. All personal interests and motives are gone. They disappeared in the light of the one supreme, compelling reason. They want this person saved that Jesus might be glorified. The wife, the daughter, the employee and the pastor are in agreement "touching" the matter of Bill's salvation. This I believe is one reason why so many personal prayers fail. James 4:3 says, "You pray, and you ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you might heap it on your own desires."

Again let me illustrate. Suppose you have a well-worn rug in your living room. You feel that it should be replaced. You have been praying for the finances to buy a new rug. What is your reason for praying, that you won't be embarrassed when you invite your unsaved neighbors in for coffee and conversation? That should not be the reason, but that Christ will be glorified and that there won't be a hindrance when should comes into your home. The underlying motive is not the same.

Jesus gives the answer in John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This is the secret to answered prayer, the glory of God, in Jesus Christ. Two or three must gather together in His Name, in agreement as "touching" the matter being prayed for. Do you begin to see the foundation of His church?

I would like to point out to you the contrast of what we discover in the twentieth century in America. I have no way of judging whether this has been true in the past. However those who lived in the past have indicated in their writings that it was probably true then. For twenty-five years I have served as a pastor, a missionary, or an evangelist, and Bible conference speaker. Therefore, I believe you will recognize the truth of what I am saying. [ED - This sermon was preached in 1972.]

Today we have churches of two major groups: the liberal and the fundamental. This dichotomy is necessary because how can people walk together accept they are in agreement. Then we have a further division in the evangelical or fundamental group: Calvinist and Armenian, going back to the theologians of history.

This morning I am not interested in the two-fold division, but submit to you a "five-fold" division. We are talked about the church, a people whom Christ has called to Himself. We've talked about union, agreeing together with an eye singled to His glory. Now let us examine the twentieth century church. The first group are people who have met the **forgiving Christ**. They have discovered their sins; they realize that they have been caught. They have been told that there was a hell, so they thought they had better be on the safe side. Someone said that they should "accept Jesus." Their primary reason was to be immunized against hell. They wanted to have an "insurance policy." Their primary concern in Christ is that He fulfill what they accepted Him for. They were so grateful to learn that Jesus had died for them that they wouldn't have to die. He had "taken the rap" for them. Their whole concern about Christ is that they should be protected from suffering and punishment. They have only met the **forgiving Christ**. They have gone no further in the Christian life. They want to see someone saved to have the same "insurance policy." When they speak of revival that they mean is to have their hearts feel the same joy that they experienced when they first came to the forgiving Christ. There's an upper limit to their interest in the church and in Christianity and it all relates to them. They have met the **forgiving Christ**.

There's a second group. These are the people who have met **the utilitarian Christ**. They were in great need and they prayed and God answered. Perhaps someone else prayed, and prayers were answered. These people were impressed by the fact that God was tremendously useful and handy to know. They were in a dilemma; prayer brought the answer. They were sick and God healed them, or they were otherwise in trouble and God brought them out. So today these people are extremely grateful, so grateful that they joined the church, submitted to baptism, learned doctrines, and tithed. But the whole of their interest in Christianity and religion is that they should be where God can take care of them if they are in trouble of having problems. They have met **the utilitarian Christ**.

Today we have a very popular cult of the utilitarian Christ. It has nothing to do whatsoever with Christ the sovereign God. It's just, "Faith in Jesus brings answers." Look at the entertainment industry. These are people whose lives are indescribably wicked who have learned "faith" and then write articles and say, "I'm so glad. I wanted to be the queen of Hollywood. I asked Jesus and this utilitarian Christ made me a success." It's also true in professional sports. I maintain that it is a cult and it lacks every biblical evidence of being a movement in the stream of Christianity. Two groups of people: those who have met **the forgiving Christ** and **the utilitarian Christ**.

The third group of people consists of those who have met **the status giving Christ**. They don't have the financial privilege of belonging to the country club, nor are they accepted in "society, but they feel the need for social acceptance so they join the church and find warmth and welcome. They are willing to submit to the doctrine, they are willing to pray, and to be baptized. They are willing to tithe and to meet anything that is required of them. Their testimony could well be, "I'm delighted to be a Christian because there are such wonderful people in the church. It is such a joy to be with such wonderful people, and to think we'll all be together forever in heaven." They have equated status with the whole purpose of God, **their** status, satisfying their needs for social expression.

Out of this group is a small group that becomes to some degree psychopathic and equates their own status in the group with the glory of God and anything that pushes them up is to God's glory. Anything that would bypass them or diminish their influence is just the opposite. You will find this group all over America. As I have traveled all over America pastors have talked to me about some of the experiences they have had. People who have felt that their status wasn't recognized have used every possible malicious means to bring grief and heartache. They would rather ruin the church than to let their personal status be affected.

Now that identifies three groups of people: those who have experienced **the forgiving Christ**, **the utilitarian Christ**, and **the status giving Christ**. What about the fourth group? Let's call them the **emotion satisfying Christ**. Oh, they love to go to church because they enjoy the syncopation and the rhythm and the emotional appeal. If they can leap or laugh in sequence, or better yet, do both at the same time, they will go away saying, "My, that was a wonderful meeting." The whole purpose of Christianity and religion is to satisfy their emotional needs primarily.

So we have people who share doctrine, baptism, and religious fellowship. When they speak of revival, those who know the forgiving Christ say, "I want to have others come to know forgiveness." Those who have met the utilitarian Christ say, "Well, I want to see others helped." Those who have met the status giving Christ want others to join the wonderful fellowship. Those who have met the emotion satisfying Christ say, "Well, I want to feel the way I felt back in July 6, 1903 (or whatever the date) back at that camp meeting. Oh, then we will have revival." But it's all below the level!

May I introduce to you group five. These people have met the Holy God and the sovereign Christ. They have seen God in His holiness. They have seen Christ in His glory. In this revelation of God they have seen their immense unworthiness, and terrifying sinfulness. Obviously they have known forgiveness, for in that brokenness of heart, because they have sinned against such a Holy God, they have cast themselves on the nail pierced hands of Christ are forgiven. Without question God has answered prayer and they have certainly found status as a child of the King, and their hearts have been satisfied with joy and peace. However, in this fifth group are men and women, boys and girls, who have had a revelation of the glory of Christ and are living only for His praise. They are broken; they have committed themselves to Him; they have submitted to His sovereignty, the cross has pierced them through, and the

one end of their being is that He be glorified. Now, this is His church. His church is on this level! He is saying (Luke 14:26) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

The Lordship of Christ transcends all human relationships. Our one purpose is the glory of God. Christ told us to take up our cross and come follow Him. (Matthew 10:37-38) We have no plan, no purpose, but the glory of Christ. A seventh of our time or a tenth of our money does not belong to the Lord. ALL IS CHRIST'S! That is His church!

Today the world says the church is weak and powerless, that it is utterly irrelevant, has no place in such a generation as ours. This I categorically deny. However, I have presented to you five distinct groups in the organized "church." I do not anticipate that revival will come simultaneously in these five groups. It hasn't happened. It isn't happening. I submit to you that we can't go on any longer waiting for the indifferent and the stubborn. The time has come when those who are of one mind and heart begin to meet on the grounds of the Lord's meeting.

How will it be? No, I don't mean start another group. I see no answer there. What is the answer? I believe that the answer is going to come when we reestablish the grounds of fellowship in the pattern of the class meeting in early Methodism. The Christian Missionary Alliance began that way. Dr. A.J. Simpson and W.T. McArthur gathered together in parlors together with men and women whose hearts were committed to Christ. They spent hours in the Word, in prayer, hours in seeking and discussing and thinking together. The glory of God came down and men and women were so marvelously transformed that entire communities were shaken for Christ.

Are you prepared to give a night of your life, above all the other responsibilities you have? Are you prepared to meet at 5:00A.M., for two hours or more? Are you prepared to spend effort and energy and sacrifice of your time because of the hunger of your heart to glorify God? Will you submit to discipline? Will you submit to teaching? Do you stand on the grounds of brokenness? What is your level of commitment? Will you declare it, and follow through with those of similar vision?

This is not a group within a group, but an individual choice. Are you going to find out how to live wholly for Christ? If so, I believe we as a church have found the grounds of unity in submission to the sovereignty of the Son of God. When this happens the glory of God will come down upon hungry hearts and there will be a revelation of His power. When there was a people of one accord, one faith mind, God poured out His Spirit!

When another group of people, bound together by their common needs and common commitment and common passion to see Christ glorified were added the room was shaken. We shall commit to the Lord those who or years have stubbornly refused to bow and break before Christ. Those people with absolute commitment, submission, and brokenness will have the privilege of meeting together, seeking God's glory and blessing and moving on with Him. The answer is not the great crusade, the "mega" church, but cell groups of people who have been drawn by a commitment to Christ. There will be a spontaneous spread and outward movement. Beloved, we had better learn how to worship alone in quiet because that has come many areas of the world. You will recall that England was saved from the abyss into which France fell by the development of the class meeting. This was a unit in which like-minded hearts were encouraged to go to know the Lord. I urge you to meditate and pray. What is the level of your commitment?

Is Christ to you only the forgiving Christ? The utilitarian Christ? The status giving Christ? The emotion satisfying Christ? Or will you proclaim Him "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" in your life? Hallelujah!

Let us pray.

"Father, if our Lord Jesus looked down upon us, He would see us here at the crossroads of the world and the center of this great world of iniquity called New York City. We're here, Lord, and our hearts cry out to Thee, that Thou will guide us and instruct us with strictness. Control us and reveal Thy perfect plan for us individually and corporately, that the Lord Jesus can receive through our blood ransomed lives all the glory that is His due. Breathe upon this people; let a new commitment, a new consecration, a new abandonment come into their hearts, and grant, Lord, that we shall see rise up in this land, from corner to corner, from border to border, a great surge of hungry-hearted men and women, boys and girls who are willing to meet with each other and with Thee. So seal to our hearts that which we have heard. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

Let us stand for the benediction: "Now, unto Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory, and honor, dominion and power both now and forever. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25)