

XXXV. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King
“Christ Above All”
Matthew 7:28-29
By: Dr. Harry Reeder
November 21, 2010 – Morning Sermon

This is the reading of God’s Word. It’s the truth. These are the last two verses in our study on the Sermon on the Mount. Let’s look at our text for this study in Matthew 7:28-29 which says **28** *And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*

The grass withers and the flower fades. This is the Word of God. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

A man asked me one time, “Pastor, what is the hardest part of sermon preparation?” A sermon takes about 18 to 24 hours of development as your preparing for Sunday morning and Sunday nights. You want to be faithful to God’s Word. We call that exegesis. The toughest things are illustrations, introductions, and conclusions but the biggest challenge is when it’s over and I go to the lobby and the people come out to talk to me. Now what are you going to say to me? It’s kind of an uncomfortable moment, isn’t it? Do I tell the pastor I enjoyed that but I was convicted? Or I didn’t enjoy that. That is such a challenging moment for me. In this text we are at the point where we just walked out into the parking lot after Jesus preached the sermon.

I call this moment of these two verses the observations from the parking lot. What was said when He finished the sermon? I love it when you all walk out by me and you don’t know what to say and I don’t know what to say but we try to get by that moment. That is really a very difficult moment. I’m reminded of the eight year old kid who went out with his daddy, the mother shook hands with the preacher, and they went and got the car. The wife turned to her husband and said “The choir didn’t sound good today. It was a terrible choir.” The husband looked at his wife and said “I’ll tell you, that was the worst sermon I have ever heard in my life. I didn’t think he would ever get through. That was just a terrible sermon.” The little eight year old boy sitting in the back seat said “Daddy and mommy what did you expect for a dollar?”

I can have 4,203 people come by me and say “Pastor that was such an encouraging sermon. Thank you for the time and prayer. God really used that in my life.” Yet it takes one neurotic person coming by and absolutely ruins my entire week saying “Where did you get that from? Did you study this week?” One of the things I secured in my life was having Frank Barker as a go to person where I would ask him questions twice a year. One would be at the General Assembly and then in January we would be at a conference together every year. I would always ask him questions and learn from him. Now I’m able to have him nearby.

One of the things we try to do is free Frank up to go around to some of the sons of the churches like Matt Adair was here today and he pastors. He is available to talk to Frank if he wants to talk to him. Sometimes he will go do conferences. We particularly like it when he can do conferences for sons of this church and they are pastoring somewhere. He did that not long ago. He went and did a conference at a son’s church but

I won't mention his name because his dad is sitting here this morning. Frank spent the whole week with him and when it was over he looked at Frank and said "Dr. Barker is there any last words you want to give me before you leave." He said "Yeah, you need to go back to the lobby after the sermon and shake hands with people." The young man said "Is that all?" Frank said "Yeah." The young man said "Dr. Barker I just don't do that because I feel kind of uncomfortable when I do that." Frank said "Well, I don't really care if you're uncomfortable or not you just need to go back there and do it."

So the young man did it. He went out after his first Sunday and shook hands with people. He was uncomfortable as the people were coming back and he knew he needed to be back there talking to his people. Sure enough this one guy comes up to him and says "I'm so glad you're out here. I've been trying to get to you for two years. It seems like as soon as the service is over you're just out of here. Thank you for coming back here. When is the next new member's class?" The young man was thinking "I should have been doing this all along." The man wasn't through yet and put a piece of paper into the young pastor's hand." The man said to the young pastor "I've been trying to get this to you for over a year now but I wanted to give it to you personally. Do what you want to with this as the Lord leads you but I just wanted to get it to you." The young pastor gets home and empties out his pocket and puts it on the table. He sees that it was a check that the man handed him. The check is for 1.2 million dollars! Wow! He thought "I should have been doing this all along." The moral of that story is whatever Frank tells you to do, you need to do it. By the way, after the first service a man came out, shook my hand and put this in my pocket and it was a 2 dollar bill. He said to me "I'm a little short right now."

Honestly this is a moment where Jesus has preached this magnificent sermon. In Matthew 5, 6, and 7 there are six sermons that are recorded in the Scripture of Jesus' public ministry. The first one was the Sermon on the Mount and we've been walking through it for months now. Jesus has basically brought to us the glory of the Kingdom. This is the King giving the manifesto of the Kingdom and in the first part He says "Here is the power of the Gospel and it's called the beatitudes. When I bless you I not only save you from your sin and the penalty of sins, I start saving you from the practice of sin." So He displays the character of one who has been saved by grace through Christ.

Then He calls us to the Gospel ministry of salt and light so that people will glorify our Father by the way that we live our lives, the way we speak and the way that we function. Then He says "In the Old Testament there's this Law and I want to show you the Gospel use of the Law. The Law first of all shows you that you're a sinner. Then it tells you that you can't save yourself. Then it points you to Me and I came under the Law so that I might bring you under grace. I died for your sins so that now you can use the Law much higher, much deeper, much broader and much sweeter than you ever could before. Now you don't just don't commit adultery but you pursue purity. Now you don't just don't murder but you pursue life. You don't just don't bear false witness but you speak the truth in love. Therefore I change your life so that you can now be repulsed by sin, hate sin, follow it but at the same time pursue sinners because I'm going to teach you how to turn your cheek when the sinner assaults you. I'm going to teach you how to take your coat off when they ask you for it. I'm going to teach you how to go the second mile."

Here's the way the Kingdom lives as the Kingdom works in your heart and you bring the Kingdom to this world, this is what happens. You hate sin and you leave sin with repentance to pursue Him out of loving obedience and then while you hate sin you're attracted to sinners. You pursue sinners in such a way that they are attracted to Him by the way you live. You are pursuing them and then they want to come to Him because of the way that you live. You refuse to turn evil for evil. You bring grace and God's glory to bear upon their lives. That's what He teaches us to do.

Then He finishes up by telling us we have three life choices. Here's life choice number one. Here's where you are. To get the Kingdom there's a narrow gate, a narrow way and the end of it is life. It's a narrow gate, a hard way and the end of it is life. Jesus is the Gate. Following Jesus is the Way. He says "I'll be with you to the end which is life." Over here is a wide gate and there are a lot of people that go through the wide gate. It's the easy way and the end is death. So which gate are you going to go through? Are you going to follow Jesus or the isms and religions of this world?

That brings you to life choice number two. Who are you going to listen to? Are you going to listen to false teachers or true shepherds and prophets who speak the truth of Christ in love? Are you going to listen to those who tickle your ears in religion or those who point you to a vital, personal relationship with the living Christ? So who are you going to listen to?

That brings you to life choice number three. You are in a sin broken world. There will be adversity. People are going to die in your family. People are going to close businesses and you're going to lose jobs. You're going to get sick. You are in a sin cursed, broken world. Now when the rains and winds of adversity comes whose foundation are you on? If you are on the Rock which is Christ the anchor will hold. Or are you building your life on the sand? So here is your last choice. Are you going to be a wise builder who hears the Word and surrenders to Christ through obedience or will you be a foolish builder who hears the Word and doesn't do it? Notice both builders are religious. Both builders hear but only one surrenders and submits. That's the wise builder.

Now when He finished this and the sermon is over and thousands of people leave the mountain on the side of the Sea of Galilee and they walk out into the parking lot so to speak, what were they saying? That is what Matthew 7:28-29 tell you. After the sermon is over this is what it says and by the way isn't it amazing to have a sermon that people are still talking about over 2,000 years later? Praise the Lord is you can remember one of mine for a month. 2,000 years later and we're still studying this and books have been written on this. These people walked away the first day it was delivered and it says **28** *And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were **astonished** at his teaching,* **29** *for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*

I love that parking lot observation of the sermon when it was over but I'm also concerned about it. That statement is very encouraging for what it says but it also is discouraging for what it does not say. It is highly encouraging because of what it says. They were astonished. You may have a translation that says "They were amazed at His teaching." Another translation of this is "They were dumbfounded", literally that's what the phrase means. They cannot believe what they just heard in this sermon. They cannot believe and they are dumbfounded because Jesus is not like their religious teachers. On

the contrary He came with authority. There is authority to what He has just said to them and they are dumbfounded, astonished and amazed.

That's encouraging for what it says but it is discouraging for what it does not say. You might be thinking "Harry what do you mean by that?" I want to give you three thoughts as we come to the Lord's Table today. These people that gathered to hear Jesus on the side of that mountain and when they left it says they were amazed and astounded. Here's the first thing I want you to learn. The first thought is the amazement of the world is captured not by the sophistication or intrigue of our gospel proclamation, but by its Biblical authority. What captivates people? Jesus is giving the Word of Truth. Jesus is communicating the truth. What captures them is not the sophistication of His teaching or the intrigue of it.

This is a great sermon. It had an introduction. It had this glorious promise in the beatitudes. It had this clear call of a gospel ministry. It had the depth, height, and breadth of the Christian life. It had marvelous illustrations and it called to decisive action. It was a well constructed sermon and I'm sure appropriately delivered but it was not the intrigue of the sermon or the sophistication of how it was put together that astonished them. What astonished them was that when He taught the Word of God has got authority and that this was not opinion. This is not religious ideas. This is not a philosophical approach to life. This is truth. Thy Word is Truth.

I love the Bible. This week I had the chance to write chapter for a book that's being published on why I love the Bible. I love the Bible because I would never know the God of the Word without the Word of God. I would have never known that He's my Father, that God dwells in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – that the Father authored my creation, the Son accomplished my creation and the Holy Spirit applied my creation. The Father loves me and keeps me. The Son of God intercedes for me and the Holy Spirit preserves me and causes me to persevere. I would have never known those things without the Bible. I would have never known what it means to be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone or an effective salvation by grace in Jesus Christ that takes me just as I am, forgives me of my sins, and then changes my life.

I would have never known the absurd notion of Christianity as opposed to religion. Do you know what religion says? Every religion in this world tells you to 'go do this and if you do it well enough God may love you.' The absurd notion in Christianity is that God loves you. Now go live for Him. If I'm coming up with a religion I'm going to hold the carrot until after you perform. The Bible tells you that God loves you and loosed you from your sins. I love the Bible because the Bible tells me what it means to be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus. That's what Jesus taught with Biblical authority.

When I'm preaching or when the Sunday school teachers are teaching or when you're sharing your faith in a coffee shop, a restaurant, or an office water cooler or wherever it is, I'm not saying 'don't be thoughtful' or 'don't be intriguing' but what I am saying is don't put your confidence in your sophistication, your intrigue, and your presentation. Put your confidence in the authority of the Word of God. It's the truth and His Word will not return void.

The second takeaway is the amazement of the world to the gospel message is secured not by our comprehension of Biblical truth, but by our commitment to Biblical truth. Again, let me say what I am not saying. I want you to know the Bible because you

can't know how to live until you know the Word of God. You can't *do* what is right until you *know* what is right. I want you to know the whole counsel of God. I want you to know everything in the Bible from Genesis all the way to Revelation. I want you to know all the truth of God's Word. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequately equipped for every good work but it is not how much you know that causes amazement from the world and of unbelief but its how much you are committed, surrendered and submitted to it.

I know many people that know unbelievable amounts of Bible facts but it's all intellectual. It's all just a rational exercise. When you know the truth and take the truth that you know and with that truth you submit to Jesus Christ and say "Lord, cause this truth to live in me" that's what attracts people to the truth that you share. It's not how much like them you are but its how much God has made you different, packaged in boldness and humility. Both boldness and humility need to lay hold of a man or woman's life. So here we are with God's Word before us. Should I know it? Absolutely, but it is not how much of it I know but how much of it that has me as I follow Jesus Christ with my life.

Isn't it interesting that the people said Jesus was not like the scribes in His teachings. These scribes were professional teachers and professional religionists. They made their living trafficking in the Bible but Jesus lived the truth. When the Bible says to take your shirt off when somebody asks for your cloak, here is a Jesus who laid aside all of His privileges, not His deity, to come and die for your sins. When it says turn the other cheek this is the Jesus who is mocked and spat upon who willingly went to the cross and received not only the mocking of others but the wrath of God to save you from your sins. This is not Jesus giving some theoretical religious view of life that manipulates people. This is Jesus who lived the truth and not only was the content of His message Biblical with authority that brought amazement but the content of His life was commitment to the truth.

I believe the amazement, the astounding, the stop and listening of the world is not by our intrigue, not by sophistication, not by our comprehension, but by the truth of God's Word, its authority and the integrity of our commitment to it as sinners saved by grace, never in perfection, but with purpose, God Your Word I want to live in my heart and out of my heart through my life into the lives of others.

The third and final takeaway is the amazement of the world to our gospel proclamation is encouraging and motivation but not our objective nor our passion. Our passion and objective is not simply that the world is astounded by Christ and the truth of the gospel but our passion is that they come to Christ because of the gospel. It's not simply "Oh my goodness those people know the truth and are committed to the truth" because that is astounding and amazing and that's encouraging if people see Christ at work in us but that's not our passion. Our passion is not that people are amazed and astounded at truth at work in us but that the truth at work in us has drawn them to Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

I love this passage for what it says but I'm also discouraged because out of those thousands these last two summation verses don't mention anyone committing to Christ. Now let me say something here. I actually believe some probably did and I believe that the process started in the lives of many. Evangelism which is bringing people to Christ is

not an event. It's a process. Sometimes you're planting, sometimes you're watering, sometimes you're cultivating. I'm sure some good gospel seed planting took place on the side of that mountain. I'm sure that those sitting there who hadn't come to Christ would yet one day come to Christ but suffice it to say that when they made the observation after the sermon, they were astounded, amazed but it doesn't say they committed their life to Christ. That's what we desire. That's our passion that people come to Christ who is life forevermore.

So here is my final thought as we come to the Lord's Supper. The response of astonishment and amazement to the gospel message may be appropriate and pleasurable for many, but not for us. Here's what I mean. Yes, we're amazed and astounded. We sing amazing grace and we're astounded by grace but when people respond with amazement and astonishment that's only the beginning for us. More importantly, what we long for is that for those whom we love, our family, friends, co-workers, classmates, teammates, neighbors are not simply astonished and amazed at the work of the gospel in all of its power but the power of the gospel has laid hold of them so that they now have come to know and love Christ as Lord and Savior.

Do you remember the Apostle Paul? He is in front of King Agrippa and he is defending the gospel, sharing with him the truth that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners and that Christ had saved him on the road to Damascus and when he was finished Agrippa was astonished. In fact Agrippa said "Saul, Saul, Paul, you almost had persuaded me to become a Christian." You would think the Apostle Paul would have left there thinking he did a pretty good job since he had almost got the King and he was pretty astonished at me. He was astonished at his message. But the Scripture says in the next verse that Paul pleaded with Agrippa saying "O King Agrippa I would that by God's grace you are just as I am this day except for these chains that you would know Christ." It's not simply that I want you to be astonished and amazed at the message but I want you to come to Christ Himself. I want you to be drawn to Him who is the Lord of glory. It is that that beats in the hearts of God's people. We long for people to know our Savior.

That's what Stephen longed for. It wasn't well I'm the first martyr and I'm being stoned to death. Everybody is watching me and I'm dying well for Jesus. It was not like that. His passion for those who were killing him was "O Jesus forgive them for they know not what they do. I want them to know You." He wanted that for even those who were killing him.

So as we come to the Table this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and Christ as your all, it's not just the message that astonishes you. It's not just the uniqueness, sophistication and the intrigue of the presentation and the message. It's not even the fact that you have met some Christians who know Jesus and really believe but it's that you have come to Christ personally. It is that you have closed for Him who has come for you. It is that you have submitted and surrendered and not just astonished or amazed at Him but that you have surrendered to Him today as your Lord and Savior.

If you're a believer today that's what you celebrate but it's so easy to get off track isn't it? So don't you thank Jesus for giving us this Table to put us back on track? Here is the fruit of the vine. Here's the bread – the body and blood of Christ given for you. Jesus, You are my all in all. I'm not just astonished. I'm not just amazed. I am Yours and You are mine. Let's pray.

Prayer:

This day if you have not yet made that commitment to Jesus Christ would you like to make this prayer, “Jesus, amazing grace, astonishing salvation, but more than amazement, more than astonishment, I know come to You. I give my heart to You. I give my life to You. I surrender to Jesus, my Lord, my Savior, today.” If you have done that by making this prayer this morning please see me or one of these elders that serve the Communion, or one of the pastors that you’ve seen, because we want to help you in the first steps in your forever life in Jesus Christ.

Father, thank You for these moments together. I know pray Father for those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior. We come to this display of Your love for us. Oh the wondrous cross of Jesus where His body bore our sins and His blood was shed for our forgiveness and this Savior who is risen now intercedes for us, we now come to meet with Him and each other and declare, afresh and anew, Jesus You are my all. Jesus You are all for me. Jesus, all for You I give, I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.