

March 15th, 2009
“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 38”
Reverend Darryl R. Curtis

Luke 18:35-43, (Matthew 20:30-34)

As Jesus was nearing Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside, begging. When he heard the crowd passing by, he asked what was going on. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

“Jesus, Son of David!” he shouted. “Have pity on me!”

Those walking in front began to rebuke him, telling him to be quiet. This only made him shout all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me.”

Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to Him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, “**What do you want Me to do for you?**”

“Lord, I want to see!” he replied.

Jesus was moved with compassion. “**Receive your sight,**” He said. “**Your faith has healed you.**” Then Jesus touched the man’s eyes, and he immediately received sight and followed Jesus, giving glory to God. Everyone who saw what happened praised God.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In the discussion after our last lesson, the question was raised about the philosophy of “Name it and Claim it”, which is the idea that God has all of the resources in the universe in some type of cosmic warehouse, and that we can obtain anything we want by simply claiming it from God’s warehouse. The philosophy is based upon a misinterpretation of **Matthew 21:22**, which says:

22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

This single verse, taken out of context, leads some to the conclusion that those who believe in Jesus Christ are in charge of the universe and can have anything that they want. Let me give you some examples to show why this is illogical. Suppose that I decided that your wife was extremely attractive, and would suit me better than my own. Suppose I simply claimed her, believing that I would receive her. You would then die, my wife would die, your former wife would fall in love with me and I would receive that which I claimed. Now, I think that we all could agree that obtaining one another’s wife is not exactly what Jesus had in mind when He said, in **Matthew 21:22**:

22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

Thus, it becomes intuitively obvious that **Matthew 21:22** does not mean that we can have

anything that we want. Suppose some Christians are Michigan State University basketball fans, and other Christians are fans of the University of North Carolina basketball team. Suppose Michigan State and North Carolina meet in the Final Four next month in Detroit, and each team's fans claim victory. Which one is going to win?

I hope that these two examples show you the lack of logic in believing that you can have whatever you want by praying for it. There are simply too many people in the world with competing interests for everyone to have whatever they want.

So what does **Matthew 21:22** mean? Well, there must be things that we can obtain through prayer, otherwise this passage of Scripture has no meaning. We need to understand how God administers our access to His power so that we can pray as we ought. The best way to understand how we ought to pray is to ask Jesus Himself. One of Jesus' disciples did so, in **Luke 11:1-2**, which says:

1 Now it came to pass, as [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

2 So [Jesus] said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Verse 2 of Luke 11 teaches us that power in prayer comes from our acknowledgement that God is in charge and praying that His will be done. James reiterates this as the Holy Spirit inspires him to talk to us about prayer, in **James 4:13-16**:

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit";

14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

James teaches that you can't claim the blessing of the profit that you are going to make in the future. James says that you have no way of making such a claim, because you don't know the future. However, you can obtain that profit if the Lord wills that you have it. Just as Jesus says in the model prayer, our future is in the hands of the Lord, and our plans will succeed as they correspond with the Lord's will. **Proverbs 16:9** says:

9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Proverbs 19:21 teaches:

21 There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand.

So, the question then becomes, how can we tell the Lord's will? Is the Lord for Michigan State or North Carolina?

First of all, let us refer to a familiar passage of Scripture. **Genesis 1:26-28** says:

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth

and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

God tells us to subdue the earth and take dominion over it. He gives us the magnificent mental and physical capacity that we have to do so. I was talking with a brother that spent many years working on a physical job. He mentioned to me that his doctor told him that he needed surgery on his shoulder and knees. “I don’t know about surgery”, said the brother, “because the doctor wants to put things in my body that God did not put there. I think that I should just keep that which God gave me.”

“Well”, I replied, “I hope that you were born fully clothed, because if not, you shouldn’t wear clothes and shoes. After all, God did not put clothes on you when you exited the womb. And you need to get rid of those glasses, because God didn’t give you those either. You bought all of that stuff at the store, so, by your logic, you need to get rid of it.

“I hope you see my point”, I continued, “God gave us dominion over the earth and told us to subdue it. He planned for us to use our brains to develop tools to subdue the earth. God gave Adam fruits to eat, but gave Noah the animals for food. Noah had to catch and kill the animals to eat them, and I’m sure that Noah could not kill a cow with his bare hands. If God blessed Noah to develop tools, then we likewise are supposed to use tools to take dominion and subdue the earth. A knee replacement is just a tool, and I don’t see anywhere in the Scripture that God is opposed to it.”

God gives us dominion over the things of the world, and so, if they meet, the players and coaches of Michigan State University and the University of North Carolina will decide who is going to win the game, not God. The game will be won by the team that scores the most points, and scoring points and playing defense is under the dominion of the individuals on the team, not God. It may interest you to know that since we have dominion over the world, we are in charge and can, to some degree, do that which we want. When we sin, God does not always stop us immediately; dope dealers can get rich and live in the lap of luxury because they are selling a product that people want and for which they will pay. And God does not immediately stop them. How long have people been selling dope? Ask the Godfather. God tells us to not buy dope, but the decision to do so is not God’s, but is up to us, because we have dominion over our world.

But we do not have total dominion over our world; we are the generals of the world, but God is the Commander in Chief. The Commander in Chief is not particularly concerned about the way that the general spends his leisure time, but he is concerned about how the war is being prosecuted. And we obtain the attention of our Commander in Chief when we are fighting the war. Listen to how Jesus, our Commander in Chief, explains our relationship, in **John 15:1-7**:

1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they

gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

The seventh verse of this passage of Scripture provides the context for **Matthew 21:22:**
22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

The context is that we have access to the power of the vine as long as we are bearing fruit. Neither obtaining a wife nor winning a basketball game is bearing fruit, as Jesus was never married nor played basketball. What did Jesus do that was considered bearing fruit? **Matthew 4:12, 17** tells us:

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Bearing fruit meaning convincing people to repent and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus convinced Peter and the boys to become His disciples after preaching the Word, in **Luke 5:1-11:**

1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about [Jesus] to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,

2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.

3 Then [Jesus] got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

4 When [Jesus] had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

5 But Simon answered and said to [Jesus], "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

The miracle ministry of Jesus Christ is associated with the preaching of the Gospel. Jesus had two objectives in coming to the earth. Jesus' primary objective was to give His life as a sacrifice, to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed. Jesus informed the disciples of this objective in the passage of Scripture that immediately follows our last weeks' lesson. **Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34 and Luke 18:31-34** says:

As they walked on the road on their way to Jerusalem, Jesus led the way while the disciples followed in fear and astonishment. Then He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was about to happen to Him.

“We are going up to Jerusalem,” [Jesus] said, “and everything the prophets have written about the Son of Man will come true. He will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and they will condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles to be crucified.

He will be mocked and treated shamelessly and spat upon, and they will flog Him and execute Him. But on the third day He will rise again.”

They understood nothing of what He told them, however. The meaning was hidden from them, and they could not comprehend what He was saying.

Jesus explained the Plan of God to the disciples before it happened, even though He knew that they could not comprehend His Passion or the reason for it at that time. Jesus explained so that the disciples would understand the Gospel after the fact, as they realized that Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection were God’s preplanned method to provide us a sacrifice for our sins and entrance into God’s Kingdom. However, it was not enough that Jesus die on the Cross and rise from the dead. Jesus’ second objective was to so impress the disciples with His Life and with the Gospel that they would preach it to the world and men everywhere could be saved. **Romans 10:9, 13** says:

9 that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

13 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

But, **Romans 10:14-15** asks us:

14 How then shall they call on Him [that is Jesus Christ], in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!”

Jesus, in His life, death, burial and resurrection, is providing salvation. Jesus is also drawing the world’s attention to the Good News of salvation through His miracle ministry. If we go back to review the episode in which Jesus called Peter and the boys, **Luke 5:4-5** records:

4 When [Jesus] had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

5 But Simon answered and said to [Jesus], “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

Why did Peter say that which he did? Peter was an experienced commercial fisherman, who knew that the best time to catch fish in the quantity that he need to his make fishing worthwhile was at night. That’s why he and his partners had been out all night. Peter agreed to resume fishing out of respect for Jesus, but he did not expect to catch enough fish to justify his work. Imagine Peter’s surprise when he caught the largest number of fish that he had ever caught, in the daytime, after fishing all night and catching nothing. Peter knew that this catch was neither fortuitous nor coincidental, but was because of the power of God working through Jesus Christ. **Luke 5:8-10a** says:

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Since Peter and the boys were suitably impressed, Jesus invited them to become part of His ministry, and they accepted. **Luke 5:10b-11** records:

10 And Jesus said to Simon, **"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."**

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

The purpose of the exhibition of the power of God is to make men turn to God from idols, and to worship the True and Living God. If you want a miracle just to get something for yourself, you might want to look elsewhere. Listen to the next episode in the harmony of the gospels, in **Matthew 20:20-28** and **Mark 10:35-45**:

Then the mother of James and John (Zebedee's sons) came to Jesus with her sons and knelt in front of Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want You to do for us whatever we ask."

"What do you want Me to do for you?" He said.

Their mother replied, **"Grant that my two sons may sit with You in the glory of Your kingdom, one at Your right hand and the other at Your left."**

"You don't know what you're asking," Jesus answered them. **"Are you able to drink the cup I will drink, and to be baptized with the baptism I will undergo?"**

"Yes," they replied, **"we are able."**

"You will certainly drink the cup I drink," Jesus told them, **"and be baptized with the baptism I undergo. But I don't have the right to grant anyone the privilege of sitting at My right or left. Those places belong to the ones for whom My Father has prepared them."**

James and John's mother certainly asked, and she certainly believed that Jesus could give her that for which she asked. She knew that Jesus was the Son of God, as she saw Him heal the sick and raise the dead, and she had heard Jesus preach about His glory in the Kingdom of God. But Mother was asking for glory for her sons, not God, and God is the one to whom all glory is due. There is no glory for us, except that which God chooses to give us, because we are only servants. What I hope to hear from God is that which Jesus said in **Matthew 25:21**:

21 His lord said to him, **'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'**

I pray that I will be prepared intellectually to be a ruler in the Kingdom, but I have to prepare to lead in heaven by serving faithfully on earth. I can't expect Jesus to give me the inside track to leadership just because I ask. I can, however, ask Jesus to give me the knowledge of the Gospel and the ability to use that knowledge to persuade men. I need to use my knowledge as Jesus sees fit, but to do so is my decision. I have dominion. I have to choose to be good and faithful. The number of people to whom I present the Gospel is up to me. The way that I deport myself as a Christian is up to me. The sacrifice that I make for the Kingdom of God is up to me. As we read last week, Jesus said, at the conclusion of the parable of the workers in the vineyard, in **Matthew 20:16**:

16 **For many are called, but few chosen.**

Why are few chosen? Few are chosen because few are faithful. Jesus tells us, in **Mark 4:19**

19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Even those of us that believe in Jesus Christ and know about the Kingdom of Heaven tend to focus on the acquisition of possessions rather than increasing the size of the Kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, the purpose of development of the doctrine of “Name it and Claim it” is to convince Christians that they can use the power of God to acquire possessions. Why would I preach such a doctrine as “Name it and Claim it? Well, I’m like the military contractor that works to help win the war because I want to get rich off of the government. I’m like James and John’s mother. I want something from Jesus. I want possessions. I want a bigger church. I want more tithes and offerings. If I can persuade you that the Gospel provides you with personal financial gain, I can persuade you that your gain is contingent upon sharing your gain with the church. However, **1Timothy 6:6-10** says:

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

I perused the miracles of Jesus Christ, and I did not find one in which Jesus’ purpose was to provide a financial benefit. Except for the miracle of turning water into wine, the miracles in which Jesus allowed the disciples to catch fish and the miracle of Peter catching the fish with the golden coin to pay their taxes, Jesus’ miracles were miracles of healing. The next episode in the harmony of the Gospels, our text for today, is a representative sample of the miracles of Jesus Christ. **Matthew 20:30-34** and **Luke 18:35-43** records:

As Jesus was nearing Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside, begging. When he heard the crowd passing by, he asked what was going on. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

“Jesus, Son of David!” he shouted. “Have pity on me!”

Those walking in front began to rebuke him, telling him to be quiet. This only made him shout all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me!”

Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to Him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, “**What do you want Me to do for you?**”

“Lord, I want to see!” he replied.

Jesus was moved with compassion. “**Receive your sight,**” He said. “**Your faith has healed you.**” Then Jesus touched the man’s eyes, and he immediately received sight and followed Him, giving glory to God. Everyone who saw what happened praised God.

No money changed hands. The blind man did not suddenly become rich. What did occur was that Jesus obtained a follower and everyone who saw that the man was healed praised God.

Jesus says, in **John 15:7**:

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall

be done for you.

We have dominion over our lives. We get to decide that which we are going to do. When we become saved, Jesus Christ gives us instructions, but He does make us follow them; He does not take away our free will. After Jesus rose, appeared to the disciples, and explained the Gospel Ministry to them, there was a period of time in which Jesus was not interacting with the disciples on a daily basis. Listen to this episode that occurred during this period, as recorded in **John 21:1-14**:

1 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself:

2 Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No."

6 And [Jesus] said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.

8 But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.

9 Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

11 Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

12 Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"—knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

14 This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Jesus then spoke to Peter, who had denied knowing Jesus. **John 21:15-19** records:

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" [Peter] said to [Jesus], "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." [Jesus] said to [Peter], "Feed My lambs."

16 [Jesus] said to [Peter] again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" [Peter] said to [Jesus], "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." [Jesus] said to [Peter], "Tend My sheep."

17 [Jesus] said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because [Jesus] said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And [Peter] said to

[Jesus], “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to [Peter],
“**Feed My sheep.**”

18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.”

19 This [Jesus] spoke, signifying by what death [Peter] would glorify God. And when [Jesus] had spoken this, He said to [Peter], “Follow Me.”

Jesus is the vine who makes Peter a branch by calling Peter from fishing to preaching. Peter’s first sermon is recorded in **Acts 2**; three thousand men joined the church upon the preaching of Peter’s sermon. Peter and the other disciples had great power, as **Acts 5:12-16** records:

12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.

14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Jesus gave Peter the power to effectively pray for that which was needed to tend the sheep. The power of God is active in the earth now, but the sheep cannot access the power directly; the power is available to those that are connected to the vine and tend the sheep. The Kingdom of God is not about receiving, but about giving. And as we give, we will receive, as **John 3:16-17** tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So let us become shepherds, entering the sheepfold to go to work. Let us not try to name and claim the temporary possessions of this world, but let us rather claim the souls of men as we work to spread the Gospel, increasing the numbers of those who enter the coming Kingdom of God.

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church