

# Authority and Service - Matthew 8:1-34

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome to Calvary Chapel Charlotte. We have a real treat today. I'm so blessed to have my dear friend and brother, not actual brother, but closer than a brother, Pastor Nick Schomburger from New York, the church we used to be at, Calvary Chapel, Seneca Falls. He was here to kind of spearhead the marriage refresh and like, well, if you're going to be here all weekend, you might as well teach on Sunday morning too. So I'm so blessed to just get to sit and partake in that. Anyway, without further ado, we will get into the word and I know y'all are going to be blessed.

Well, good morning, everyone. My name is Nick Schomburger, as Jared said. I am a pastor up at Calvary Chapel, Seneca Falls, where Sue and Jared hail from originally. Well, not really originally, I guess, but before here, we'll see where they came down here. And yes, I'll share with you, Jared and I, the Lord really did knit us together years ago, closer than brothers. We used to say, it is truly a rare thing to have a David and Jonathan type friendship. And that's what he gave us. And there were days before we knew what plan the Lord had for them to bring them down south here.

We used to say like, oh, isn't it going to be amazing? You know, we're going to go through ministry together, serve together and have all these years doing that together. And then we think, well, man, David and Jonathan thought that too. You know, like Jonathan, the last time he says, David, he's like, David, you're going to reign and I'm going to stand at your right hand and uphold you as I can. And then he died like a week later. And so he said, which one of us has to die? Like, who's going to die first? Little did I know that was just the Lord bringing them down here.

So, but that's why it truly is such a great joy for me to be able to be down here. And it is, you know, I have, I have missed being able to be here and do ministry, to be with Jared doing ministry.

So to be down here and do it is such a privilege for me, but I also always love the chance to get to meet the body of Christ just wherever it is and what the Lord says. And I always love to start anytime I have ever taught anywhere else. I like to be able to say, and I'll say it now, the church of Christ in Seneca Falls greets you. It sends its greetings, brothers and sisters in the Lord who you have never met before and who have never met you, but we are one body and we serve him together, each of us, according to our callings and in our own place.

[ 2 : 42 ] Now today we're going to open up to Matthew chapter eight. Matthew chapter eight. And I, I almost never, I don't like to do titles for my messages. It's just me. I mean, I have no problem with other people want to do titles, but, but I like to instead say the topics that we're going to be delving into. When you look at Matthew chapter eight, it is really all about authority and service. That that's what this, this chapter just is full of this idea, the authority of Christ and service of Christ and how we can serve Christ.

Things that come up over and over again. And it has been, it's easy for me to jump here because it's been a major theme in my life for the last probably six months. I would say the Lord has just been pounding home the idea of what it is to be his servant. You know, I've been in ministry essentially for 20 plus years. And you would think the Lord would have wanted me to teach, to teach me that sooner, but he waited 20 plus years into ministry to say, all right, now we're really going to go to work on understanding what it is to serve me. And it's been truly life altering for me, but we're going to kind of delve into some of those ideas and some of those things. And hopefully it will be an encouragement to you guys as we jump in. So let's just start reading off right in Matthew chapter eight, verse one. Now, when he or Jesus had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him and behold, a leper came and worshiped him saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Then Jesus put out his hand and touched him saying, I am willing be cleansed. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, see that you tell no one, but go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them. Now, when it says, when he had come down from the mountain, what mountain? Well, this is immediately following the sermon on the mount. So Jesus had been up there giving his, what many call, this is the pivotal teaching of Jesus, the sermon on the mount. This is the one that he would repeat many aspects of over and over again throughout the gospels as he would go town to town. If you've ever noticed, when you read the gospels, you realize like, oh, is that the sermon on the mount? But it's not said exactly the same thing, or he only touches on one or two of these. And you realize, no, he's not teaching on the mountain. He's teaching somewhere else. And that has to do with the fact that Jesus was an itinerant preacher. He traveled from town to town preaching the kingdom of God. And so he would often talk about the same things, much like if you have ever read straight through the epistles of Paul.

How many of you have ever done that? Read like straight through? Ever notice how repetitive they are? There's like five or six topics. That's it. That's all he touches on over and over again to each of the churches. Why? Well, because it wasn't only the church in Rome that needed to hear it.

The church in Galatia needed to hear it. The church in Ephesus needed to hear it. And so that's what you find in the gospels as well. Jesus is repeating the teachings in different places. And of course, in different settings and different teachings, it would be said a little differently. A little differently here, a little differently there. Maybe a conversation triggered the idea in a slightly different way with another individual, but it's the same ideas. So he comes down and he's given this great teaching. It's a ministry. And this is like a huge, like, wow, you walk away and you go, that was awesome. This is great. What the Lord did. Did you hear this teaching? Did you hear what he's saying? The multitudes are just amazed and it's time to go home. And Jesus comes down off the mountain and he looks and the crowds are still following him. They're not ready to go home yet.

[ 6 : 53 ] They're not dispersing out. They're just following and think, well, what should we do? Should we turn around and do more teaching? Nope. He's about to be interrupted by a leper. And I know many of you know what lepers were like back then. Someone suffering from leprosy, a disease in that day and age that had no cure. Today we have medications that can take care of it, but back then there was no cure. And it was highly contagious. And it was a disfiguring disease, a debilitating disease, and would ultimately end in death. And they were considered under the ceremonial law of Moses unclean.

They were not allowed to enter into worship in the temple because they weren't allowed to be in fellowship with people for fear that they would spread this. You know, we used to, like 10 years ago, we would be like, oh, I can't imagine what that is like. Then COVID hit. And we got a very small taste of, oh, I got a positive COVID test. Oh, you can't be in fellowship with anybody.

You need to isolate yourself. In fact, everyone who's ever been in contact with you in the last however many hours needs to isolate themselves. We got a very, very small taste of it. But could you imagine what it would be like if, oh yeah, you tested positive for COVID, the rest of your life, you can't be near anybody. Whoa, what would that be like? So this man desperately comes up to Jesus, breaking the commandments himself just to get near God in his desperation. And he asks, Lord, I know if you are willing, you can cleanse me. And Jesus says, I'm willing. And Jesus does something that is unthinkable and he touches him. He touched a leper and the leprosy went away.

Remember the multitude is still following behind him here and they see this. This is going to be something both shocking, offensive, and mind-blowing to them.

And then Jesus says, he always does because he fulfills the law. He doesn't abolish it. What does he tell him to do? Go and fulfill the law, which was if a leper got healed in the Mosaic law, they had to go to the priest. And there was this whole thing of ceremonial washings and checkings over so many days that they had to do just to make sure they're really cleaned and they're really healed. He says, go do that, but make sure you don't tell anyone. One of those weird things, the whole crowd is still behind him seeing it, but he's like, listen, just keep this on the down low, please. And do we think he did? In fact, we're told in the other gospel, he did not keep this on down low. How could he? I mean, like he actually is in a position where, what are you going to say when people are like, you're not supposed to be here? You're a leper. Not anymore. How'd that happen?

[ 9 : 44 ] Can't tell you. What do you mean you can't tell? Like, okay, so this is getting out one way or another. But it's interesting that Jesus would say, don't tell anyone. And so what we see here, and we're going to kind of quickly hit each of these little sections in Matthew 8, so I'm not going to go too in depth into each one. But what we see is Jesus has authority over incurable disease.

Jesus can heal. And now we move into the next section. Now, when Jesus entered Capernaum, the centurion came to him, so a Roman, comes in pleading with him, saying, Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.

And Jesus said to him, will you come and heal him? I will come and heal him. And the centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only speak a word and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.

And I say to this one, go, and he goes, and to another, come, and he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it. And when Jesus heard it, he marveled and said to those who followed, assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.

And I say to you that many will come from the east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness.

[ 11 : 17 ] There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion, go your way. As you have believed, so let it be done for you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.

This is another amazing account of Jesus's healing. Both of them precipitated by faith, correct? The leper saying, hey, I know if you're willing, you can heal me. And the centurion basically says the same thing. I know you can do this, Lord. I know. And I have this servant.

I mean, right there, you go, okay, it tells you a lot about the guy. He cares about his servant. This is a centurion. He's in the Roman army, the Roman legions. Now, I said he's Roman. I meant to say he's in the Roman army as an officer, because actually very few people in the army were actually Roman. The Romans built their army from their entire empire. So he could have been any of a wide variety of nationalities. He could have been from Europe. He could have been from Northern Africa. He could have been from Greece. He could have been from a huge area. But this is a man who actually cares. And he is also a man of faith. Some have said and speculated it might actually be tetanus, because it's a paralyzing disease that is a terrible, terrible way to die.

And it would fit the description. But some sort of disease that has just been awful, and he can't stand watching it. And he hears Jesus is here, and I know you can heal him. And when he shows up, and he says, heal him, and Jesus says, I'll come. It's just fascinating. He's just like, no, Lord.

The humility in this man, that he says, I'm not even worthy. No, you cannot step foot in my house. I'm not worthy of that. In fact, I know all you have to do is say the word, and he'll be healed.

[ 13 : 23 ] Now, he doesn't leave it at that, which is fascinating. This is a guy who apparently likes to explain his thought process. I'm one of those guys who likes to explain my thought process. It drives my wife crazy. She's like, you could have said in two minutes what you just took 10 minutes to say.

Like, well, then you wouldn't know how I got there over the last six months in my thinking. But this man spells it out, and we're so glad he did, because he says, I am a man, also a man under authority, having soldiers under me. I say to this one, go. He goes. I say to this one, come. And he comes. And to this servant, do this. And he does it. Now, why is this so important? Why is this recorded for us? And why does Jesus marvel at it? See, Jesus actually is not marveling at the faith of someone to know he can heal by word. This is not the only guy in the gospel to do that. He is marveling at that this might actually be one of the first confessions of acknowledgement of who Jesus actually was. Because notice what the man says. He does not say, I am a man of authority. What does he say instead? I am a man under authority.

Because I am a man under authority. When I tell my soldiers to go, what do they do? They go. When I say to them, come here, what do they do? They come here. When I say to a servant, do this, what do they do? They do it. Now, why is it so important? Why does that come from a man under authority? Because of the understanding of how authority works? In an army setting, which is a perfect picture of order and authority, or we should say military setting. I think I've been told, Derek, you're a Marine. So we don't want to offend by just simply army references only.

If you have been in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or Marines, you will understand this. There is this way it works. The private does what he is told. Not because the sergeant or whoever it is told him to do it could throw him in the brig or do something, but because there is a whole weight of authority behind him. If the sergeant's authority only went so far, eventually he could outweigh it.

Eventually you could just hold out. But that is not how authority works. In the Roman army, the centurion would have, eventually further up, a general over him. And over that general, take it up a few steps higher, you have Caesar. So these people know, why does he have to obey?

[ 16 : 15 ] Because eventually he can fight it all he wants, but he's going to end up in front of Caesar. If he does, and Caesar's going to say to him, why are you here? Well, my centurion told me to do something. I didn't want to do it. All right, guys, kill him. And that's what's going to happen because the ultimate authority was behind this man. And so what he is saying to Jesus is, I understand your authority is God himself. I know where you come from. And that's why I know you don't even have to be present for this to happen. He no doubt knows these things where a centurion would send his aid with an order to somebody and they better do it. Because the aid says, the centurion said to do it. And so this understanding of the authority of Christ is enough for him. And that's what Jesus marvels at. He goes, wow, you were astute. You picked up on where I came from. You know who my authority is. And sometimes it seems weird to say, well, but Jesus was God. Jesus had authority. Well, yes, we're told that in 1 Corinthians 11, aren't we? For God is the head of Christ. Christ is the head of man. Man is the head of woman.

This order of authority in creation, and not just creation, but God's creation in Christ, it's all there. And then you say, wow, even try and wrap your head around Christ has an authority in the Father. Well, that is because he took on flesh. And he came here, and he submitted himself to the plan of salvation that was laid for word by the Father. This is the struggle of the Garden of Gethsemane, right? Lord, Father, if there's any way that this cup could pass, let it pass. Let it pass. But not my will, but yours be done.

And I think we can all understand that we've all had moments of Gethsemane, and it doesn't matter if it's our death on the line or just the death of a little bit of our flesh on the line, where we're kind of like, Lord, this isn't going to be fun. Anyway, we could not do this. And the Lord says, nope, we got to get through this. And then we have a choice. All right? Are we going to say, nevertheless, your will be done? Or are we going to fight and kick against the goads?

See, either way, typically, the Lord tends to get his work done. The Lord does get his work done either way. It's just, to borrow a phrase some of my friends and I like to use when we play board games. We could do this the easy way or the hard way. And I often think God says a very similar thing to us, only more in a pleading tone. Come on, let's do this the easy way. Let's do this the easy way, because he also told us that his burden is easy and his yoke is light, his yoke is easy.

And so what we see here is that Jesus's authority is not just a local authority. He doesn't need to be physically present to make miraculous things happen. But the only reason that he, the reason cited here why it's that way is because he has put himself also under authority. And so the healing happens. And now we move on to Peter's mother-in-law. Verse 14, now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laying sick with fever and he touched her hand and the fever left her and she arose and served them. Wow, that's simple. That was short. But there is a lot to unpack in there. There really is Jesus, as we're going to read a little bit later here.

[ 20 : 29 ] Does he have a home of his own? No, he is literally a homeless man as an itinerant preacher. He has no home. And so Jesus is, Peter says, come stay with me. Now think about again, our culture, our sensibilities, how we deal with things. Oh, we're going to have a party. Someone's sick in the home.

There's fever. How many are going? No, we cancel. We're done. But Jesus, knowing God's will, Jesus with the power that he has in him says, ah, we're not going to let that bother us. Just, here you go.

Come on up. You're fine. And she is. I sometimes think in Church of Seine Good Falls, our senior pastor, his name is Ray Torrey. And I mean, Jared and Sue can attest to this too. If he finds out anybody has even a headache or a little kid fell and bumped their knee, what's the first thing he's going to do? Let's pray for that. Let's just pray for that right now. And I remember when we were first at the church, I used to be like, okay, that's fine. We can pray for it, I guess. I'm not sure God's gonna. But sure, if you want to pray, it's just a headache. It's just a fever. But as I've, through the years and decades as they've gone by serving with him, I see the simple obedience in that. Like, why wouldn't we just ask God to take care of it? And then Peter's mother-in-law, what's the immediate response?

Well, I'm good. Let's go serve. Well, don't you want to take a couple days to recover? Jesus heals. You're good. You are recovered. We're going to get right down to it. And so she joins right in with the serving. And you see, I love that because it's a beautiful picture. Once we've been healed, once we've been saved by the Lord, what's our mission right off the bat? Well, let's start serving him.

Let's start doing what he would have us do. And I think it's really amazing that what you see, if you broaden that picture a little bit and you start saying, let's fill in the blanks that are left because there's not a lot of detail. When Jesus would travel, who else would come with him?

[ 22 : 47 ] The 12, at minimum. You'd get the 12. So by serving Christ, who healed her? Who else is she actually serving as well? His people as well. And that's actually one of the things I've had to learn over these last few months that the Lord is just pounding home to me. I would get in these ruts where ministry's going great. I feel great. Ministry's not so smooth, we'll say. People start complaining a little bit. Why'd you do this? You know, you really need to deal with this person. You've let them get away with far too much. Nick, you know, people, you let people take advantage of you. All this stuff is like, Lord, what am I doing? I'm trying to do my best and people don't see it. And I start getting frustrated. And what he's shown me is that my problem is that I've actually been no longer viewing it as serving him, but serving people and serving them. And yes, there's nothing wrong with saying we serve each other. We do serve each other. But when I lose sight of the reason I serve others is because

I serve the Lord, then I have lost sight of who I actually answer to. I have lost sight of my authority. I am no longer serving under his authority. I'm serving under mine. And I start making dumb decisions. And those dumb decisions are not often what people think they are.

The dumb decisions are not like, oh gosh, how could you not see you should have done something totally different? It's more, Nick, how can you not see I didn't have you ministering in that situation? You inserted yourself. You're not the person I want there. And therefore, how can I now minister in Christ when he hasn't sent me there? There is part of when you love people, right? And how many of you generally love people here? Hands up. I want to see everyone, right? Or else we're going to have an altar call after. But when we love people, we tend to be moved with compassion for them, which is correct. But what we often mistakenly do next is think we have to act on that compassion through, now let me insert myself into this situation and do whatever I can to help. When I have no idea what's going on in that situation, I have no idea if the Lord is chastening them. I have no idea if the Lord is saying, nope, I want them to reunite with that person over there who they've been estranged from.

And it's going to happen when that person ministers to them in this situation. I've seen that happen before. And it could be a ton of other things. And so what do we do when we're moved with that compassion? First we pray. Say, Lord, what would you have me do? Would you have me act? Would you have me pray? Would you have me encourage? What role do I have in this? And so by remembering what he's done with me is by remembering I serve him and my job is only to go where he tells me to go, only to do what he tells me to do, it's amazing how much joy and peace I have found in my life.

Because when I do that with confidence, I hope you all know the satisfaction of this, of being able to say, right now I am doing exactly what God wants me to do.

[ 26 : 29 ] There is such peace to that. There's such joy to that. That is when you really truly feel untouchable. And I don't necessarily mean physically, because sometimes we're persecuted for doing what God wants to do. But I'll tell you, spiritually, you're untouchable. When you are walking in the will of our Lord, I want you to do this. Then I have no question if he's going to equip me to do it. Of course he is. He asked me to do it. He's a good father. He gives his Holy Spirit. And if I'm walking in obedience doing it, he's not going to leave me unequipped. So even when he asks you to do something, you can't, you're like, there is no way I can do that. Yes, you can, because he's going to make it so.

Sure, there's no way you can do that yesterday, because you weren't asked to do it yesterday. And there's no way you should have done it yesterday. But what we see here, I'm just, should close up that area, is in that immediate response to the Lord and rising to serve him, now we find we serve others as well. Now, this is where things get interesting. I imagine if you were one of the disciples, everything got interesting eventually with Jesus. It didn't take long.

So now let's put this in context. Earlier in the day, we've had a Roman centurion come by. We've had the Jewish people all scandalized because Jesus has told them, hey guys, there's a bunch of Gentiles, including this Roman occupier, who is going to sit down at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A bunch of you aren't. I mean, okay, that's not a way to make friends and influence people. This is simply a way to rip off the band-aid and expose raw nerves.

And he's had his day of ministry, comes home, heals Peter's mom. They get ready. They make dinner and they eat their dinner and they're ready to relax for the night. And there's a knock on the door because it says, when evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed.

And he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet saying he himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.

[ 28 : 55 ] I was thinking about it this morning as I was reading this through. Like, okay, how many of you were at the marriage refresh? I know a number of you were. I saw a number of you. Okay. So I was thinking like, this would be kind of like, all right, hop in the truck with Jared and Sue, we go back to their house. We were hanging around the kitchen for a little bit after Kitty and Henry and knock, knock, knock. Who's knocking on the door? Look outside. Um, there's about a hundred people and they look demon-possessed. I mean, we laugh at, but like, that's the reality of what happened.

And it's like, I mean, like, thought is like, this is like a horror movie plot, right? But no, because Jesus has all authority over demons. So Jesus is like, all right, guys, we had our break with dinner. Now let's get back to work. And all the sick and demon-possessed are healed. The demons are cast out with a word. In other words, go. And guess what happened? They went.

And this is the crazy part because, well, how many of you have actually thought about, Lord, I want to serve you. I wonder what you would have me do. Ever had those thoughts go through your mind?

And, and if you are like me, you probably have this criteria of like, this would be really cool. I'd love to do this, but I really don't want to do this. And I really don't want to do this.

And it's like, we have our lists and being surrounded by a bunch of demon-possessed people is kind of on my list of this would make me uncomfortable. And instead of my first thought being, all right, Lord, you brought them. Let's go. You have this power through the, we have a power through the Holy Spirit that we can cast out demons. Let's speak the words and let's minister.

[ 31 : 04 ] There's still that flesh in me. That's very uncomfortable with this, but to be a servant of God means you have to know your master and you have to know what your master has asked you to do and giving you authority to do and equipped you to do. But the only way we know that is by meeting with him. Otherwise we're just flying by the seat of our pants and we may or may not be right. I'll never forget years ago, gosh, this was a while back when the WWJD stuff was all big.

And I don't remember what you used to always say about it, Jared, but you'd be like, I hate that question because we asked that half the time for situations Jesus would never be in. And he was right. We get into a lot, we ask those kinds of questions and it's like, no, Jesus wouldn't be here. So it's kind of pointless to ask this question. All we can ask now is Jesus, what do you want me to do now that I find myself in this mess?

But Jesus healed them all and he shows his authority over the spiritual realm. And now when the great, Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. And another of his disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

But Jesus said to him, follow me and let the dead bury their own dead. These are two statements Jesus makes that we have to understand are in the same vein as what he said to the rich young ruler. When he said, the rich young ruler, if you remember, came to him and said, hey, Lord, what do I have to do to be perfect? Or be saved? Right? What should I do? He goes, well, keep the commandments. He lists a bunch of them. I've done all that. Jesus said, yep, you have. Now, if you want to be perfect, go sell all you have, give it to the poor and come follow me.

[ 33 : 17 ] It says he went away sad because Jesus went straight to the heart of this guy, put his finger on it and said, I'm asking you to give up your one thing that holds you back. Hebrews 12, let's lay aside all those sins which so easily ensnare us.

Put them down. Why is it so hard to put them down? If you ever find yourself in a conversation with an unbeliever and they, they don't believe man is bad, right? You hear that all the time. Oh, I don't believe this whole sin nature stuff that man's inherently evil. Best question you can ever ask them is then why is it impossible for man to do what's good for him?

They'll look at you blankly. I've done it with people. Like, what do you mean? I said, well, I said, I didn't put on these extra pounds by eating the food I know I should eat. And how many people smoking know they shouldn't smoke, but still smoke? How many people do drink too, drink too much? They'll do it knowing they shouldn't. You never have to tell people what they're doing wrong. They know already and they're trying to fix it. Some are, some aren't, but that's what I say. Why is it so hard to do good? Well, because we're sinners.

We're sinners with a bent and crooked nature. And so it's very hard for them to answer that one, to come back and say, well, no, they're all still just good. But he goes to the heart for these two men as well. So this, this scribe who comes to him says, listen, Lord, I'll go wherever you go.

And no doubt this was a scribe who lived in Capernaum because this is where Jesus is ministering and he's getting ready to leave. And the scribe tells him, I'll go wherever you go. And he's like, yeah, you don't get it. You've gone home every night to the comfort of your house. The son of man doesn't have a home. You follow me, you're giving it all up and you're going to go place to place to place. We don't know. We're not told what he actually did. The next guy, listen, I'll come, but I got to bury my dad first. Now there's, there's different thoughts on this, whether his dad had just died and they have to go through the cleansing ceremonies and the burial services.



[ 35 : 44 ] Maybe he's asking, can you wait two or three days or a week for me? Some have often said to, no, he's not dead yet. And he's, they've got away from dying. This could be a much longer process.

In one sense, it doesn't actually matter because Jesus's response is you come follow me and let the dead bury the dead. Now, how would we interpret that? Well, one of the things that we have to understand about the classes of human beings, we've heard it said before, like, oh, in the old Testament, there were only two types of people, there were Jews and Gentiles, right? In the new Testament, there's only two types of people. There is the saved and the unsaved. Well, you can boil that down to a more stark and blunt and accurate phrase. There is only two types of people, those that are alive and those that are dead. Because that's what salvation is, right? Life entering our spirit.

This is why Jesus would make a point to say to the Pharisees, God is not God of the dead. He is God of the living. Because all those who are his people, all that we call the saved, the church, universal, all the people throughout all of history, the cloud of witnesses referenced in Hebrews 12, what separates them from all the rest of humanity is they're actually alive. And everybody else who has not been quickened through the blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit coming into them, they're dead. And so this is what he's saying. Listen, this stuff is the business of the world. This is the business of the dead.

Let the dead do the business of the dead. Right now, the kingdom of God, the Son of Man is before you. Choose that. Because that is the way of life. It was what Pastor Jared talked about last night at the marriage retreat with Mary and Martha. Mary chose the better thing. It's not that Martha was wrong to want to make dinner and have help making dinner. In the same way, Jesus isn't saying it's wrong to have a funeral for your dad. But what he's saying is, do you know what you have before you right now? You got to choose the better thing. And so we're going to move on here to 23. Now, when he got into a boat, his disciples followed him, and suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves.

But he was asleep. Then his disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us. We are perishing. But he said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? And he arose, rebuked the winds in the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, Who can this be that even the winds and the sea obey him? Here we see Jesus' authority over nature. We have seen his authority over disease.

[ 38 : 57 ] We have seen his authority over nature. We have seen his authority over the spiritual world. And we have seen the fact that he puts himself under the authority of the Father. And we have seen that to be under authority means to serve.

And so, this is one of those interesting areas, because I love this question Jesus asks. Because he's got this whole series of questions, not just Jesus, but angels too. They sometimes ask these kinds of questions where you're like, You're really asking that question?

You want to know why we're afraid? So when it says the waves, the boat was covered with waves. Yes, this is, imagine the wooden fishing boats, and the waves literally pouring over them. Water is coming onto the ship. The boat is being thrown back and forth. And Jesus says, You of little faith, why are you so afraid? These are guys, many of them who have been on the water their entire life. So what did Jesus expect? Well, I think Jesus expected, can we please put two and two together here at some point? I can heal from a distance. I can cast out demons at a word. You are part of this ministry I have. You all say, I'm a man of God. Do you really think God is going to take me down with a storm in the sea?

I have a feeling it's one of those things that it wasn't so much that they woke him for this. It was more how they woke him. Imagine if they said, Jesus, we're getting a little comfortable. Would you mind doing something about this for us? That there probably wouldn't have been the rebuke. But the fear was overwhelming. So he, and they marvel. Like, oh my gosh, who can this be that even the wind and the seas obey him? And this is, this is power they have not seen before.

Now, as they crossed to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs exceedingly fierce so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out saying, what have we to do with you, Jesus, you son of God?

[ 41 : 22 ] Have you come here to torment us before our time? Now, by the way, this is a great question that they ask. And it's important. It's easy to miss. There is agreement in the spiritual realm about authority and service. Satan is a liar and a deceiver, but he is under no deception and there is no disagreement over God's authority over the demonic hosts. In 1 Corinthians, or yeah, I think it's 1 Corinthians. It's one of the books of Corinthians. Jesus would, or Paul would write, what fellowship can light have with darkness? How can the temple of God and the temple of God, how can they be mixed? They have nothing to do with each other. And here the demons agree, because they're saying the exact same thing. Jesus, what do we have to do with you? Jesus, we're not serving you. We're not your people. We're not anything. Why are you here? Leave us alone.

Have you come to torment us before our time? They know what's coming. But it's not about them, is it? It's about these two men.

Now, a good way off from there, there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged him, saying, if you cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said to them, go.

Again, a word, a single word. So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place to the sea and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled, and they went away into the city and told everything, including what happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And they saw him, and they begged him to depart from their region.

I am going to avoid the great temptation to go into the role of swine herd throughout the history of the world. It's actually, it's funny. Like, you think about, oh, people herd swine?

[ 43 : 39 ] My oldest daughter, in research for a book she was doing, has gone through like a lot of Arthurian legend stuff. And they list swine herds in like royal houses in Europe. It's crazy.

So there are people who's literally its whole job like they are with sheep to deal with swine. And these guys are the witnesses to what happened. They're the representatives of the town watching over this flock of swine, this herd of swine.

And I can imagine what their day is like. Okay, they're just going about a normal day, and there's this commotion all of a sudden. And then now the wording used here, and I don't take credit for this. One of my friends back in Seneca Falls recently did research on this.

The term implies the idea there was probably about 2,000 pigs there. Okay. And this huge herd of pigs. Yeah. This huge herd just all of a sudden gets really agitated.

And they're probably going, what is going on with these guys? They're probably thinking, is there a predator somewhere around? And they just take off for the cliffs. And these guys, whose whole job it is to take care of these swine, and by the way, so his numbers he got, they're up for upstate New York, and it's Finger Lakes region of New York.

[ 45 : 04 ] You go to one of our cities, and you sell swine. About that much swine would be worth \$2.6 million. That's its current value. 2,000 swine averaging. I think he averaged the average pig that's herded is like 240 pounds or something like that. He did the math. \$2.6 million. So you can imagine these people are like, well, we're going to have to give account of where the pigs go.

And so they come, and they tell the whole story. And Matthew is clear to tell us, including what happened to the demon-possessed man. He wants us to be aware of all the decision being made here by the town. It's not just Jesus drove our pigs over that they're working on. They know what happened to these two men. And what do they say? Lord, just go away. Look what you've done to us. You've ruined us.

This is our livelihood. This is our well-being. This is millions of dollars literally down the tube. We're done. We don't even know what to do with you. So just leave.

It didn't matter that Jesus had healed two men that they full well knew didn't even let them walk that way because they would attack. It didn't matter these two men were back in their right minds and whole because they didn't really have interest in those kinds of things.

They were interested in the things of this world instead. And this is what was perplexing about Jesus to so many people. In a world where people wanted power and wealth and prestige, he didn't. The Son of Man came to serve.

[ 46 : 56 ] So how much more do we who have been saved by him and those that fall under his authority serve? We're going to close by turning over to Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

Now, this is a great place to kind of put it together because Matthew 8 shows us exactly who Jesus is. And all of us, I would hope as believers have read Matthew 8. We've read our gospels. We know what Jesus can do. But it's one of those things that there's a big difference between knowing and through reading what he can do and knowing because we have experienced and fully believe what Jesus could do. Like Job said at the end of the book of Job, Lord, I had heard of you, but now I have seen you. The differentiation between, yeah, I knew this stuff, but now I really know this stuff.

See, in Ecclesiastes, Solomon decided he was going to do a little science experiment with his life. One day he's kind of sitting there going, man, I just not feeling it today. I'm just, I don't know.

What's the purpose? Temple's built. It's great. I've got all these houses built. I've got all these women and wives. You know what? I want to figure out exactly what it is that makes life worth living.

Because if you actually read through Ecclesiastes, ultimately what Solomon is struggling with is the idea he's going to die. And when he dies, what good is all this wealth? So Solomon says, I'm going to try out, see if I can find purpose in wisdom and folly. So he tries wisdom. He tries folly and says, nah, they're both kind of meaningless. They don't bring what I was looking for. And he says, I'm going to try women. And I'm going to try architecture. And I'm going to try gardens. And I'm going to try singers and music and art. No, didn't find anything there either. He actually even goes on to say, if you kind of rephrase it to our modern days, he basically says, I became a master bartender.

[ 49 : 08 ] I figured out with alcohol, how to drink just enough and the right kind of mixes to get pleasure without losing my mind. And he says, eh, that was nothing either. And that's where he starts going, man, this is all pointless. What am I going to do with my life? And he's lamenting, like, tells you what kind of dad he was too, because he sits there, he goes, I built all this. I'm going to have to give it to my good for nothing son who's going to waste it all. This is where he has at life.

And as he is processing it, then he comes near the end of this book and he starts seeing more clearly. Yeah, that was empty. That was empty. That was empty. That was empty. And instead of despairing of the fact that everything was empty, he comes to terms with it. And this is where we end with in Ecclesiastes 12, 9. And moreover, because the preacher or Solomon was wise, he still taught the people knowledge. Yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find acceptable words. And what was written was upright words of truth.

The words of the wise are like goads and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails given by one shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by these. So what he's saying there is, I was going through all of this difficulty. My life had no meaning, no purpose. I thought it all pointless.

But even still, there was something in me that said, I know I can't just leave wisdom behind. And so I still wrote my proverbs. I still spoke what I knew was true, even though I didn't feel it.

And he says, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. I have just written 12 chapters in the Bible, telling you my whole thought process. We thought the centurion liked to tell his thought process. Solomon really liked to tell his thought process. Because let's hear the whole conclusion. He's going to give it in two verses. Fear God, keep his commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. And this is the encouragement and why I wanted to come here to end this off. Because what do we see in those two things? Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all. In other words, we can say, do what he says.

[ 51 : 44 ] Or serve him. Be a faithful servant to God. Do what he says. Why? For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. Because he is our authority. He is an authority we cannot escape in our lives. And in the end, this is what Solomon had to come to.

This is unfortunately, the people of the Gadarenes did not come to this conclusion. Solomon tested everything of the world. And for him, he finally said, you know what? No matter how rich, no matter how wise, no matter how much pleasure you get, no matter how much wealth you have, we cannot escape the final fact that God is going to judge us all in the end. And he's not going to judge us by our success on earthly terms. He's not going to judge us by how happy we made people. He's not going to judge us by our wealth. He's not going to judge us by our status. He's not going to judge us by any of that. In fact, he's going to go so deep in judgment, he's even going to go into the secret things of our heart. That's why David would pray, seek my, search out my heart, Lord. See if there be any wicked way. Deal with it before judgment has to happen. And with that recognition, he says, so in the end, what is the all for man? Not the part, not even the most important part. What is the all of every human being on this earth to serve him and obey him? And I think that's a wonderful thing.

It might sound terrible, like, oh, I've got to get rid of this. I got to stop doing this. I got to, and you can come up with this whole laundry list of things that get in the way of that. But the thing to remember about the Lord is what we started with. His burden is easy.

The yoke is light. He is never going to ask you to give up something that will be good for you. He's only ever going to ask you to give up something that is a snare to you and that will work death into your life. And that is where faith comes in. Do we really trust him on that? Do we believe him on that? Or do we say, when he says, ask, when he says, I want you to give that up. Do we say, Lord, you don't know what you're asking of me. He knows exactly what he's asking of us.

And what he wants from us is that simple trust to say, well, Lord, you are good. Lord, you love me. In fact, you love me so much. You gave your only son for me. You paid a price higher than any price I could ever pay. And do I really think your nature is such you're just tormenting me?

[ 54 : 47 ] You're just trying to make life hard for me? No. The faith is that he loves us. The faith is that he's going to ask us to do good things. And so let the worship team come up.

And as we just worship him, I think what I would admonish and encourage you guys with is use this time before him.

And when we worship him, worship our King, worship our Lord, and walk out of here with a heart and mind to serve him and to obey his command, knowing that this is where you will find your joy, your peace, your satisfaction, and the fulfillment of all he has for you. Lord, thank you for your mercies that are new this day. Thank you that even when we haven't laid down the things we should, you are faithful and just, and you just continue to call us in your mercy. You just say, lay him down. And may we forever have in our hearts a desire to serve you faithfully with joy, knowing that you are the one who rewards all of our good works. In Jesus' name, amen.