



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 12:15–21

Gospel of Matthew

“God’s Elect Servant: Gentle and Quiet”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading for today is again found in the 12th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and the verses that are to be read are the verses 15 through 21. While you’re locating your place, let me remind you of the context, because the passage that we are going to read does demand an acquaintance with what has preceded. It really belongs to the preceding sections, but since it made one of the messages much longer than it was possible for us to make it, I’ve reserved these verses for special treatment.

Remember, the Lord Jesus has defended the apostles and disciples who were plucking ears of grain in the corn fields, and were eating them against the accusations of the Pharisees and scribes who claimed that this was a violation of the Sabbath law. And the section concluded with the claim that he was Lord even of the Sabbath day, and it was perfectly biblical for the disciples to do what they did.

Shortly after that, he went into the synagogue to teach, and while he was there, there was a man with a withered hand. And again, the question of the nature of the Sabbath day arose, because it was the traditional view that healing could not take place on the Sabbath day. But the Lord Jesus healed the man with the withered hand and claimed that it was in full accord of the teaching of the Old Testament, and won the day.

Now we pick up the account right at that point, where the Pharisees have taken counsel together against him that they might destroy him. And so in verse 15 we read,

“But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, ‘Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.’”

May the Lord’s blessing rest upon his inspired Word.

Our subject for today is “God’s Elect Servant: Gentle and Quiet.” I must confess that I was tempted to pass this section by in the exposition of Matthew. It rarely catches the attention of the readers of the Gospel as they go through it. And furthermore, it actually belongs to the preceding section rather closely, and were it not for the limitations of time, it should have been considered last week.

It does contain, however, several important themes—some of the great themes of the Word of God—and I want to lay a little bit of stress upon them this morning. And so, in spite of the temptation to pass it by, [I] will not do it.

We are introduced here, for example, to the great theme of the Servant of Jehovah. Some Old Testament scholars have said that this is the greatest theme of the Old Testament, and so it would be bad if we were to pass by the theme of the Servant of Jehovah, and the only way in which it

could be justified is that it comes up several other times in this Gospel. And the fact that the prophet, as well as Matthew the evangelist in the New Testament includes the “behold” with which the passage begins, stresses the importance and significance of the ministry of the Servant of Jehovah: “Behold, my servant.” That means, “look,” “pay attention,” “what we have to say is of significance.”

We’re also directed in this section to the source of Gentile blessing, because it is evident from this passage that the blessing of God upon Gentiles is due to the ministry of the servant of Jehovah. Twice this is mentioned in the passage. We read in the 18th verse, “And we shall show judgment to the Gentiles,” and then again in verse 21, “And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”

Sometimes, we who live in the United States of America and the Western world, and who have been the recipients of influence from Protestant Christianity for many, many generations, do not realize that we are ultimately dependent upon the nation Israel for our blessings. Now, we are particularly indebted to the nation Israel, because our Lord Jesus was of the seed of David according to the flesh. And it is he himself who said that salvation was of the Jews. So we should never forget the fact that the blessings we have as Gentile believers, these blessings are ultimately traceable to the purpose of God through our Jewish Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. So here we have, again, that the source of our blessing is the Lord Jesus, of the seed of David according to the flesh.

And then we are reminded of the third theme. And that theme is that today is the day of the servant’s longsuffering, but there is coming a time in which the meek and gentle Jesus will become the furious Jesus, and shall execute his judgment and justice upon the disbelievers of that future time. We read in the 20th verse, for example, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and a smoking flax shall he not quench, *till*”—note the fact that the text of Scripture says “till” suggests quite strongly to me and to most students of this Gospel that the time is coming when he will break bruised reed, and he will quench the smoking flax. So we are taught that today is the day of his longsuffering, the day of his gentleness, and the day of his meekness, but there is coming a time when the judgment of God in retribution will be poured out upon men.

And though men do not like to think of the doctrine of retributive judgment—just this past week I’ve read another expositor who expounded at great length attacking the doctrine of retributive judgment. Even though we do not like it, it is taught very plainly in the Word of God.

Charles VII, who deserted Joan of Arc, was advised by Accordia to destroy the black marble monument raised over the remains of the great Duke of Bedford who had died at Rouen. And he replied, “Let him repose in peace and be thankful that he does repose. Were he awake, he would make the stoutest among us tremble.”

Now, the Lord Jesus has been crucified and buried, and he has been raised again, and he is at the right hand of the Father. And infidels and unbelievers and worldlings and sin-lovers want to forget the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. But he has been raised from the dead, and the thought of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus should make all who have not come to him tremble at that reckoning day. It is sure to come, and that theme is also set forth in this text.

The Sabbath incidents have led to the assassin’s council, described in verse 14. The Pharisees went out and held a council against him how they might destroy him. I think this is the culminating point of the opposition of the official religious leaders in the land to the Lord Jesus. Everything will move very quickly now to the consummation at Calvary when he shall be put to death.

The reason that we have a great number of chapters in between is because the Lord Jesus desired to have a time in which he would instruct his disciples concerning the truths that especially would be applicable while he was no longer here in the flesh. So in the Gospel of John, we have the great Upper Room Discourse, and in the Gospel of Matthew, we have these great chapters on parables, for example, which is actually the next chapter that we shall study, and then the other materials to the time of the crucifixion, in which he instructs in the light of the day when he will not be here in the flesh.

Our passage begins after the Lord Jesus has come to the knowledge of this council that his held against him. Now whether he discovered this through some word that was spoken to him, or whether he just knew this because he is the eternal Son, our Bible does not tell us in the other

passages either. We simply read in verse 15, “But when Jesus knew it.” And so, he withdrew, and began to deal with those who were coming to him in the way that he had been dealing all along in his messianic healing ministry.

Now you can see from this that the plotting against the Lord Jesus does not hinder the ministry. It does not terrify him so that he says I will not carry out my ministry. Now, it’s true that he seeks to avoid the publicity and he does withdraw, but I’ll try to explain that in just a moment. He withdraws to avoid publicity, but he continues his work of performing the messianic miracles. This is the predetermined work that he must accomplish, and that is precisely what he does.

We’ve had several references to it in the Gospel of Matthew up to this point. Remember, John the Baptist had a question about him, became disturbed about him, sent word to him. And the Lord Jesus, in the 11th chapter, sent a message back through the disciples of John to John, “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised up; and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosever shall not be offended in me.

He said that because he hoped that John would remember those passages from the book of Isaiah which said that these were the very miracles which the Messiah should perform. And so he continued his ministry in order that men may have authentication of the claims of the Son of God.

Now in this authenticating ministry, we are not to think that our Lord performed these miracles that men might believe. Miracles do not bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. That is evident if we study the miracles of the New Testament, and especially study the effect of the resurrection of Christ. Miracles were simply designed to point him out as the legitimate Messiah, and then men were to come to believe by faith in this legitimate Messiah. So they were identifying signs.

One thing before we move on from the 15th verse, will you notice that when the multitudes followed the Lord Jesus, he healed them all. And again, I want to comment upon the fact that in the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus, we have everybody healed.

Now this was true of the apostles when they performed their ministry, too. They healed all. This was true of those who had the gift, the New Testament gift of healing. Now that gift of healing meant that everyone who was the object of that ministry would be healed. And in the light of this, it is my contention—and I still contend this—that the kinds of gifts that are called healing gifts today, in which there may be some healing taking place, but not everyone is healed—in fact, the great majority are not healed—that is not a healing ministry. What we see today, and the claims that we hear from the healers, are not valid, biblical New Testament claims of healing. Now remember, God does heal. He often heals without any healer. He heals out of his own power, but the spiritual gift of healing, in my opinion, does not exist today.

Now, I have mentioned this several times, and I need to mention it again, because, there are people who do hear me, and they don’t pay any attention to what I say. [Laughter] And that’s their perfect right. That doesn’t upset me. I’ve never gotten upset over that after I passed the age of 50. [More laughter] Now before that, I used to get very upset over that, and if anybody disagreed over me, I just couldn’t understand why they didn’t understand this truth in such a pellucid fashion. Everyone, it seemed to me, should have been able to understand. But now it doesn’t bother me, because I know that there are people who listen who have different viewpoints.

They write me little billet-doux all the time [laughter], and I was comforted the other day, reading in one of the popular preachers of an age past, in which he made reference to the fact that he constantly got love letters from people who disagreed with him. So, if you want to write a letter to me to disagree with me, come on, write them [laughter]. I’ll be happy to read them.

And I have one before me in which a man disagreed with me from this series in Matthew. He is a charismatic, but he’s listening to the Word. He said, “You said, ‘Incidentally, it should be noted by all charismatics that a true healing ministry is one that heals every disease and sickness and all who were ill. Illness and torments is a general term showing that Jesus was able to cure every illness no matter what it might be,’ Hendrickson declares.” So evidently, I had cited Mr. Hendrickson here.

Then he goes on to write to me, “But isn’t it patently untrue, brother, to make this claim?”—he does include me in the family of the faithful [boisterous laughter] for which I am delighted, and I want to say to him if he is still listening that in the light of your letter I include you in the family of the faithful, too. But he says, “Isn’t it patently untrue, brother, to make this claim and thereby cast aspersions on all charismatics, that unless all are healed, no true healing ministry exists?”

The only illustration that he can give me from the Bible to support his view in this letter of a page and a half is the reference in 2 Timothy (which he does not actually give; he refers to Acts 19), that Paul left Trophemus at Miletus sick. Now he refers to the Apostle Paul and says, “Does not he have a true healing ministry at Ephesus in Acts 19? The Holy Spirit was with him to perform special ministries insomuch that handkerchiefs were carried away from him, and the diseases of the afflicted were cured?” Of course, the answer to that is yes. “And yet, did not this same Paul leave Trophemus sick at Miletus?”

Now that of course is true, but there is a great length of time between the ministry recorded in Acts chapter 19 and the ministry of the Apostle referred to in 2 Timothy chapter 4. The facts are, from the study of the Scriptures, that when Paul left Trophemus at Miletus sick, in the first place, he was a believer, and the healing ministries as a rule—not entirely, but as a rule—were ministries that were performed upon unbelievers. But primarily there is no reference whatsoever that Paul tries to heal Trophemus.

There are times when it is God’s will for the saints to be sick. And ultimately, there comes to every one of us, unless the Lord comes, the time when we must die. And every one of us, including all the charismatics of the past, have had this experience, and have not been healed. There comes a time in our lives when we must have gray hair, and vanishing hair [laughter]. And there must come a time when we have wrinkles upon our faces and other things that indicate that the decay of old age, wrought by sin, is upon us. Now you have a beautiful illustration right before you, of course.

[Laughter]

But there is no illustration in Scripture of anyone attempting to heal who had the gift of healing, and who was unable to heal by virtue of that gift that he possessed. There are times when healing did not take place and was not attempted for other reasons. But whenever the healing gift—true healing gift—is exercised, healings take place. And he healed them all.

So, I appreciate the letter from my brother, but he had not given me any reason to change my mind. I am sure that he probably thinks by now, if he is listening, that there is no way to change Dr. Johnson’s mind, which may be an interesting point [laughter], and maybe provable on other grounds. But I want you to notice again that we read, “And he healed them all.” The biblical gifts of healing were, in my opinion, by which the person who possessed the gifts were able to heal all that were brought before them. And so a percentage of thirty or forty percent in healing ministry does not mean that there is any healing gift present. I do not doubt that some healings have taken place in healing meetings, but it was not because of the so-called healers, but rather because God does heal in his will.

Now in the very next verse, we have an interesting statement which I have called in the outline, I think, the messianic secret. For we read that after the Lord Jesus heals the people who have come to him, he charged them that they should not make him known. Now that is an interesting statement.

Since the time of the great German scholar [Indistinct], this has been the subject of much learned discussion. You see, it is very strange that the Lord Jesus—who came to reveal his messianic identity and ministry, who came to preach that he was the king, who came to give the ministry that God had given to the ministry of the messianic king, who came to preach, in a sense, his office, his person and work—isn’t it strange that he should hide what he came to reveal?

Would it not have seemed the primary point of good, common sense that if you were able to perform mighty miracles, could you not, on the basis of this, construct a movement that would sweep many thousands of people into possession of the faith that leads to possession of the forgiveness of sins? Why not use that as a platform on which to construct a movement that would

sweep all over the world? It would seem to us, from our human reasoning, that that is some of the poorest methodology that one could possibly adopt: perform a great miracle and then tell no one to say anything about it.

So, the reasons for this have provoked the scholars quite a bit. Now, there is only explanation that has not been given, one could have said, “Well, Jesus was a predestinationist, and everybody knows that predestinationists do not like to preach the gospel [laughter], and so he wanted them to keep quiet, because he wanted them to believe in predestination. I am surprised that some of my unwitting Arminian opponents have not hit upon that as a possible explanation, but even they recognize how foolish that would be.

Some have said, he did not wish to be a miracle worker and known as a miracle worker. After all, would you like to be known, simply, as a miracle worker? And so he toned down the effects of his ministry in order to keep from being known as a thaumaturgist. Or, others have said, these were days of his humiliation. And since they were the days of his humiliation, it would be improper for him to advertise his ministry of healing.

Now, most of the wise interpreters of the Word of God—I hope I don’t offend you by using the adjective, wise—have said that there is another explanation that makes a great deal more sense. You see, the Lord Jesus came at a time when there was a very poor understanding of the messianic kingdom. The purpose of the Old Testament which prophesied that there would be a great and glorious kingdom upon the earth, the Jews had read with a great deal of relish.

The prophecies that said that the messianic king would suffer, they evidently had not liked because they had not studied them at all. Some had studied them, and it arrived at a doctrine of two Messiahs: one who would come in glory and one who would suffer. But even that was a minority viewpoint at a later time.

So, how are we to put these things together? Well, they omitted the prophecies that had to do with his sufferings, and laid great stress upon the prophecies that had to do with his glories. And since it was evident that one of the blessings of the messianic king and his coming would be

deliverance from the political yoke of the nations, and since the Israelites at this time were under the yoke of Rome, it was natural that they should think that the Messiah would deliver them from the yoke of Rome.

So the general messianic viewpoint was, when the Messiah comes, he will deliver us from Rome. Therefore, their views of the messianic officer were false—the messianic work. So if the Lord Jesus had encouraged them to go out and tell of his miracles, he would have excited a false hope of deliverance of the Roman yoke at the present time.

And this false hope would have encouraged others to have the same ill-advised enthusiasm, and so a movement would have been aroused and propagated, and the end result could only be disaster because he knew that he must suffer and die before he delivers Israel from the political yoke of outsiders. Jerusalem must be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

And if the Lord Jesus had encouraged this enthusiasm of a false character, then, of course, he would have no time to teach the apostles the things that he needed to teach them to prepare them for this present age. And so knowing that he must give them the instruction of the Upper Room Discourse, and the instruction found in the Synoptic Gospels in the latter chapters, it was necessary for him to say to them, as he performed his mighty works, do not say anything about it. Mark says, “He strictly charged them not to say anything about it.”

Now, I think that explains the reason why there is such a thing as a messianic secret. Well now, Matthew is a great student of the Bible. He reads the Bible. That probably is one reason why he was such an effective apostle, and why he was, by the Holy Spirit, given the task of writing this great gospel of the king. And so he turns to Scripture to support this. He says, in the 17th verse, as he discusses the messianic style, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken Isaiah the Prophet.”

He says that in the Old Testament you could find confirmation of the fact that the Messiah would have a gentle and quiet ministry. He will not quarrel in a wrangling and disputatious way. He will not call everybody to debate. He will not stir up people as popular types of miracle workers

might in order to gain support in a fleshly way for their movement. And he points us to the passage in Isaiah 42. This is one of the great servant songs of the prophecy of Isaiah, and I do not think it is exaggerating to say these servant songs of the Old Testament—there are four definite ones; one found in Isaiah 42 which is the one that is cited here, one cited in Isaiah chapter 49, one found in Isaiah chapter 50, and one found in the greatest prophetic passage of the Old Testament in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (perhaps, perhaps one in Isaiah 61, but there is debate over that)—it is not exaggerating to say that these are the greatest passages of the Old Testament revelation. They surely are the greatest passages in the book of Isaiah, which may be the greatest prophecy of them all.

This is the first of them. And a great deal of learned discussion and wrangling has taken place over the interpretation, because it is such a key passage. It’s just as you can expect; whenever a passage is a key, important passage, you can be sure there is going to be a great deal of debate over it.

In the Old Testament, you could just know ahead of time there was going to be a great deal of debate over Genesis chapter 1 and the creation. And so, there has arisen all the controversies over evolution and creation, because that is a key revelation. And the same is true right through the Old Testament, because in the Old Testament, we have a revelation concerning Christ. Never forget that. And the scholars, even if they don’t know why they’re arguing, have this sense—some kind of innate, intuitive sense of disobedience, often—that something must be done about these clear passages that prophesy the coming Redeemer.

Mr. Spurgeon used to say, “Whenever I read the Old Testament, I head straight across country to Jesus Christ.” The Old Testament is a revelation of Christ, so the scholars have asked the question, “Is the servant a person, or is he, simply, a personification?”

If he is a personification, is he a personification of all Israel, or is he a personification of the ideal Israel? Is he prophet Isaiah, or is he some other prophet? Or could it be—and the Jewish interpreters, who are responsible for the Targums, have said it is the Messiah, the servant of Jehovah—some have claimed that this is the prophet Isaiah. This is a very popular, modern Jewish interpretation. The Servant of Jehovah is Isaiah.

Now think of it. The text of Scripture says, concerning the servant, all we like sheep have gone astray. We’ve turned, everyone, to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on (Isaiah) the iniquities of us all. Or let us say, we have all gone astray. We’ve turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon (Israel) the iniquity of us all.

You see, it cannot mean that, and in the New Testament we have the inspired interpretation. Not only does our Lord refer these passages to himself, the apostles refer them to the Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul does. The Apostle Peter does. Philip the Evangelist in Luke [sic] [Acts] chapter 8 refers the passages to the Lord Jesus. And the voice from heaven that says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased,” identifies him with the Servant of Jehovah.

The uncertainty, the very uncertainty of the scholars over the interpretation testifies against their interpretation. There is one well-known Old Testament scholar, Ernst Zolene. He is no longer with us in the flesh. Professor Zolene had four different interpretations of this passage throughout his career. In one part of his career, he said the servant was this. In another part of his career he said, no, the servant is this. In another part of his career he said, no, the servant is not that or that, it’s this. And finally, to cap off his career, he gave a fourth interpretation. So, through his career he passed through four different interpretations of the servant.

Now, I must say I do not see anything here that would lead us to believe that anything other than Jesus Christ is the servant. Now let’s notice a few things before our hour is up.

“Behold, my servant”—something unusual is to be expected—behold, look, my servant. Now notice that he says, “My servant.” He does not say, your servant. The “my” shows that before he serves man, he is essentially the servant of God. There is a contemporary theologian who has made quite a mark in the last 35 years. His name is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer is especially known for his resistance to the German Nazis.

Bonhoeffer studied in the universities of Germany. He came from a family which was involved in the ministry of the Word of God. He came to the United States. He lectured over here. He was in Britain. He was fairly well-known as a young scholar, and when he came back to Germany,

he came into conflict with the Nazi regime and ultimately was involved in the plot on Hilter’s life.

And as a result of this, he lost his life.

He has written some random reminiscences, *Letters from Prison*, and a few other volumes of works that have been collected. He was not a finished theologian by a long shot, and consequently, some of the things that he said were quite good, and some of the things that he said have been quite bad. But he said things in a rather unusual way, and contemporary scholars have made a great deal over him.

And he made a statement which has been put into popular language as “Jesus, the man for others.” And if you ever listen to liberal preachers, you will find this phrase in their messages. They will talk about Jesus, the man for others, and evangelicals, who like to listen occasionally to liberal preaching have picked up some of these things, and they, too, occasionally, will speak about Jesus, the man for others.

Now I don’t object to that. There is a sense in which that is true. But we must get our priorities right. The Lord Jesus is the man for others. But really, and fundamentally, he is the God for man. And because he is the God for man, he is, before the man for others, he is the man for God. In other words, he is the man who came to do the will of God. Pre-eminently, his aim in life was not to please men. Pre-eminently, his aim in life was to please the Father. He said, “Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me to do Thy will, O God.”

So when we read here that he is “My servant,” we’re not surprised at our Lord’s ministry to discover that the essential thing about it is that he came to do the will of God. He is a man for God. And only as a man for God is a man for other men. Let us not forget that. You know, it always helps in reading the Bible to read it from the divine standpoint, rather than the human. Don’t look for ways in which you might be blessed, first of all, but read it from the divine standpoint, and then you will find your cup of blessing is overflowing constantly.

My servant, of whom I have chosen, unconditional choice. Calvin used to say that Jesus Christ is the mirror of election. Now God is delighted with his servant, because he has a servant who

does not fail, because he chooses him unconditionally because of his love for him, just as we ourselves enter into relationship with God because of love.

And isn’t it a striking thing, too, that he says, “My Spirit shall be upon him”? Because even though he is the GOD-man, he is the God-MAN. And as the God-man, the first aspect of his lifestyle that is stressed here is the equipment for his task. How much more is it necessary for ourselves to be equipped for our tasks by the Holy Spirit. If the Lord Jesus, who was the God-man, needed the equipment of the Holy Spirit to carry out his messianic ministry, how much more do you and I need the enablement of the Holy Spirit to live the life of service and the life for God that he desires that we live? That is why it is so important that we learn what it is to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and empowered by him.

He says that he will show judgment to the Gentiles. I agree with many of the students of the Word of God that this means that he will bring true religion, for that is the meaning of the term, judgment. All the aspects of the civil life of the peoples of the earth shall be subject to God ultimately by his sovereign grace. Now that will not occur until the second coming of the Lord Jesus. We shall not have judgment in the earth until then.

We shall not have justice in the earth until then. All Christians, of course, should array themselves on the side of those who stand for justice. But we should be realists and realize that man shall never bring us to a just age. It is only through the ministry of the God-man.

Now, we have a second and third aspect of his ministry. For we read that he shall not strive. Now what an interesting thing. No frenzied, ecstatic prophet is our Lord Jesus Christ. He shall not scream. He’s not the greatest revolutionary who ever lived. He does not take his movement to the streets with tumult and uproar. He does not use the Madison Avenue approach with marches and troubles and screaming and noise. The Lord Jesus was controversial, no question about that, but he was not hysterical. And the characteristic thing about the ministry of our Lord is its simplicity and its forbearance.

Think of our Lord. Think of his beginning. He was born in a little town by the name of Bethlehem. Probably what we would call a hick town. I don’t want to name any town around Dallas, because some of you may come from it, but I am sure there is just such a town around Dallas.

This was one of the little towns around Jerusalem. It was filled with hicks and rubes, we would say. Country men—that’s where he was born. Not only that, he grew up in Nazareth. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” And again, I resist the impulse to name a few places that we might have upon our minds. But nevertheless, the beginning our Lord had is just a testimony to the forbearance of God, and the littleness of the beginnings.

Look at his ministry. For thirty years he was an unknown. He served as the son of a carpenter and worked at a carpenter’s bench. I don’t know of anything that is more ordinary than the profession of being a carpenter, unless it is preaching [laughter]. When I went out this morning, I went out of the meeting and some young man came up and introduced himself to me, a nice-looking young man with another one, and I said, by the way, what do you do? And he said, “I’m a carpenter.” Well, that’s a noble profession, but it certainly is an ordinary one. And our Lord Jesus was a carpenter.

His whole life was one life of forbearance, from the beginning to the end. You’ll find him going quietly to be baptized by John the Baptist. You find him driven off into the wilderness for forty days. No one even knows about it—the disciples don’t even know about his victorious temptation until he tells them later on.

And finally, his earthy career reaches its gigantic climax when he makes his entrance into the city of Jerusalem, not upon a mighty steed like Bellerophon on a Pegasus. He comes in upon a lowly ass. And all of the uproar is caused not by his PR men who go before him into the city, but by the children who are shouting out, the Son of David! And if they had not shouted out, the very stones would have cried out.

His whole ministry is described by, “He shall not strive. He shall not cry. He shall not lift up his voice in the streets.” What a different kind of ministry. It was different in his spread of the gospel, in his apostles’ spread of the gospel.

They did not, like Mohammed, enforce their truth by the sword. Mohammed went out and gained a great number of followers. He did it by the means of scimitar. If you don’t support us, off goes your head—that’s a good way to get adherents [laughter], and I would imagine that was very helpful when the offering plate is passed, too [more laughter]. But, the use of worldly means and the use of worldly methods was something the Lord Jesus never did.

He did not call down plagues upon people—that belongs to the age of the law when Moses called down his plagues. And it’s a remarkable thing, I think, that we have forgotten this in our ministry of the Word of God, and so we frequently use every earthly and fleshly means that we possibly can. We call up outstanding men and say, the great philosopher has believed in Jesus Christ. The great psychologist had believed in Jesus Christ, and we attempt to advance the cause of Jesus Christ with such methods.

I am delighted for all these things, and I don’t want to attack modern evangelism. I do believe in evangelism, and I do believe anyone who believes the great doctrines of the Word of God must believe in evangelism, and he must evangelize. But it’s my own personal opinion that the greatest force for evangelism are the doctrines of the grace of God. And when those grip a man’s heart, there is motivation for the preaching of the Word of God that cannot come in any way, and fruitfulness, too.

And so speaking for myself and for the elders of Believers Chapel, we believe in predestination. We believe that there is a doctrine of election. We believe in the sovereignty of God, and we believe also in divine retribution. And we believe firmly that the gospel of Jesus Christ should be preached and preached with power and conviction, and preached under God to the salvation of souls. We believe that, but we should do it in the way of the Word.

He says that he will not break a bruised reed or quench smoking flax. Now that’s a striking statement and very interesting because he says that he will not do this *till* he sends forth justice unto victory. And the implication is that there is coming a day when he will break the bruised reed, and in which he will quench the smoking flax. Therefore, this text probably does not have reference to the saints of God but has reference to the enemies of God.

In other words, this is the day of the forbearance of God, in which the gospel message is going out, and God is withholding his thunderbolts of judgment. But the time is coming when we will not see the meek and gentle Jesus, but the furious Jesus, in which he shall execute his judgment.

There is an interesting little story which I’ve used a number of times in the past, but which I like. There is a story of a little boy who was in a hospital in the days of King George V. Some of you may have been living when George V was living. I was.

And they were told in this hospital that the king was going to pay them a visit that day. So everybody put on their best clothes as they were lying in their bed, waiting for the king to come. There was one little boy who was so anxious to see the king. And all day long there were a number of visitors, because it was visitor’s day. And along about 4 o’clock in the afternoon, a man came in with a number of other men with him. He went around in ordinary clothes. It was to be an informal day.

He went around in his ordinary clothes. He spoke to a number of the kids, and he even spoke to this young boy who was waiting to see the king. He patted him on the head. He spoke very nicely to him and left.

Well that night, as he was being made ready for bed, he spoke to the nurse and said, “Nurse, the king didn’t come!”

And she said, “Oh, the king did come. Don’t you remember that nice elderly man that came over to you and patted you on the head? And spoke so sweetly to you?”

And he said, “Yes, I do.”

She said, “Well, that was the king.”

He said, “But nurse, he didn’t have his crown on!”

Now, the Lord Jesus came in his first coming, and he did not have his crown on. He came not striving. He came not crying. He would not have his voice be heard in the streets. But there is coming a time when he shall have his crown on. He shall come back with many diadems, but then it will be the furious Jesus, not the meek and gentle Jesus.

In his name the Gentiles shall trust. That’s the successful outcome of it. They trust, because they love. And one never trusts a power or a force. This is a person. The grand enthusiasm of the saints arises from love for him. No other leader shall suffice us.

Napoleon used to say that my empire has passed away because it rested upon force, but the empire of Jesus lasts still and will last forever because it’s based upon love. I’d like to make just one change: it’s based upon redemptive love. [Indist. Comments]

Now the time is up. I must stop. He is the servant who quietly carries on his ministry by ushering in the golden age of redemption. But the day of his fury will conclude his messianic work. And then, as Mr. Spurgeon has put it, “Ye have rejected mercy, and mercy will plead with you no more. Ye challenged power, and power shall break you like potter’s vessels. Ye despised love, and love grown angry now despises you. Ye rejected truth, and now truth shall bind you in chains of fire forever. Ye would have none of God, and God will have none of you. Ye shall have none of the Savior, and he shall say, I never knew you; depart from me ye workers of iniquity.”

I say, as I have said so often, it would be a horrible thing if some, having heard the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the one who died for sinners, shedding redemptive blood that they might be delivered, pass out of this auditorium having never believed in the Lord Jesus.

If you are here today and you have never come to faith in him, may God reveal to you your lost condition. May he reveal to you the peril of failure to come to him. And may he move you to come to the one who loves sinners and desires to bless them with eternal life. Shall we bow in prayer? May we stand for the benediction?

“God’s Elect Servant: Gentle and Quiet” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the stress of the Word of God who is sufficient for these things. O Father, through the Holy Spirit, give enlightenment and conviction and conversion, salvation and joy through the Lord Jesus.

And O Father, we pray that Thou wilt tenderly deal with the hearts of those that are outside of the Savior, still. And now may grace, mercy and peace go with the saints as we part.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.