

EFC

June 19, 2022

Big Story. Bigger God. – “Yes He Can”

Matthew 3:13-4:17

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I am one of the Pastors here. We are glad to have you join us this morning. Thank you, Roberto, for preaching last Sunday. I was in New York to visit my mom, as well as attend my uncle’s memorial service. It is good to be back home.

As we continue studying the chronological story of the Bible, we finally arrived last week at the New Testament and the life of Jesus. We will spend a few months in the book of Matthew, as we consider who Jesus is, what He did, and what that means for our lives. Roberto started us last week, showing us that Jesus is the Messiah (the promised One), God, our Savior, the only way. All who trust in Jesus receive God’s love, mercy, and grace.

Pray.

Has anyone ever promised something, but you weren’t sure they could keep their promise?

In the opening scene of the life of Jesus in Matthew 1:21, God makes a promise about what Jesus would do: “he will save his people from their sins.” This is a pretty big statement, isn’t it? After all, sin has been humanity’s biggest problem since Adam and Eve. For thousands of years, sin had brought nothing but death and destruction. It was a universal problem that no one could escape. Everyone is born into sin, plagued by its consequences, and needs to be saved.

God had promised that someday one of Eve’s descendants would indeed destroy the devil and rescue us. But thousands of years later, humanity was still waiting. Many people had come along who did some good things and were part of God’s plan. But in the end, they all disappointed and were not the Rescuer the people were looking for.

Cain and Abel. Ended up a murderer and a victim.

Noah. Saved through the flood, but ended up drunk.

Joseph. Rescued from famine, but died in Egypt.

Moses. Led the people to freedom, but prevented from entering the Promised Land.

Joshua. Led the people into the Promised Land, but didn’t always seek God.

Israel. Promised to be faithful to God, but quickly and often turned away from Him.

David. A man after God’s own heart, but also a great sinner.

The people put their hope in a lot of potential rescuers along the way, but none of them was able to crush the devil and restore humanity to life with God.

So now we hear that someone else is on the scene, and He’s supposed to be the Rescuer. But why would this One prove to be any different than the many who had failed before Him? Can Jesus really do what no one else could?

As we turn to our passage this morning and look at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we will begin to see why we can have confidence that Jesus can Rescue when no one else can. After Jesus had grown

up, God sends John the Baptist to prepare the way for Him. We read about that at the beginning of our time together. Now finally, after thousands of years of waiting, Jesus steps forward to Rescue us. This is how it begins:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)

There are several reasons in this story as to why we can have confidence that Jesus can save us from our sins.

- I. First, Jesus came to fulfill God's will. This was His greatest commitment.
 - a. "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."
 - b. The opposition of John couldn't stop Him.
 - c. The potential awkwardness of misunderstanding didn't stop Him.
 - d. And we'll see in a moment, that not even temptation or the devil could stop Him.
 - e. Jesus came to fulfill God's will. Period. It was absolutely essential that Jesus always, without fail, did God's will. For at the heart of sin we find lack of trust and disobedience toward God, like we saw in Adam and Eve. If Jesus were to conquer the devil and rescue us, He had to honor God at all times.

We can have confidence that Jesus can save when no one else can, because He always honored God.

- I. Second, we can have confidence that Jesus can save, because Jesus is the Son of God.
 - a. As Jesus obeys God and is baptized, God tells us clearly who Jesus is: His own Son. This is an affirmation of what we have already been told: Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is the very Son of God, God Himself, who has come to rescue and save.
 - b. And God is "well pleased" with Him. That phrase is only ever used to refer to Jesus in the Bible. He is unique, set apart, in Himself pleasing to God unlike any other.
 - i. As we just saw, Jesus pleases God fully, in part because Jesus fully submits to the Father and obeys Him at all times, and in all ways.
 - c. This was not God telling Jesus something He didn't already know. This was a blessing for Jesus to hear the loving affirmation of His father that He already did know.
 - i. Example: "There was never any question that your dad was proud of you." I knew that. But it was good to hear!
 - ii. And this also told the people around who Jesus is.
 - d. But the way God says this about Jesus points us to an important prophecy in the Old Testament. Through the Prophet Isaiah, God had promised to send His Servant to rescue His people. This Servant is known as "the Suffering Servant", who will save God's people by suffering on their behalf. When God says that Jesus is "my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," He is alluding to Jesus as the Suffering Servant.
 - i. Isaiah 42:1-3 reads, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth

justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice."

- ii. Later on, Matthew quotes these exact same verses and tells us Jesus is the One who fulfills them.

We can have confidence that Jesus can save, because He is the Son of God and the long-promised Suffering Servant.

- I. Third, we can have confidence that Jesus can save us from our sins when no one else could, because He begins to prove it immediately after His baptism.
 - a. Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "' Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "' He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "' You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.
 - b. Compare and contrast Adam and Eve with Jesus.
 - i. Both were in perfect relationship with God.
 - ii. Both were commissioned by God to fulfill His will in the world.
 - iii. Both faced the lies and temptations of the devil.
 - iv. Adam and Eve were in a lush garden when they were tempted. Jesus was weak and hungry after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness.
 - v. Adam and Eve doubted God, listened to the devil, and gave into the first temptation the devil sent their way.
 - vi. Jesus trusted God, listened to God and rejected the devil's lies, and resisted not once, but three times.
 - vii. Where Adam and Eve – and everyone since – failed, Jesus succeeded! Perhaps He will indeed prove different than all the others before Him. Perhaps He will succeed, where all others have fallen short.

God announced to Joseph that Jesus would "save his people from their sins." We can have confidence that Jesus saves because He always does God's will, He is the beloved Son of God, and He resists the devil and temptation.

Jesus is unique. He alone can save. Like the one key that can open the lock, when no other can. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, we are pointed to Him as the Promised and long awaited Rescuer. He is our only hope, and He is our sure hope.

So what does this mean for us? What is the significance of the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and all we learn of Jesus in it?

A little bit of context will help, because Matthew uses a literary tool to point us to his message. Matthew repeats something both before and after this section. This repetition is kind of like the two covers of a book. On the front cover is the title of the book, that gives us an idea of what it is about. On the back cover of many books there is often a short summary of what's inside. The two covers of the book help us know what the message of the book is. Matthew gives us two book covers before and after this section, so we will know what the message of this section is.

John begins his ministry by saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2) And after Jesus has been tempted and moves to Galilee to fulfill prophecy, Jesus begins His ministry saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) This is the message we are to hear, when we look at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It is time to repent, and follow Jesus into a new kingdom.

Repentance is turning away from one thing, and turning to something different instead. Jesus is bringing something new, and calling us to follow Him out of the old and into the new. Since this is the beginning of Jesus' ministry, we should expect to learn more and more of what it means for our lives to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. As we progress through Matthew, we'll learn more and more. But here are a few things we can know from the beginning.

- I. From John's statement to the Pharisees, we can see that we are to turn from empty religion that bears no good fruit, to living lives of repentance and good fruit.
- II. From Jesus' example of submission to God in all things, we can see that we are to turn from the rebellious ways of Adam and Eve, and turn to submitting to God and trusting in Him.
- III. From Jesus' temptation we learn to:
 - a. Repent from seeking comfort, and instead depend upon God and His word.
 - b. Repent from trying to take advantage of our position as God's children in order to force God to act on our behalf, and instead submit to God in humility and trust.
 - c. Repent from looking for shortcuts that cause us to compromise, and instead walk the path God has for us, regardless of the cost.
- IV. From the story that immediately follows, we know that turning from life apart from God and turning to life in the kingdom of heaven requires discipleship to Jesus.
 - a. Matthew 4:17-22 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

What might this mean for us today, on June 19, 2022, in the midst of social turmoil and difficulties in our country?

- I. Repent away from life apart from God, seek God's kingdom and righteousness first. We do this by trusting in God and obeying Him in faith. Some of what we know He calls us to would be:

- a. Pray for the country and everyone involved and impacted. Prayer (or the lack thereof) reveals something about who or what we are trusting in for life and wellbeing.
- b. Listen with respect.
- c. Speak with humility and grace.
- d. Love even your enemies. Remember, love is active. In your words and in your deeds, treat even those who you disagree with, with kindness, generosity, etc.
- e. Pray for those who cause you trouble.
- f. In all you do, let your words and your attitudes and your choices and your actions and your interactions with others point to the hope of life in Jesus, who is able to save.

This is what confidence in Jesus turns into: the power to follow God through any difficulty, and to love in any circumstance. And even here, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, we are given good reason to believe that He indeed is able to save from sin, and all its effects. So let us repent, and follow Jesus in the kingdom of heaven, trusting in Him alone.