**Capernaum Part 1**

**Text: Matthew 11:23-24**

Throughout my Christian life I have been influenced by great writers such as John MacArthur, Tony Evans, David Jeremiah and others.

* I promise that this sermon will pale in comparison to the writings of these men,
* but I have a desire to write from my heart, to my people, to my family of God, to my beloved friends, to those closest to me.
* So allow me to open up my heart, and open up the Scriptures so we can grow in the Lord together.

*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.**But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.* ***Matthew 11:23-24 ( KJV )***

***Big Town?***

Many great things happened in this tiny city.

* It is reported that Capernaum, in its hay day had a population of 1500 souls.
* Not a large city in comparison to Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv or even New York City or Houston.
* Small as it may have been some pretty monumental things happened there.
* Peter, Andrew, James and John were from Capernaum, as was Matthew the tax-collector.
* And these men were called into the Gospel ministry by Jesus Christ Himself!
* I would say that was a big thing.

Also Jesus, after being threatened in Nazareth to be thrown off of a cliff, came to Capernaum and set up His headquarters there.

* That’s really monumental when you think about who Christ is.
* He is God… With a throne in heaven… and He decides to set up headquarters in tiny Capernaum.
* The towns’ people should have shouted for joy.
* There should have been a podium set up for a speech from the King of Kings.
* But that was not the case.

What do you think happened to make the Lord say something like He did in Matthew 11:23-24.

* That Capernaum would be brought down to hell, and that in the Day of Judgment Sodom would be better off.
* Sodom was a wicked city.
* They were sexual deviants there.
* The men of the city wanted to have homosexual relations with the angels of God.
* What must have Capernaum done to warrant such a scolding?
* If you think about it you never read anywhere in the Word of God where the people of Capernaum mocked Jesus or tried to run Him out of town.
* You never read that Capernaum was filled with sodomites or “bad people”,
* …yet Jesus says they would be brought down to hell.
* One must ask why?

***The indifference of the people***

Do you know what the sin of Capernaum was?

* You guessed it… indifference to Christ.
* Indifference to Jesus Christ is worse than the sin of Sodom.

Jesus was about to send His disciples out when He sat the twelve down and gave them direction.

* And at the end of His directive He said to them in Matthew 10:14-15…

*“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.**Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city”* ***Matthew 10:14-15 ( KJV )***

It’s interesting to read that Jesus told the disciples to *“shake the dust off of their feet”* if anyone rejected the message of Jesus being Messiah.

* One may ask what it means.

In the Jewish culture when a pious Jew would walk through a Gentile town they would very publicly shake the dust off of their feet showing their separation of Gentile practices.

* So when Jesus told the disciples to shake the dust from their feet they understood Him to be saying that they needed to publicly show their separation from Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah.
* It was a gesture to show people of their wrong choice.

And oh what a terrible choice.

* To reject Jesus as Messiah is placing a death sentence on yourself for all of eternity.
* To have all the evidence we have today of a risen Messiah and still reject Him is worse that the days of Sodom.
* Jesus says if Sodom would have seen the wonderful works that He did there in Capernaum they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.
* In other words… there would have been true, deep, sincere repentance because they, even as wicked as they were, would have recognized Him as Messiah.

***The Mighty Works Mentioned by Jesus***

Jesus mentions that there were some works that He did in Capernaum that would have won the city of Sodom to Him. What were they?

There were several mighty works that Jesus did in Capernaum and we are going to spend the remainder of our time together looking at and studying these works.

What I want to do is go to Matthew chapter 8:1-17 and study a passage where Jesus heals three people in a swift progression.

* I also want to show several things that the people of Capernaum should have recognized and that should have led them to Jesus as their long awaited Messiah.

**THE LEPER**

First I want us to look at the first four verses in Matthew chapter 8…

*When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.**And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.**And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.**And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

***Matthew 8:1-4 ( KJV )***

***His choice (sovereignty)***

The first thing I think the people of Capernaum should have spotted in Jesus was His ability to choose to heal someone.

* I think this shows His sovereignty.
* Even the leper understood this.
* He said to Jesus… “*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”*
* Notice that Jesus didn’t correct him and say… *“Well, it’s not my choice to heal or not to heal.”*
* Notice how the Lord responded… “*And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.”*
* He simply responded to the leper by saying (Potter Paraphrase)… *“Your right that I can heal if I so choose, and I’m choosing to heal you as we speak.”*  WOW!

***A Leper’s plea***

This man was in desperate need of help.

* He had been pronounced unclean by the priest of that area and was put out of the city, abandoned by his family and friends.
* No one wanted to come near him for fear of catching the disease themselves.
* Not only was leprosy painful but it was a disease that caused separation.
* No telling how long or how many years he had been separated from family and friends.
* He was desperate for a touch from the Lord.

He knew if the Lord healed him he could go back to some normalcy in his life.

* No more itching,
* no more pain,
* no more separation.
* If only he could get to Jesus and ask him for a huge favor.

Notice with me in verse 3 the manner in which Jesus healed him.

* We said earlier that it was Jesus’ sovereign choice to either heal this man or not.
* In verse 3 we see Jesus willing to heal the man.
* You would think that would be enough.
* I mean just to hear the words from Jesus… “*I will; be thou clean.”*
* But Jesus took it a step further.
* Notice the whole statement in verse 3…

*“And Jesus put forth his hand,* ***and touched him****, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”*

Not only did Jesus heal the man, but He also touched him, even though his skin was covered with this terrible disease.

* How long must it have been since this leprous man was touched by anyone.
* He must have been disgusting to look at and the very thought of touching him was unheard of.
* But Jesus did.
* Jesus touched him.

Oh how disgusting I was when I was living in sin.

* But Jesus touched me one night at an altar of prayer and my soul was healed from the dreaded disease called sin.

Leprosy in the Bible is a picture of sin.

* Sin is a disfiguring disease that ravages our souls, and separates us from a Holy God.
* But Jesus came and died and shed His precious blood so that you and I could be free from this dreaded disease.
* I think of the song, “He Touched Me.” The words go something like this…

*“He touched me, oh, He touched me. And all the joy that floods my soul. Something happened and now I know He touched me and made me whole.”*

I just want to take a moment and say thank you Lord Jesus for choosing to touch and heal my soul.

Let’s go back to our opening verse…

*“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for* ***if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day****.
But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.”* ***Matthew 11:23-24 ( KJV )***

This was one of those mighty works that would have convinced a sin filled city like Sodom to repent of their sins.

* And this will be one of the things that will be brought up against the people of Capernaum on Judgment Day.

**\*\*\* Prayer and Invitation**

(8:5-17; 9:2-8, 18-33; Mark 1:23-28).