Morning. Welcome, introduce self. Privilege.

Church fam through Matt 18 – sermons online.

Pick up with passage earlier: 12:22-37, pg 977

Bible near, open, follow. First: pray God’s help.

*Lord, hear word, see living word. Say with psalm:*

*“with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.”*

*Clarity. Rich text. Love abound know & insight.*

To what Extent forgive person who says hurtful?

Go on forgiving – lie, insult, gossip?

Thought before? Tested? Work, neighbour, friend

Broaden: how much evil speak and still be forgiven?

Hear: hate speech, extremists. Even blasphemies.

Some things are unforgiveable? Today passage.

Before any further: get into Matthew 12:22-37

Imagine Israelite. Jew. N Israel. 1st century.

Farmer (everyone). Craftsmen, fisherman. Farming.

Jewish trad: celebrate festivals, taught law & proph.

Leaders, Pharisees. Command respect. Detail. Call.

Romans: occupying, unfair taxes, king.

This is people. Patterns of season & festival.

Rumour man in south: camel’s hair. Locusts honey.

John. Sounds crazy, people flocking to hear.

Different: not law or self; repentance. Turn. Heart

Cos: kingdom coming. Promised. King like David.

Soon stories about Jesus. Travelling N Israel.

Teach amazing. Does amazing. Can’t believe.

Stories keep come: new ppl, miracles, diff teaching.

Heal leper (avoid law). Servant centurion from miles

Calming storm. Cast out demons. Deep & rich law.

Astounding story: friends lower man to heal.

Jesus forgives sins. Outrageous: Pharisees disagree.

Ppl ask: is this what John talked about?

Long waited, promised, Messiah. Free ppl.

Pharisees (respected) push back. Accuse blasphemy

You sceptical. Surely not do. And how teach? (auth)

Jesus in next town. Heard lots. Does & says amazing

Nearby. Let’s read ***[read v22-24]***

**Jesus has performed another astonishing miracle.**

In front eyes. Cast out demons, cured disabilities.

See and talk. Undeniable. Mum headache story.

1st C Israel alleged healings. Some fake or natural.

Mislabel possible headache + paracetamol.

Super origin could ne be challenged; and is not.

Public. Obvious, abs incurable disabilities healed.

Blind and mute now see and talk. Account clear.

Question on lips: son of David? That is, could…

Opponents panic. Hear considering if Messiah.

Cannot deny so leaders make outrageous claim. *v24*

2 origin exercise super: God or Satan (derived).

Opt latter: otherwise God’s power - Jesus from God.

Position, prejudices, preconceptions do not allow.

Instead ‘Beelzebul’. Common. Prince of demons.

**This accusation is absurd.** J. shows to be. *v25-26*

Any org (kingdom, city, house, church) divided falls

Unreasonable suggest devil pulls kingdom down

Pharisees acknowledge demon. How win battle?

Absurd, and **the accusation is self-defeating** *v27*

Jewish exorcisms happened: Acts 19 sons of priest.

Jesus turns accusation on Pharisees

Your own cast demons (questionable?) never devil.

So why me? On what basis? Clear for everyone.

And yet, **there is something different about Jesus.**

*v28-30*. J. doesn’t claim power from: (scripture, trad, personal piety, ancestry). Power of spirit.

Strong man (satan) overpowered.

House (influence, blind mute man possessed) freed.

J. claims power of very spirit of G.

Work of G. as evil flees before the spirit of G.

For you: 1st C Israelite. Witness to all this.

Listen whisperings accusation reply. For you: decide

Jesus words ring *v30*. Until now no side. Unsure.

But ofc **there no neutrality when it comes to Jesus.**

J. done super. Claims by spirit. Kingdom breaking in.

1st importance to all of life because if really…

Demands entire life. Everything.

To not acknowledge *is* to reject.

Jesus acts & words leave no middle way. ***Pause***

Impossibility of neutrality true for us.

In Northstowe, Savesey, Cambridge. 2000 years on.

Neutral just as impossible.

If man who walked was God, then pay attention

Many try to find middle way: hold distance, claim politeness, preserve neutrality.

Not openly against. Neither boldly on Christ’s side.

Perhaps even true for believers. In a way each of us.

Impossible: creator, king & wants us to know him.

Clear in passage, mouth of J: 2 parties. 2 camps.

With for cause? Otherwise against. Gather? Scatter.

Neutrality not an option.

Section also: **Jesus will not cause peace and agreement wherever he and his message comes.**

No neutrality: confronted comes to surface.

In values, individuals, scripture. Gospel itself.

Exactly as seen with Pharisees.

We talk vaguely of unity harmony, peace in world

As if expected. Earlier in Matt not peace but sword

Here division is abundantly clear.

Not surprised divide: homes families, even churches

Terrible, but no neutrality. Not worth sacrificing.Continue in passage: **read v30-32**. No neutral…

Every person left to self chooses to turn away.

Reflect in life, behaviour, sins. Even after turn.

So come back to q: extent you willing to forgive?

Wronged personally. Spoken evil against you.

J. here answers, as a man and as God himself.

How evil speak & still forgive? Commit sin & return?

What extent can God forgive? J: *v31*.

God’s forgiveness theme of Bible.

Moses: “the compassionate and gracious God…maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

Patience to David: lie, coveted, stole, adultery, kill

Forgiven remembered great King lead worship.

Church in Corinth: sexual, steal, greed, drunk, fraud.

And more, but Paul writes: “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.”

God’s forgiveness great theme of bible.

Even directly speak and act against God.

Peter. Mockers on cross.

Even directly insulting God is forgiven.

Drawn to exception – marvel at primary positive!

Perhaps wrestle injustice? No acknowledge wrong?

Sin has immediate effect, justice. Not always.

How can God wipe clean without justice? Doesn’t.

God’s justice requires the right penalty for evil.

Because of love provided son, J, carry debt to cross.

Incredible, inconceivable, only achievable. Forgiveness offered to all.

Forgive story of bible: offered to each of us today.

All who vocally oppose: Stephen Fry “capricious, mean-minded, and stupid”.

Daily blasphemies. Name in vain. Offered forgive.

Those who claim to know but struggle. Offered.

Again from Bible *v31*.

Come confident despite sin. Taken away in Christ.

God’s justice & forgiveness: our ability to forgive.

Challenge: someone spoken needs forgiveness?

Ofc speak about unforgiveable sin *read 31-32*

Hard to understand, not head round.

Perhaps causes worry for believers, have peace.

Don’t believe this is something a believer can.

First: seen what not. David. Peter. Even on cross.

Context of entire bible say with confidence 3:16

More likely: repeated ongoing rejection conviction

HS has ministry of shining light, softening.

God’s means of saving people on a path to judge.

Refuse life ring. Hardened against very means.

What hope?

Unforgiveable because hardened against lifeline.

Perhaps Pharisees who repeatedly reject.

Believer, take confidence.

Not believer…challenge as you hear now of J.

What stopping you? Risk of unforgiveable sin.

Final part of passage **read 33-37.**

Words focus: responses of people and Pharisees

Expressed in words. Final section explains why.

**Words are the evidence of the state of our hearts.**

As fruit tree. As smell milk. As heat hob.

J. judges innermost character by what say.

Growing up: knock glass. Collier’s.

Whenever knocked, not once transformed. Same.

Words overflow from sin or good.

Evidence of hearts, so evidence on judgement day.

Line of inquiry when J. returns to judge

Going to give account for all said and done.

Just as words lead to condemned: salvation.

Paul in Romans 10: *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”*

Link words and heart again clear.

Belief in heart, expressed and evidenced in words.

Seen all along, forgiveness offered on account of J.

Pay attention to words? Little thought & reflection.

Words really so unimportant? Great challenge here.

Sometimes be calm: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Prov 15:1)

Sometimes need to speak up oppressed, Gospel.

Sometimes be quiet: “Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.” (Proverbs 10:19).

Perhaps still confused. Apprehensive?

In some ways appropriate to God.

Great confidence of infinite forgiveness.

No matter what said. Pray

*Hope in alone: unfailing love and redemption.*

*Praise for forgiveness offer. Renew devotion. Side.*

*Transform heart & words for glory. Christ name.*