

Matthew Bible Study

It would seem that the best way to introduce Matthew a.k.a. Levi is the way the Bible introduces him. After the Sermon on the Mount and after Jesus begins His healing ministry as He was walking through His new home Capernaum, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth. Now being a tax collector was not a very respectable job in those days since tax collectors had a tendency to extort too much money from an already poor and over taxed people...(sounds a lot like today to be sure.) They technically contracted their services out to the Romans and as such they were regularly ceremonially unclean. So because of their associations with Gentiles and the regular swindling of their people they were looked at as the lowest of vermin in the social ladder of the day.

Back to the way the Bible introduces Matthew... as Jesus walked by Matthew (which by the way means “gift of Yahweh”... (In Aramaic/Hebrew it would look like this phonetically- “mattanyah”- mattan= “gift of”, Yah= “Yahweh”), He said to Him *“Follow me”*... and Matthew rose and followed Him immediately. (Just as an aside; in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Matthew is referred to as Levi, and lest we get confused, it was not uncommon in those days or ours for that matter for someone to have 2 names...Simon, also known as Peter, Thomas also known as Didymus...so on the surface it seems to be that simple. However, there is an old church tradition that seems to believe that Levi was his given name and then when he became a follower of Christ that his name was changed to Matthew just like Peter’s name had been changed from Simon.)

We can only speculate at this point as to what went on in Matthew’s mind. (It appears that by the very act of getting up and following Jesus he was breaking a Roman contract, probably in the employ of Herod Antipas as he labored in “Galilee of the Gentiles”; which meant at that moment he could not come back to that profession. He was laying everything aside to follow Jesus...just what Jesus expected.) It may have been that he, like everyone else, had heard all the stories about what Jesus had been doing and saying and when Jesus called he could not resist the call of Christ and so, like so many others, he simply rose and followed because the call of Christ is in fact, irresistible. Another idea as to why he was prepared to leave without hesitation may be that he was probably acquainted with both Andrew and Peter and given Andrew’s propensity to evangelism he may have been introduced to the Messiah through him.

Matthew’s main purpose was to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Kings, to his fellow Jews and he would stop at nothing to do this as his Gospel contains more Old Testament references (up to 100) than any other book, bringing the Old Testament prophecies to bear on Jesus as He had come to do the will of His Father by saving the elect from their sins. Matthew sought to show over and over again that God’s children did not get to heaven by their “good works” as the teachers of the Law proclaimed but only by the grace of Jesus, the Messiah. He shows very clearly and powerfully that salvation is only through the work of Jesus...even in his own calling he makes the point of the Messiah’s irresistible call.

Matthew’s phrases and use of particular words point to the Jewishness of his writing for a particularly Jewish audience. His emphasis on Jesus being the Son of David, the chosen Messiah along with the use of the phrase “kingdom of heaven” often as well as the emphasis on dreams and his emphasis on the Law separate this from the other Gospels.

But for all the “good news” in Matthews Gospel there is some disturbing news as well. Probably the most disturbing of all are the proclamations concerning those who claim to be His followers and are not. (See Matt. 7:21-23; 22:11-14; 25:11-12.) Many have stated in commentaries and in sermons that these are perhaps the most stunningly terrifying words Jesus spoke. For He is speaking about people who honestly believe that they had an intimate relationship with Jesus but on the Day of Judgment will find Him saying, *“I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.”* These are practically the same words used in Matt. 25:12 and 41 when speaking of non-believers.

Matthew also paints a rather bleak picture of those who openly reject Jesus and His teaching. Jesus’ harshest critics were the religious leaders of the day. In their minds He brought a different message than the one they had been entrusted with. In reality, it was the same message, as Matthew shows over and over again; it is just that they had so corrupted the message as their forefathers had that they could no longer hear the truth. Jesus made it clear how he felt about them when in the Sermon on the Mount He told the people that *“...unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisee, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* At first blush I am sure the people may have thought; “No way...the Pharisees are the most righteous!” But after a while it became clear that they had no righteousness that could win them favor with God but Jesus clearly is saying that those of us who receive His righteousness must go beyond the “works” of the Pharisees not for salvation but to honor our father in heaven who has given us so great a salvation. We are allowed to inherit the kingdom because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us so the rest is showing forth the righteousness that glorifies God and enable us to enjoy Him forever.

Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy so that from the beginning to the end he was tying the truths of the Old and New Testaments together showing God’s continuous story of redemption...and a redemption not just for the Jews. In the “family tree” at the beginning there are all the regular descendants of Abraham that you would expect but also such foreigners as Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba and Ruth. And then there are the Magi/Gentiles that come from the East with these and more representing the promise given to Abraham that through his seed the nations of the world would be blessed with salvation.

Matthew probably seems to have written his gospel in the early to mid-60’s before the destruction of Jerusalem since the Sadducees seem to still play a major role in the story. (The Sadducees are pretty much non-existent after the Fall of Jerusalem.) Also, the amount of detail from the Old Testament that Matthew uses seems to also give credence to the fact that this Gospel was written at least a few years before the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple so that he still had access to the scrolls he would need to complete his work as a gospel writer confirming the words that God was giving him through the inspiration of the Spirit.

This book has been called, even by critics of historic Christianity, the greatest book ever written and rightfully so!

References in study: My own Journibling and teaching through this book through the years; R.C. Sproul’s commentary on Matthew; Hendrickson’s Commentary on Matthew, and various other sources through the years that God has brought my way.

Matthew Bible Study
September 24, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Brief Introduction

1. **Matthew's main purpose was to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Kings, to his fellow Jews and he would stop at nothing to do this as his Gospel contains more Old Testament references (up to 130) than any other book, bringing the Old Testament prophecies to bear on Jesus as He had come to do the will of His Father by saving the elect from their sins. Matthew sought to show over and over again that God's children did not get to heaven by their "good works" as the teachers of the Law proclaimed but only by the grace of Jesus, the Messiah. He shows very clearly and powerfully that salvation is only through the work of Jesus...even in his own calling he makes the point of the Messiah's irresistible call.**
2. **Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy so that from the beginning to the end he was tying the truths of the Old and New Testaments together showing God's continuous story of redemption...and a redemption not just for the Jews. In the "family tree" at the beginning there are all the regular descendants of Abraham that you would expect but also such foreigners as Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba and Ruth. And then there are the Magi/Gentiles that come from the East with these and more representing the promise given to Abraham that through his seed the nations of the world would be blessed with salvation.**
3. **Turn to Malachi 4, for a moment. There had been 400 plus years of "silence" since the Prophet Malachi came on the scene but God had continued to work during this time.**
 - a. **Given all the reasons that the people were standing opposed to God in this book of prophecy, how is it that God ends this book?**
 - (1) **That though this is clearly a prophecy concerning the 2nd coming of the Messiah it implies that there will be a first one to set all of this into motion just as has been prophesied.**
 - (2) **One of the signs of the Messiah's coming is that many would not follow Him.**
 - (3) **Here at the end of the older testament God seems to be saying that instead of bringing another curse on these people, that He is going to bring back the voice of Elijah...which would be fulfilled in John the Baptist.**
 - (4) **Instead of condemnation...this time...He gives them time and many events in preparation for His Messiah.**
 - b. **What is the purpose for the inclusion of verse 4 in the midst of this prophecy concerning the 1st coming of Christ?**
 - (1) **His law would be foundational...everything He is doing would be based upon it and his covenant and would need to be dealt with...**
 - (2) **God would deal with it as He has planned all along.**
 - (3) **Also, since there wouldn't be Prophets for awhile that they need to be diligent in the Law that they might continue in the true religion even without a physical shepherd to remind them until He sends one.**
 - c. **What were some of the things that God had been doing during this time while He was "silent"?**
 - (1) **Scribes were constantly studying the OT seeking to discover when the Messiah would come...as well as writing and teaching works that sought to make the Law applicable to everyday life for the Jew...**

- (2) 1st fulfillment of verse 1, is with all the strife and death and even the conquering of their foes, the Seleucids...under Antiochus Epiphanes there was much persecution even the defilement of the temple as he sacrificed pigs and also set up a statute of Zeus then a revolt ensued causing many more death but they won their freedom around 142 BC many more deaths ...a second fulfillment may be AD 70... probably does not refer to the Last Day...(See II Peter 3:10-13) since his purpose seems to be to end with a specific introduction to the first coming. But given what we know now since we have the rest of Scripture God may have had the end in mind.
- (3) However, Rome was on the march and would eventually take over Palestine around 63 BC occupying Rome with its own rulers until around 37 BC when they would install Herod the Great, as a vassal king to rule in their stead and he would rule until around 4 BC.
- (4) Herod rebuilds the temple for the people which began in 20BC and continued until a few years after His death...that is the Temple proper... the surrounding courts and walls wouldn't be completed until around 64 AD. then it would eventually be totally destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.
- (5) Also, during this time Rome is Hellenizing Palestine as best it can...introducing Greek literature and art, relocating its people for the expressed purpose of cross breeding with the people of Palestine, also building roadways and aqueducts making travel and communication easier and faster.
- (6) Rome is also moving towards monotheism in its religious positions.
- (7) Pax Romana...allowing Israel and others sects to practice somewhat freely what they wanted to believe.
- (8) The people still awaiting their Messiah...but now the thinking had moved to a more political Messiah that would bring back the Davidic political kingdom rather than the one prophesied...their definition of peace was a renewed Promised Land.
- (9) Then Gal. 4, *"When the time had fully come, God sent His Son..."* *"the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings..."* Mal. 4:2-3.

4. Now as we move toward the Gospel of Matthew what would you say is the simple purpose for all the Gospels?

- a. They give us a clear picture of who Jesus is...as Savior, King, Redeemer, Messiah...2nd person of the Godhead.
- b. They tell us who He was, what He came to do and why and what He wants us to do.
- c. By the time we finish this Gospel my prayer is that you will have a deeper picture of Jesus and a clearer understanding of what He wants us to do.
- d. The Gospel accounts gives us Jesus' actual words from which we can compare the words of the Apostles. Having said that, of course, Jesus is the Word and so all the Bible is His Word...but here we actually hear and see the dialog of Jesus.

5. What questions about Jesus do you hope to have answered through this study of Matthew's Gospel?

C. Now let's jump into Matthew 1.

1. When you think of genealogies or lineage what do you think of? Ancestry.com... Who Do You Think You Are? (a TV show)... Duck Dynasty

2. Genealogies in the Bible- Principles governing each list:

- a. Primarily there are 2 forms of these lists....segmented and linear.
- b. The lists serve a variety of functions and we must always determine the purpose for the list given.
- c. The lists are always subject to change...adding one person one time and then not mentioning him the next.
- d. The lists are usually never complete...never meant to be seen as exhaustive.

- e. They always ensure that God's people can see God's grace transgenerationally...to the saved and to the unsaved within the family...just because one generation is evil is no indicator that the next will be, all in God's hands.
 - f. Matthew would have been especially acquainted with lists and genealogies as a tax collector and if he didn't have the information he knew where to get it since it was a matter of the public registry.
3. What does this genealogy tell us about his primary audience? Who is he primarily writing too? The Jews
 4. What is Matthew communicating in vs. 1 when he says, "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ...*"? Immediately he begins with who Jesus really is...the Christ...the Messiah. Jesus' name was Jesus bar Joseph or Jesus of Nazareth...as far as the world was concerned. Christ is His title...Messiah...Jesus the Anointed One.
 5. Right out of the shoot he is calling Jesus the Messiah, but then he adds "...son of David...". Why, what is he communicating now? Jesus is the King, the One that God had promised to King David. No question...this IS the One they had been waiting for! He comes from the royal lineage.
 6. Then he says, "...*the son of Abraham.*" What is the point of this connection?
 - a. Established His historical lineage...something extremely important to the Jews. The farther back you can establish your ancestry the stronger your case for the person. This ancestry, like a pedigree, testified to a historical reality. Just like in the courts of kings...the lineage established placement and importance even if someone could be a knight or not. Most cultures of the world value lineage and ancestry with the exception of our own which is probably why we often fail to understand the importance of such genealogies when we come across them. (See Luke 3:23-38) ...Matthew wrote to the Jews, so Jesus was shown as a descendant of Abraham, while Luke wrote to the gentiles, so he would emphasize Jesus as the Savior of all God's people Jew and Gentile.
 - b. Genealogy to the Jew...that is having one...testified to the historic reality of the person. This proved they were real not mythical. This was important then and later and today!
 - c. The OT had predicted that the Messiah would come through both Abraham and David.
 7. Normally linear genealogies list a person's descendants...the list before us list's Jesus' ancestors. Why might that be? Jesus is the focal point of redemptive history so His ancestors depend on Him for their meaning! God preserved and directed the line of David because of His plan to send Jesus.
 8. In the first 17 verses we meet 46 people whose lifetimes span some 2000 plus or minus years. All were ancestors of Jesus as we have said, but they varied considerably in personality, spirituality and experience. What is the purpose for showing this wide variety of ancestors?
 - a. God works through ordinary people.
 - b. God's work in history is not limited by human failures or sins.
 - c. Just as God used all kinds of people to do His will in the redemption of His people, he uses all kinds of people today to accomplish His will.
 9. Women were usually not part of genealogies. So who are the 5 women spoken of in this list and what is their significance? Tamar of Canaan...reminds us of Judah's failures but God's desire to save; Rahab of Jericho, Ruth the Moabitess, Bathsheba (seems she was Jewish for it appears that her grandfather is Ahithophel, who opposed David and supported

Absalom, but, by virtue of being married to a Gentile/pagan she would no longer be considered a Jew by her immediate and extended family if they were at all orthodox in their beliefs.) wife of Uriah the Hittite... these remind us of how Gentiles were never an afterthought to God's plan of redemption and that they are a fulfillment to the promise made to Abraham when God said that through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. And Mary, the mother of the Christ/Messiah prophesied of in Is. 7.

10. There have been volumes written about the meaning of the 14 generations in verse 17. What have you been taught?

- a. The easiest way to understand this...is the way it has been taught to me...that David is the central character in this genealogy because Matthew is going to great pains to establish Jesus' connection to David who has come to fulfill the promises made through David to God's people....to be the Messiah and King of an even greater kingdom.
- b. I love this by Matthew Henry concerning verse 17; *"Lastly, the general summary of all this genealogy we have, where it is summed up in 3 fourteens signalized by remarkable periods. In the 1st fourteen we have the family of David rising and looking forward as the morning; in the 2nd, we have it flourishing in its median luster; in the 3rd, we have it declining and growing less and less, dwindling into a family of a poor carpenter, and then the Christ shines forth out of it."* Think of this as the phoenix rising out of the ashes...or just like John the Baptist he had to decrease so that Jesus might increase.

11. How has looking at these genealogies once again broadened your understanding of who Jesus is?

- a. For me again it gave me more content to the truth that I already knew and placed Him in the proper context.
- b. That God works even through our sinfulness. His will, will be done.
- c. Reading through all these names tells us that the whole OT points to Christ. We often get caught up in the exciting stories or the mundane events and forget that each of these is pointing forward to Christ.

12. Now let's look at the more familiar part of this text is verses 18-25. As you read it again is there anything that stands out that you hadn't noticed before?

- a. "betrothal"- a binding contract...an unbreakable pledge of marriage...for a year they are bound to one another as if married without the physical relationship. The woman would live with her parents or some relative in charge of her care during this time and then at the end of the betrothal she would then move to the home of the groom who had previously prepared a place for them to raise a family together. Betrothal was so close to marriage that it was an extremely serious crime if the woman was found to be with child ahead of time. It was so serious that the woman and possibly the man could be stoned to death for such an offense (though that by this time it seems they weren't doing that very often)....but in this case the father of this child was the Holy Spirit...
- b. Two miracles... His conception and His virgin birth.
- c. "divorce her quietly" meant that he had decided to deal with this event with compassion and that would probably mean she would be sent away and he would take care of her at least for a time... financially and such. Joseph thought he only had 2 options...divorce or stoning...but God gave him a third...marriage. God often shows us that there are more options if we will only wait for Him seeking His word.
- d. "angels"- an interesting critter created by God as His special servants. Not men who have gone to heaven. I love "Clarence" in "It's a Wonderful Life" but his death on earth is NOT how he became an angel. Angels have special tasks to perform for God. They sing God's praises and they are messengers, protectors of God's people, encouragers, warriors, they carry the believer

home to God...they are servants of God that minister only to God's people on God's behalf.
(Heb. 1:14)

- e. "Joseph, the son of David"...the angel made it clear and Matthew records that Jesus' legal father was as well of the line of David.
- f. "by the Holy Spirit" is referenced to twice...from a biblical perspective the genesis of life in the first place was from the power of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit hovered over the deep...so the angel declared both to Joseph here and to Mary in Luke that the same power from which the universe and all life was originally made is also the power that will conceive in her womb and produce a son...and this should be a great comfort and honor that these two lowly people were chosen to be a part of this event.
- g. Jesus means literally- "Yahweh saves" ...God says to name Him Jesus, "for He will save His people from their sins." Jesus did not come to make salvation possible for everyone...He came to be the Savior of His people. The name indicates that people cannot save themselves...they cannot choose to save themselves...He had to come to save them...His coming, His death, resurrection and ascension secured salvation for His own.
- h. God named Him as was His practice throughout the Bible. (See John the Baptist) Parents usually had the privilege to name their children, but in the case of a child being born for some specific historical and redemptive purpose God named the child, indicating that the child belonged to Him.
- i. Jesus is His proper Jewish name...Immanuel describes what He does in His incarnation...the Word became flesh and dwelt among His own...describes the presence of God with us

13. What is Matthew seeking to communicate here in verse 18 that is perhaps of greater importance today than it was even then?

- a. "The birth of Jesus..." = "the genesis of Jesus" which comes from another Greek word "geenomia" = to be, to become, to happen.
- b. Matthew is asserting a historical reality...this is how Jesus came to be.
- c. The importance of this phrase lies in the fact that Matthew makes a case for Jesus' birth fits within the framework of history rather than mythology!
- d. And he does this 2 times within this short chapter...1st the genealogy testifies to Jesus historic reality...and then 2nd with this phrase he reiterates it.
- e. Not just His birth but a "virgin birth"...this was as He had said it would be...this was completely different from man...and mirrored more the beginning of man than it did day to day occurrences of women giving birth.

14. Why is it so important that Jesus be born a man and that He was born of a virgin?

- a. Born a man and at the same time God for only a blood sacrifice would work to take away the sins of God's people...and only God can atone for those sins since in being God he was perfect thus meeting the perfection required to appease the wrath of God.
- b. Born of a woman has a few things attached to it...
 - (1) First, it points to the fact that Jesus truly is man and God...human from His mother divinity from God His Father.
 - (2) Next, it fulfills the prophecy that the Messiah would come this way from Isaiah...and Matthew will be doing his best to show these Jews and subsequent generations how this Jesus fulfills the OT prophecies about Him.
 - (3) The Bible declares He came in the flesh. It also calls Him holy in Luke 1 which means he was sinless since He was God's Son. Since the Bible declares it to be so it is so. If we do not hold to the virgin birth then we deny the Bible and its authority...for if you deny the Bible even in point you deny the whole.

15. Some people say that the stories about Jesus just "contain" truth or principles and it is these that matter. It is not important whether they actually happened. How would you respond to such a statement?

16. We live in a world that is suffering. People are often sad to the point of depression. What message does this passage (especially vs. 18-25) give us to pass on to this suffering world? Hope... seeing God keeping His promises...proving that He is a trustworthy God when everything in this life may not be trustworthy...he is and we can share that truth with the weary and downtrodden...of course, we have to believe it ourselves in order for it to be effective.

Next Time: Chapter 2

Matthew Bible Study
Oct. 8, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How can sections of Scripture like genealogies bring hope in this troubling world? God uses ordinary people for His purposes. How can a statement like that help us today? Most people “feel” insignificant...they are convinced things happen randomly without purpose...this shows that God uses the likes of them to do important things as well as the fact that there is a plan and things are done with intentionality. Can be hopeful stuff for the hopeless and despondent.
2. What was “one” new thing that you learned about Jesus from this first chapter that you were not aware of before this study began?

C. Matthew Chapter 2

1. As you read this account again, what myths... that have surrounded this story for years... are disproved? Things like...the wise men weren't at Jesus' birth...
2. As you read these accounts again, what more do you wish Matthew had told us?
 - a. Jesus' age. Some indications are inferred:
 - (1) *“After Jesus was born...wise men came from the east...”* - They set out from the east either after He was born...or they were in route before and arrived after He was born...speculation of just where they came from tells us that it took them at least a year to get to Jerusalem from the East...Babylon/Persia.
 - (2) Vs. 11, tells us they were in a house...not in a stable...so it wasn't at His birth...or for a while after since the gifts that they gave them made them very wealthy and they only brought the minimum to the temple when it was time for His circumcision (Luke 2)
 - (3) Vs. 16 seems to indicate that what Herod ascertained from them (vs. 7) was that the child was at least 1 year old maybe as much as 2...
 - b. He leaves out the shepherds.
 - c. Wonder if anyone else came after the shepherds before the Magi.
 - d. Contrary to popular opinion, we don't know how many Magi came to worship the Lord Jesus.
 - e. We would certainly like to have been given more information about the Magi. Precisely where did they come from? What did they believe?
 - f. What was the “star” that appeared, and just how did it guide them?
 - g. How long was the journey, and what became of them later on?
 - h. How Joseph and Mary reacted to these “wise men” coming and bowing before their child.
 - i. How interesting it would be to read more of the time Jesus and His parents spent in Egypt!
 - j. Why do you suppose he doesn't? Matthew, like the other Gospel writers, was very selective in what he chose to include in his Gospel. See John 20:30-31.
3. Who are the main characters in this chapter? Jesus, the Magi and Herod the Great
4. Who did the Magi first talk to about where to find the one born king of the Jews? The people in the streets...another myth debunked.
5. Who were these men...the magi?
 - a. The “*magoi*” (the plural of the Greek “*magos*”) to whom Matthew refers were, first of all, to be sure, wise men, scholars of the stars in (probably) Persia and the land of the two rivers. At the root of the ancient study of the stars was the conviction that the microcosm of humanity is in a magnetic-symbiotic relationship with the macrocosm of the heavenly bodies.

Astronomy (“astral *“nomos”* or law”) was the study of the laws or movements of the stars; astrology (“astral *“logos”* or word”) was the study of the message or meaning of the stars’ movements for earthly life... . The two disciplines, now rightly separated, were combined in the same persons in the ancient world. Because of their skill in deciphering the meanings or messages of the stars, the magi were widely considered ‘wise men.’

- b. While these magi may have been considered “wise men” in many parts of the world, they would most likely be viewed quite differently by the Jews. To begin with, they were Gentiles. In and of itself, this is nearly enough to condemn them. If this is not bad enough, “magi” are not well spoken of in the Scriptures.

- (1) Balaam was considered a “seer” or magi in his time...also a false prophet that God uses but exposes his lack of belief at the same time.

- (2) Daniel speaks of “conjurers” and “sorcerers”...the “wise men” of Babylon could not tell Nebuchadnezzar what his dreams meant.

- (3) The OT is quite clear about how God sees diviners/seers...magi!

6. What was the purpose of the Magi in the story about Jesus’ early years?

- a. Fulfillment of many prophecies like Is. 60:1-14 and Ps. 72:8-17. This is vitally important to the whole because it reveals that God keeps His promises...His word...that there is a plan and that there is intentionality in play...things don’t happen by random.
- b. I believe that Matthew celebrates the fact that these Gentiles were divinely called to worship the Christ Child. While Matthew may have been a Jew, writing to Jews, he would not distort the gospel of Jesus Christ...the message of redemption and the message of Isaiah that said that the Messiah would be a light even to the Gentiles.
- c. I like this explanation that I pick up through the years. Like Balaam of old they were unbelievers, it would seem, but both groups were given divine revelation. While Balaam rejected God’s Word to his own destruction, the Magi promptly obeyed God’s call on their life and dropped everything and came to Jerusalem and then on to Bethlehem to worship the child Jesus, the Messiah...King of the Jews..
- d. Another way to look at them is like this: The Magi can remind one of Abraham. It may well be that Abraham and the Magi came from the same area. Both were “Gentiles” at the time God summoned them to the Holy Land. Neither knew exactly where they were going when they left their homeland. Both obeyed God (though the Magi did so more promptly) and saw the Savior (see [John 8:56](#)). Both, incidentally, were instructed by the stars: *“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’ But Abram said, ‘O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.’ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.’ And He brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then He said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:1-6 ESV)
- e. The gifts that the Magi brought seem to have been what Joseph and Mary would have used to finance the trip that they were quickly called upon to make. There are definitely symbolism that may have been in Matthews mind...gold =gift worthy of a king, frankincense= used by the priests of old for intercession and myrrh= used to embalm the dead...looking forward to Christ death...but the immediate need was to get them to Egypt ...there and back again...and they would have picked up at that time and left.

7. What about this star? Why would God use a star to guide them?

- a. Again fulfillment of prophecy...even the prophecy of a Gentile seer in Numbers 24:17.
- b. Ps. 19:1-4; Luke 19:39-40; Rom. 1:18-20...It has been said before and I find myself in agreement that: Israel was to be a *“blessing to the nations”* (Gen 12:1-3)...a *“light to the Gentiles”*

(Isaiah 42:6), but they failed to do so. They did not take the good news of Messiah's birth to the Gentiles; rather, the Gentiles brought the good news to them. When God's people were "*silent*," the "*stars*" (as it were, or the star) cried out (like the stones would have in the Luke passage), leading the Magi to the Savior.

- c. There are many who are intent on finding some human explanation for it. Some suggest that it was Halley's Comet; others, a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Possible, but...
 - (1) 1st of all, if this were a known and predictable phenomenon, then why would the Magi follow it? It would not have been that unusual at all.
 - (2) And how could it possibly lead the Magi to the very house where Jesus and His parents were living?
- d. You have to ask yourself, why is it so important to find a human explanation for a miracle, other than to avoid the fact that it was a miracle? Why is it, for example, that some commentators on the Book of Jonah (even some very good ones) find it profitable to produce examples of men who were swallowed by "great fish" and rescued alive? God may very well use natural means to accomplish His purposes, but He does not always do so. Sometimes God uses extraordinary measures, measures that have no counterpart in nature, so that the supernatural hand of God is undeniable. God owns the stars and He owns the "big fish" so He can use them any way He wishes...

8. What prophecies does Matthew refer to specifically in this chapter alone and what is their significance?

- a. Vs. 5- Micah 5:2- not only tells the magi where they could find the Messiah/King of the Jews...but also tells his audience and us today who Jesus is...also talking about the trustworthiness of our God to keep His promises.
- b. VS. 15- Hosea 11:1- Hosea spoke these words originally with the Exodus in mind but by Matthew using it here this tells us that it had not met its fullest completion until it rested on the Christ child and His family. Egypt at this time had become a haven for Jewish refugees fleeing Rome's and Herod's reach and inconsistencies toward Palestine. There were historically around 1 million Jews in Alexandria alone and many more spread throughout the land. So Joseph would not be alone in this land as he sojourned there.
- c. Vs. 18- Jeremiah 31:15- a solemn text to be sure... The immediate context was of Rachel weeping over her children being thrust out of the Promised Land and being exiled in a foreign land. Now Rachel was not alive at this time but the children of Israel were seen as the children of Rachel, the favorite wife of Jacob. And now Herod is enraged...and when he was enraged people died...whether it be his own family or the ones he hated ...namely the Jews. He was not a Jew but of the tribe of Esau.
- d. Vs. 23- "Jesus will be called a Nazarene"- Matt. 2:23. Nowhere in Scripture is Jesus called this or prophesied to be this...so how do we reconcile this? Well, it seems to be of the same vain as in John when Jesus calls Nathaniel. After being told that Jesus came from Nazareth he says, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nazareth was not thought of very highly among the Jews...and so as Jesus grew up He would have been despised and mocked for where He was from. A friend of mine is Lebanese but his wife is from Syria, and she was born in a town called Homs...but it has a reputation... so all from there are called a Homsie...like we call people from Indiana ...Hoosiers as a derogatory remark or a name of honor as the people from Indiana do...though no one what it means. Anyway, how does this answer the issue that he starts out saying that this was spoken by the prophets? Well the sentence structure is completely different than usual and it seems he was saying, *'This was to fulfill the teaching of the prophets that he would be called a Nazarene.'* ...to refer to the way He would be mistreated as we are told in passages such as Is. 53...rejected and despised... What Matthew seems to be saying is that the prophets predicted the Messiah would be a despised person, the victim of slurs such as this from the earliest days of His life.
- e. Reveals to us that God's plan will be carried out just as He says ...when He says.

9. How did Matthew intend for his readers to understand the connection between Herod's slaughter of the infants in 2:16-18 and Jeremiah's words in 31:15?

- a. It would have reminded them and is to remind us that His redemptive events throughout time have always been accompanied by pain and suffering.
- b. The context of Jeremiah 31 is Israel's captivity and subsequent return and restoration. In particular, God is assuring the Northern Kingdom of Israel of their restoration after their Assyrian bondage.
- c. The mood of this chapter is joyful celebration, because God will bring His people back to the land and restore them, showering His blessings upon them. In this sense, those who weep should weep no longer.
- d. How easy it was to describe the mourning of the mothers of the Northern Kingdom as "Rachel weeping for her children" when the Assyrians led them away in captivity. The same words would be an apt description of the mothers of the Southern Kingdom mourning as they watched their sons carried off to Babylon. But after this Rachel should refrain from weeping 31:16...because the remnant will return to bring forth the Branch of Righteousness.
- e. Also, the context of Jeremiah 31 is the "new covenant". God has loved His people with an everlasting love and because of that He scattered His people out of judgment and discipline for their sins but He will gather them back. Because of the slaughter of Bethlehem's infants Matthew pictures Rachel weeping once more for essentially the same reason as before...these children are no more and the child which is the object of Herod's great wrath has been driven into Egypt. But by referring to the Jeremiah passage Matthew offers the same hope that the people then had in the "Branch of Righteousness"...He will soon return from Egypt...from exile...in order to save all those who are His. This is how these 2 stories connect...and it is a positive connection in the midst of the reality of suffering.
- f. Suffering and salvation go together...just look at the Saviors life.

10. How does this chapter and its events support Matthews earlier claim that Jesus is the Christ...the Messiah... both God and Man?

11. What lessons can we take away from this text for today?

- a. That Scripture interprets Scripture.
- b. God's purposes will be fulfilled.

Next time: Chapter 3

Matthew Bible Study
Oct. 22, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. **What was the thrust of John's message after heralding the King's coming?**
Jonah Gould answered this..."REPENT and BELIEVE!!!"
2. **Why were the Pharisees so unimpressed with John the Baptist and his message especially considering how well he fulfilled prophecy? (Think: When did the facts ever matter to these guys?)** They didn't have ears to hear...they were upset that John placed them on the same level of the Gentiles in their need to be cleansed...after all THEY were children of Abraham!

C. Chapter 4-

1. **Let's look at Matt. 4:1-11 for a moment. Immediately without much thought... what OT image(s) come to mind after reading these 11 verses?**
 - a. Temptation of Adam and Eve
 - b. The Flood...raining for 40 days and 40 nights
 - c. Moses on Mt. Horeb/Sinai...for 40 days and 40 nights... Ex. 34:2,28; Deut. 9:9,18
 - d. Wilderness testing of the children of Israel for 40 years to Jesus' 40 days of testing. See Deut. 8:1-5.
 - e. The people were driven into the wilderness to wander...the passage before us says that Jesus was led up by the Spirit...the Greek word translated "led up"= "drove him as with great force...or impelled Jesus into the wilderness" to go there for a specific reason of being tempted by Satan...and the purpose for the temptation was to test Him. The nation was the type or shadow of what Jesus would later experience.
 - f. Elijah...I Kings 19:8
2. **What are some things that Matthew simply assumes that his readers already understand and accept?**
 - a. He assumes they knew the words of the OT...
 - b. He assumed they would recognize the connections with the number 40...
 - c. The existence and work of the Holy Spirit...
 - (1) He has sighted this in the previous chapter as well.
 - (2) So what did the Jews think about when Matthew said Holy Spirit?
 - Judaism teaches that God is non-corporal and has no form, only spirit. God's presence is referred to sometimes as Shekinah which denotes the spiritual presence of God. In most languages breath and spirit are designated by the same term. The life-giving breath cannot be of earthly origin, for nothing is found in this life from where it may be taken. It is derived from the supernatural world, from God. God blew the breath of life into Adam (Gen. 2: 7).
 - The Spirit was among 10 things that were created on the first day according to Jewish teaching.
 - Though the nature of the Holy Spirit is really nowhere described in Judaism, the name indicates that it was conceived as a kind of wind that became manifest through noise and light. "The holy spirit", in the mind of every Jew, is in fact, "God" and God alone. Judaism (and Jews) do not consider "the holy spirit" to be a separable entity, any more than your own "sense of humor" or "spirit of fun" are separate entities from yourself.
 - d. They believed in the devil as well. The Talmud (2nd century -5th century AD) is full with accounts from the Jewish sages confirming that:
 - (1) male and female demons do exist;
 - (2) demons have a chief demon, who is unnamed;

- (3) demons have free will to do what their will demands...evil things only, which they use all the time. *"So firm was the belief in evil spirits, both among the educated and uneducated classes, that the Talmud legislates for it. In their legal decisions the Rabbis prescribed for circumstances which pre-suppose the actuality of demons."* Rabbi Abraham Cohen, one of the editors of the Soncino Talmud, wrote about this subject in his highly respected book, 'Everyman's Talmud.'
3. Just as to add some clarity it would seem that Jesus was tempted during the whole time He was in the wilderness (See Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:1-2). These temptations before us seem to be the last of all that He endured.
 4. So it seems that Satan waited until Jesus would be at His weakest in His human form to test, tempt and try Him with the greatest temptations...when He was famished. Why was Jesus tested? Do we have any "clues" from the text?
 - a. The first Adam was tested and he sinned...so the 2nd Adam was tested and He succeeded so that He could be our high priest.
 - b. The types of temptations Jesus faced were of the type that all human beings experience generated by physical needs, drives and those that appeal to pride and a desire for possessions.
 - c. The triumph over sin uniquely qualifies Him to represent us before God as our merciful and faithful high priest. The Son knows personally and experientially what it is like to endure temptations and still be without sin. Jesus had the ability to sin or He would not have been human in anyway. But He did not sin. Only the one who resists temptation feels its full force.
 - d. WLC #48 says, Question 48: *How did Christ humble himself in his life? Answer: Christ humbled himself in his life, by subjecting himself to the law, which He perfectly fulfilled; and by conflicting with the indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in His flesh, whether common to the nature of man, or particularly accompanying that His low condition.*
 - e. Where else do we find additional information? See Hebrews 2:17, 4:14-5:9
 5. How is Satan seeking to tempt Christ in the "first" temptation recorded by Matthew? (Matt. 4:3-4)
 - a. Knowing of His hunger he says to Jesus... *"Since you are the Son of God..."*...he is seeking to plant the suggestion that since He is the Son of God He shouldn't have to suffer the pangs of hunger. Self-serving attitude. We sometimes think that since we are God's children that we shouldn't have to endure the struggles we do!
 - b. Satan is tempting Jesus to choose the physical over the spiritual. Trying to get Him to succumb to a food "need" just like the 1st Adam. Adam wasn't hungry but what is it we want when we are told we can't have something?...The very thing that we are told we can't have!
 6. What was Jesus' response?
 - a. To rely on His Father to supply His need especially since the Father had not told Him to stop His fast. So He was relying on God's Word to direct and provide for Him.
 - b. Then He uses the Word of God to prove His point by saying, *"It is written..."* every Jew would have known that He was quoting from the sacred Scriptures, specifically the Pentateuch (Deut. 8:3) even if they did not recognize the actual address...and to show His reliance upon the actual Word as well...His own word because it is vital that "all" men live by the Word of God so He makes this point.
 - c. He actually speaks to both the physical and the spiritual need of men... *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* Bread is important...physical food is important but man cannot live well on just bread but only... *"But by every Word of God"*... and not just some of them...but every word. And the OT spells out extremely well what happened when God's people choose to pick and choose which words of

God they would listen to. John Calvin called the Bible the "*Vox Dei*"... "The voice of God" and that we should receive it as if we were hearing it audibly from the lips of God.

7. How is Satan seeking to tempt Him in the next temptation? (Matt. 4:5-7)
 - a. Since Jesus quoted the Word of God Satan decided to put God's promise to the test...(Ps. 91:11-12). It is as if Satan is saying, *"Make your 'father' prove how much He loves you. Here your chance, throw yourself down, put Him and His word to the test."*
 - b. Almost like a courtroom scene in that God is placed on the stand to give proof for who He is and what He will do for His son...
 - c. The highest point of the temple is actually the pinnacle of the royal porch, approx. 450 ft. above the Kidron Valley. This place would have made this display public...so he is tempting Jesus to do something that would bring Him public acclaim before His time.
 - d. To leave the path of the suffering servant to take up the path of the celebrity.
8. What was Jesus' response?
 - a. If you really trust someone there is no need to ever put them to the test. To do so shows that you do not trust or love them. But He knows this Word is true and He knows that God the Father will do what He says...but now is not the time for public displays...
 - b. Jesus reconfirms His desire to be the suffering servant...the servant King.
9. How is Satan seeking to tempt Jesus in this last temptation? (Matt. 4:8-10)
 - a. Interesting, the arrogance of the devil, for he represents himself as if he is the ruler/king of a vast domain... "all the kingdoms.." (Think: the conman seeking to sell the Brooklyn Bridge.)
 - b. The devil is asking that Jesus leave His allegiance and submission to the Father and bow before him giving him what Jesus had given to the Father...His Father.
 - c. Just like in the garden Satan seeks to undermine the God mandated authority structure. In the garden he went to Eve to seek to undermine Adam's headship...God's established authority structure...and here he comes to Jesus to put His father to the test seeking once again to undermine God's established plan and authority.
 - d. The temptation was to get all the kingdoms without any cost to Himself. Getting something for nothing...well almost nothing...selling His soul to the devil. Satan was offering Him glory without Him having to suffer for it as had been decided before the foundation of the earth. We all like short cuts, right? And we don't always consider the consequences for those shortcuts.
10. What was Jesus' response?
 - a. Jesus can give His honor and glory to no other but the Godhead of which He is one. He would not deny Himself as well as the Father and the Spirit.
 - b. At His command Satan leaves Him...because Jesus is in fact God incarnate who controls all even Satan...though it is clear that Satan will attack Him in one way or another throughout the rest of His earthly life...thus fulfilling the Scripture of Gen. 3:15.
 - c. There is a price to pay... one that He has willingly placed before Himself...He came to suffer and die to glorify the Father by doing His will.
11. How does vs. 11 actually show that God does keep His word? (Look again at Ps. 91:11-12 and Satan's words in vs. 6....see also Mark 1:13)
 - a. The angels were there...as such God was there the whole time.
 - b. God the Father provides for His Son. The word translated here as "ministering" is the word "*diakoneo*" is used elsewhere speaking of serving food...(1 Kings 19:6-8; Matt. 25:44; Acts 6:2)
12. Food for thought. Have you ever considered your personal point of vulnerability? If Satan were to come to you with a test what would he put in front of you: fame, fortune, pleasures? How do you respond to Satan's temptations when you are alone and no one can see what you do?

13. Now let's look at vs. 12-17. (About a year has gone by since vs. 11. While John's Gospel finds Jesus in Jerusalem quite early (John 2:13—3:36), the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) pass by this early Jerusalem ministry and present our Lord's ministry as commencing in Galilee. Matthew and Mark specifically indicate that Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee after the arrest of John the Baptist. The arrest of John was therefore a kind of turning point in our Lord's ministry. After John is arrested now Jesus begins to preach!) Practically speaking, why do you suppose Jesus went to Galilee, then to the city of Capernaum?
 - a. John was arrested in Judea so it was a hostile environment at the time so Jesus "withdrew" to a safer place...Galilee... just like it had been in His infancy (Matt. 2:22).
 - b. Capernaum is on the Sea of Galilee...and He needed to be there to fulfill the Scriptures. Is. 9:2....For He has come to save the nations...His children are from every nation, tribe and tongue.
14. Now we see the calling of Jesus' disciples. (Vs. 18-22) What or who seems to be missing? The rest of His disciples. What is being communicated by saying "Follow me..."?
 - a. By leaving and following Him they were placing themselves in submission under His authority an authority that they recognized already. Promising to live in obedience to Him at all cost.
 - b. As God appointed king He issues a sovereign command to "Come" and they come...leaving their nets immediately. The power of God's word implores them and they come...they are not given a choice...there is no "invitation" ...since by implication an invitation can be turned down...Jesus calls and His call is irresistible, He changed the dispositions of their hearts so they freely dropped everything immediately and followed Him. But they also responded to the command of their KING!
15. What does Jesus promise them?
 - a. To become fishers of men...they had a different calling...God the Father didn't need any more fishermen, but rather He needed fishers of men.
 - b. He guarantees their success... "I will make you fishers of men..."...you gotta love this...we are so worried about this...
16. What is Jesus doing in these verses and why are His works significant?
 - a. He fulfilled Scripture...How specifically does the text say He did this?
 - (1) He fed the poor and needy...physically and spiritually...healing sickness and preaching the kingdom.
 - (2) His fame grew...His notoriety grew as people saw His power...
 - b. Interesting to think about this: He received all the things that Satan asked Him to do or He did them. All the things that Satan had offered Him He was already planning to do in His way.
17. What new thing(s) do we learn about Jesus in this chapter?
18. What lessons can we take away from this text for today?

Next week: The Sermon on the Mount chapters 5-7

Matthew Bible Study
Oct. 29, 2014

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What was the purpose for Jesus' testing? And what was His response?
2. What is He teaching us through these responses?

C. Chapter 5-7: Sermon on the Mount

1. This section opens with these words, *"Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them saying:..."* What is a disciple? What are the characteristics of a disciple?
 - a. A true disciple of Jesus is a person who has been called by Jesus. John 15:16; Acts 13:17; Eph. 1:4. In the case of His disciples He called them as they were working at the jobs/professions that he had give them. A true disciple is not someone who turns over a new leaf in life or one that has made a decision for Jesus, but one whose life has been radically transformed by Jesus claim of his or her life.
 - b. A true disciple of Jesus is taught by Jesus. So we must be theologians...students of God's through His Word...Christ is the Word so He teaches us to be able to proclaim, warn and teach. Others
 - c. A true disciple of Jesus is sent by Him to proclaim His message. Matt. 28:19; John 17:18...both are great commissions...but THE great commission came in Gen. 12:1-3. As we go...wherever we find ourselves...wherever God has placed us we are to proclaim the truth.
 - d. A true disciple is first and foremost a sheep... See John 13:12-20. This passage reminds us:
 - (1) That we are only sheep...that we are only disciples...
 - (2) That a disciple is NOT greater than his Master...the messenger is NOT greater than the One who sent him.
 - (3) And that a disciple only does what his Master does...it is not for us to make things up as we go...to do so means that we think of ourselves as greater than the Master.
 - (4) Theology 101- He is God, we are not!
 - e. A true disciple loves the other disciples completely...a disciple loves the other disciples with his whole heart...John 13:30-35. What is going on here?
 - (1) This is not a "new" commandment- Lev. 19:18...so what is "new"...or what is Jesus trying to make clear?
 - (2) Well since He has been talking about the betrayal of Judas...He is making a connection here...a true disciple will love one another...other disciples completely and will never betray another...this type of love is a mark of the Christian according to Francis Schaeffer... this is a relational criteria among brothers and sisters in Christ...
 - (3) To betray a brother or sister in Christ marks the worst type of betrayal...and is a mark of the betrayer/Satan... NOT the mark of a disciple. *"And it was night."* – The time when most betrayals occur...figuratively and physically...behind the back of another so that the one being betrayed does not know it is coming.
 - (4) If you have a problem with a brother and sister in Christ you go to them face to face...you do not betray them or you are not one of the fold.
2. The most famous part of the sermon on the Mount is the first 8 statements that begin with the words... *"Blessed are the..."*. In the Latin Vulgate this portion is entitled *"Beatitudenes"*, which comes from the word for "happiness". But

make no mistake this word means much more than “happiness” for it speaks of a settled joy...a peace that passes all understanding...when everything around you is chaotic and you are at peace kind of blessedness. This Latin word is the origin of the title you have in your Bibles, The Beatitudes.

3. Having read the whole sermon, how would you answer these general questions?
 - a. Imagine yourself in the crowd on that remarkable day.
 - (1) After listening to Jesus’ teaching are you confused by anything He says? What? Why?
 - (2) Are you convicted by anything He says? What? Why?
 - (3) Are you comforted by anything He says? What? Why?
 - b. Who is His primary audience? His disciples...and by extension...all true believers.
 - c. What does the sermon focus on? How true believers are to live...this sermon is a fuller expression of the 10 Commandments. Instructions about Kingdom living for all true believers....the gospel of the kingdom...
 - d. What similarities do you immediately see between the Sermon on the Mount and the 10 Commandments? Are its standards attainable?
 - e. How would you generally describe these true believers that Jesus is speaking of without using the exact terminology that He uses? Certainly not what we consider when we think of movers and shakers...these people are humble, submissive, and obedient...
 - f. There seems to be a lot said about hypocrisy in this message. What is a hypocrite and why do you suppose that Jesus spends so much time telling us about it? Pretenders, Posers, Frauds in priestly garb are the worst...but the same holds true for regular people as well. Jesus places hypocrites right up there ...or down there ...with false teachers/prophets who deserve nothing less than death and eternal punishment. Hypocrisy is one of the most insidious sins that infects the church as far as Jesus is concerned...it can , if allowed to remain...will undermine the strength and witness of the Church in the world around us.

4. Are you aware of any common misunderstandings concerning the Beatitudes?
 - a. The first misunderstanding often comes from the title which in the Latin comes from the word “happiness”.
 - (1) Some will say that these are a receipt...an 8 step method for how to be happy....since many in our culture read the Bible as a self-help book. But rather than a self-help guide, it reveals how God helps His own.
 - (2) Some say they are convinced that we can be good and get better if only we would work hard...God will accept our efforts.
 - (3) They do tell us how to attain satisfaction/happiness in this life as members of Christ Kingdom...but it is not something we can work our way into...we first must be called and adopted by Christ into His family then we can live as He prescribes which will result in a measure of joy and peace.
 - b. A 2nd misunderstanding is that they can be read in isolation, as unrelated statements. Each is in fact related to the next in the way the 10 commandments are...break one of the commandments...you break them all...cannot live even one of these you will not live out any of them.
 - c. 3rd, that Jesus didn’t have today’s church in mind as these requirements are unlivable and irrelevant in today’s cultural context. But in fact, one of the underlying themes of this sermon is

in how the Scriptures have been misinterpreted and misapplied in the culture then. They weren't being lived out and they seemed non-relevant even then.

- d. 4th, that this is all of the Beatitudes...these statements are scattered throughout Scripture...Ps. 1:1; Luke 1:42; James 1:12, 7 Beatitudes of the book of Revelation-Rev. 1:3, 14:3, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14... and these are just a few.

5. Now let's look at Matt. 5:1-12

- a. What else do you understand by the use of the word "Blessed..." before each of these qualities? We first see the word used in Gen. 1:22 and then in vs. 28 where God gives a divine directive showing His divine favor on the animals and then upon people as a way to enable them to fulfill His commands. RC Sproul says, "To be blessed of God is to receive spiritual benefits from God that last forever, and this is what Jesus is pronouncing upon the various groups mentioned in this sermon."

- b. Let's consider the 8 specific qualities of a kingdom citizen that are listed here. How would you define each one? How are we blessed by each?

(1) Vs. 3- Poor in Spirit— What does this communicate to the world around us when they read, hear or see this? That Christians are passive, and weak...that they should be push overs!

- This word for "poor" in the Greek means one who is a beggar...one who is deprived of every means of self-support...one who is totally dependent upon others for support and he knows it.
- But since it is "poor in spirit" then this is describing a contrite and humble spirit that acknowledges its own spiritual bankruptcy before God continually. (Ps. 51; Luke 18:9-14) This deals with confession.
 - 1) No spiritual capital
 - 2) No righteousness
 - 3) No holiness
 - 4) Nothing to offer God in order for them to enter into God's kingdom
 - 5) Can't do anything that would enable them to enter in
- Poor in spirit speaks to "*a poverty of arrogance*" (R C Sproul)...complete opposites of the Pharisees and non-believers.
- Instead like a beggar we come with empty hands, broken hearts admitting our spiritual bankruptcy. God has enabled us to understand our need and the fact that we can't do anything...but that He can take care of it...He can supply our need and does through Jesus substituting Himself for us...so in the end it is good that we are poor, for by God's grace alone, the Kingdom of Heaven becomes ours.

(2) Vs. 4- Mourn- Who really cares anymore? Aren't we getting more and more desensitized toward all the pain and suffering? Observation: women seem to be more sensitive to grief over sin and the loss of others.

- The word describes "a passionate lament". See Eccl. 7:2-4...true mourning has always been a more honest emotion; nearly impossible to fake without recognition.
- What is being considered here is the strongest possible meaning for the word "mourns". This is the sorrow of a broken heart, the ache of a longing soul, the anguish of a troubled mind.
- This is the sorrow of true repentance. This deals with contrition. (Rom. 7:24)
- The "mourning" relates to our being "poor in spirit"...in that we come to the Lord humbles, and broken aware of our own inability because of the totality of our sinfulness...and this recognition grieves us to the point of openly repenting with full account...full contrition which is a right response to the sin that God lets us see.

- Mourning over our sin pleases God and He forgives and we are comforted in that forgiveness.
- **Comfort:** Heidelberg catechism Q&A #1&2- #1- *"What is my only comfort in life and in death? That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him."*
- #2- *"How many things are necessary for you to know, that you, in this comfort may live and die happily? Three things: first, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption."*

(3) Vs. 5- Meek- or gentle or quiet or humble. What does the world think of meek people for the most part? Malleable...easy to manipulate, weak and frail. Who does God most often use for His service?

- Because we are poor in spirit knowing of our inability we mourn our sin which has made us totally unable on our own and then being totally dependent upon God, we are humbled. Very little distinction between meekness and poor in spirit...but maybe this...Poor in spirit speaks to ones recognition of his being spiritual bankrupt and his inability to do anything about it...whereas "meekness" seems to be more associated with a man relationship to God and others. (See Ps. 37:11, 22, 29, 34) This passage and others within the OT seem to define meek as:
 - 1) one is not resentful towards God or others...
 - 2) one who does not hold a grudge...
 - 3) one who does not think "woe is me" but looks to God and His comfort...
 - 4) one who knows he cannot claim any merit before God...
 - 5) one who is humble...Like Moses and like Jesus.
- We become meek because we realize we cannot lord our position over someone else when we owe everything we have to God and His grace. See Rom. 12:3
- Those who are polite, courteous and treat others with dignity are termed gentle. (Matt. 11:29, 21:5) *"This meekness or gentleness denotes a humble and gentle attitude toward others which is determined by a true estimate of ourselves."*
- **How do we balance meekness and not being a doormat...a pushover?** An injustice committed against ourselves is different than an injustice committed against my wife and children, our church family or the family of God in general. We can stand and oppose the latter...the former we need to hesitate, check our motives and usually let it go or allow someone else to take up our need.
- **Interesting use of the word "inherit" as in "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."** What will we actually be inheriting? Will the Lord really give us this mess of a world as an inheritance? Is this the best we can expect? This world is passing away...inheritance speaks to the fact that:
 - 1) As kingdom citizen we have right of possession...now... but even better later with the new earth...
 - 2) The new earth will be received as a treasure... the greatest physical gift from God.
 - 3) The Lord will restore His creation and the meek will receive the best.

(4) Vs. 6- Hunger for Righteousness- What things do we hunger for as a culture? Companionship, love, affirmation, fame, fortune, power, excitement and material things...but none of these will satisfy for long. We are the most technological

country in the world...we have the most entertainment in the world...and yet we are bored out of our minds.

- **What does this describe that we are to hunger and thirst for?**
 - 1) This describes those with an insatiable hunger for fellowship with God. (Amos 8:11-14) A desire for what He desires!
 - 2) This also describes an unquenchable thirst to know more about God and His Word. (Ps. 42:2, 63:1)
 - 3) Jesus said it earlier quoting from Duet. 8, *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* It is our desire for this type of food.
- Righteousness here describes a character and conduct that pleases God.
- Since we have been made Kingdom citizens we are to produce fruit...the best fruit...and when we produce that best fruit we are satisfied with the product of our work...satisfied in the knowledge that we have given our best to God.
- God will not let the worldly things we think we desire satisfy us...in fact, there is a curse on all such things. Hungering and thirsting for Him is the only place we will find satisfaction as he supplies it.

Next time we will continue in Matthew 5-7...The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew Bible Study
Nov. 5, 2014

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. What ways are these first 4 Beatitudes related and connected?
2. Just in the first 4 Beatitudes the characteristic “humble” has come up many times in explaining the type of kingdom citizen God expects. What is it and where does it come from? Humble in contrast to hypocrite! Hypocrisy comes from within our fallen selves...it is our default, if you will...humbleness is a sign of a changed heart and nature that can only come from God.
3. What things did you see as we considered these first 4 Beatitudes that you were not aware of before?

C. Read Matthew 1-12 again...let's continue with the Beatitudes.

1. **Vs. 7- Merciful**- What makes people merciful? What makes us care about others in need?
 - a. Often we ...believer or non... are inclined to be merciful to others in their time of need...in trouble - physical or spiritual...this seems to be wired into our DNA as image bearers of God...UNLESS being merciful is inconvenient which is where the fallen nature comes in.
 - (1) Think Luke 10:25-37- the Priest and the Levite were probably on their way to some function of their office and could not be “soiled”...be made unclean by touching a corpse if he was dead...or even as he was...they wouldn't be able to complete their assigned task so it wasn't convenient for them to stop and help...
 - (2) We define...or justify things the same way...we can be merciful even non-believers can shows signs of mercy for their fellow man...as long as it is convenient and doesn't require too much of them...as people we prefer to give money rather than to roll up our sleeves and get “soiled”.
 - b. We are inclined to be merciful to others when we realize that we depend on God's mercy every day. So this is to be a common character quality of all Christian!
 - c. How would you describe being merciful?
 - (5) This is a concern for people in need that goes beyond sympathy to empathy.
 - (6) They see what the suffering see and they feel what the suffering feel.
 - (7) It truly grieves us when others suffer.
 - (8) True mercy never stops at emotion but stoops to offer help. (James 2:15-16; Heb. 13:3)
 - (9) Meekness will not allow us to elevate ourselves above others mercy sees their suffering and seeks their well-being.
 - f. Being truly merciful is evidence of a repentant heart which brings God's mercy upon us...which in turn causes us to desire to be merciful to others.
2. **Vs. 8- Pure in Heart**- What does this mean to you at first read?
 - a. “utterly sincere”... “complete integrity of heart and behavior”... “a heart devoted to God”
 - b. A life free from hypocrisy and is lived transparently before God and others. (Ps. 24:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:1-5) No hidden motives.
 - c. A heart not mixed or divided or combined with anything else...
 - d. No private agendas or secret idols.
 - e. In contrast with the Pharisees in Matt. 23:25-28.
 - f. Why do we have a hard time seeing God? Ex. 33:20-23...The reason provided for us in Scripture is not that we have eye problems but that we have a heart problem...no one that is impure can see God and live. And they shall see God in the person of Jesus... See John 17:24...Seeing His glory now we see God acting, working and directing in the lives around us...in the events around us...in good and in bad...and we can give Him the glory.
 - g. But then on THAT DAY face to face when we are each made perfect and pure...

3. Vs. 9- Peacemakers- Not Peacekeepers. What is the difference?

- Seeking to spread God's peace and all that that entails.
- Never seeks conflict, they seek to bring peace out of conflict/chaos with the use of God's standards... without compromising integrity or truth or justice.
- They seek solutions.
- They are, *"quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger."* (James 1:19)
- But they are not peacekeepers. They do not overlook sin or embrace doctrinal heresy for the sake of peace. They are not reactive but rather proactive towards God's goals. This is not peace at any price. (Luke 17:3) Compromise this way never leads to lasting peace...peacekeepers are only temporary. They do not seek to appease all parties in every way.
- By being merciful people who are pure in heart we can be peacemakers... but peace by God's standard!
- We are children of the Prince of Peace so peace is our mission. See Luke 10:1-6...spreaders of God's peace.

4. Vs. 10-12 the Persecuted- What kind of persecution will secure a blessing from God? (I Peter 3:17) Righteous behavior provokes persecution because the unrighteous in the world cannot stand to look upon righteousness. Hypocrites like the Pharisees cannot stand to look on the truly righteous. When the Church is not being persecuted it is usually because it has decided to compromise on one or more of God's standards.

- a. This comes when two irreconcilable values systems (the world's and God's) collide. (Luke 6:26; Rom. 5:1-5; Phil.1:29) The world is not...never...our friend...but always our enemy. Tigers eat meat...the world naturally eats Christians whenever it can...sometimes publically usually behind the scenes.
- b. Christians are and will be mistreated, and reviled/slandered because of our love for righteousness and because of this persecution we will be blessed. See I Peter 4:12-19
- c. Jesus made this abundantly clear that we will be persecuted as they persecuted Him....as the world hated Him the world will hate us.
- d. Those who seek to be meek, gentle and humble will be mistreated because of how opposite they are from the rest of culture.
- e. Vs. 11 seems to simply be a personal application for those who were at that moment being persecuted for their faith...being ostracized by the families and friends because of their faith. When seeking to emulate Christ they will slander us because we make them look as bad as they are.
- f. Rewards!!?? Vs. 12 tells us to *"Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven..."*. How can we reconcile the truth that Christ is our merit with our receiving great reward in heaven?
 - (2) There are no less than 25 texts in the NT that teach that rewards in heaven will be distributed by Christ according to our works.
 - (3) *"God gives rewards as a just Judge, not because of the worthiness of our gifts, but because of the worthiness of Christ who He sees. God as a just judge rewards us, not because we have deserved it, but because He has promised it."* - Thomas Watson.
 - (4) *Think the martyrs that are under the throne of God...they have been given a special place...a reward...from God...one that He promised.*
 - (5) These rewards from God recognize He has enabled us to do "good works through Christ" but also that He delights in giving lavish gifts to His own as we are obedient that help us to get a taste of the grandness of what our experience in heaven will be like but also to know God's love here on this earth now.
 - (6) In this life we can take solace in the reward that we are numbered with the prophets and the martyrs of God when we are persecuted...a blessed club!

D. Now let's look at verses 13-16.

1. What statement is Christ making about the world that we live in by saying to us, “*You are the salt of the earth*” and “*You are the light of the world*?” (see Rom. 3:10-18) That the world is bland and dark!!!
2. What statement is Christ making about us with the use of these metaphors?
 - a. This is how He sees us...we are to be people who bring zest/life into this dead...not dying, but dead world.
 - b. The world is in need of people who live out these Beatitudes. Without us ALL would be lost.
 - c. Obviously we are to look different from the world which is locked in darkness and useless in as far as fulfilling their purpose of glorifying God.
 - d. Think Gen. 12:1-3
3. Given that these first 2 statements are extremely positive what is the purpose for the negative statements in vs. 13 and 15?
 - a. One who professes to be a disciple of Christ that does not live as Christ prescribes is useless....
 - b. What's in play here is the teaching that salt should never lose its saltiness not light its light. In a sense these are unthinkable realities. So with this metaphor in mind, it would be unthinkable that a follower of Jesus would be without a clear testimony to God's glory...if they don't they were never salty in the first place.
 - c. Note: This image would have been familiar to the people for it seems that the Rabbis told a similar story. It seems that one day an inquirer came up to a Rabbi and asked, “*What do I use to make tasteless salt salty again?*” And the Rabbi answered after seeming to study and ponder this question with great concern, “*With the afterbirth of a mule.*” Well, what did that mean? Everyone in that society and many in ours as well...since we live here in Texas...knew that mules were sterile so the point is...You ask a stupid question you get a stupid answer. Salt that has lost its saltiness is no longer salt and maybe never was salt...potash maybe!!!!...everyone knows that!
4. In your own words describe the connection between the Christian's character as laid out in verses 1-12 and what our influence in the world around us is to be according to verses 13-16? (see Rom. 12:20-21; Phil. 2:14-16)
 - a. We are to be different from the world...to be willing to reach out and be bold with the Gospel and living the Gospel.
 - b. We are to know our place as ones who have been created to bring God glory and to enjoy Him in a world that desperately needs this truth...but also in a world that will persecute us for this truth.
 - c. For we have been called to be a blessing to those around us as the outworking of how we glorify and enjoy our God.
5. The end of vs. 16 speaks clearly how our light is to shine in the world. What are some of the good works that will influence the world and bring glory to our God? (see Matt. 25:34-40) In all that we do to be authentic Christians in contrast to the hypocrites. God's word spells out what we are to do...if we say we are a Christian and don't do it then we are being hypocrites but when we do do it we are doing as we have been commanded and we are being authentic. The Christian is not really called to be relevant...We are called to be authentic...what you see is what you get. Relevant implies in the mind of most that to be relevant is to be willing to compromise for the good of others so they can ‘feel’ better. Also what is relevant today may not be relevant tomorrow... being authentic requires that we “hang with” God's Word which never changes...and we take our marching orders from it and it alone. Societal morays (what's relevant) have a tendency to conflict with biblical truth.

Next time we will continue in Matthew 5-7...The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew Bible Study
January 21, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Read Chapter 5

2. This section opens with these words, “Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them saying:...” What is a disciple? What are the characteristics of a disciple?

- g. A true disciple of Jesus is a person who has been called by Jesus.**— John 15:16; Acts 13:17; Eph. 1:4. In the case of His disciples He called them as they were working at the jobs/professions that He had given them. A true disciple is not someone who turns over a new leaf in life or one that has made a decision for Jesus, but one whose life has been radically transformed by Jesus’ claim of his or her life.
- h. A true disciple of Jesus is taught by Jesus.** So we must be theologians...students of God’s through His Word...
- i. A true disciple of Jesus is sent by Him to proclaim His message.** Matt. 28:19; John 17:18...both are great commissions...but THE great commission came in Gen. 12:1-3.
- j. A true disciple is first and foremost a sheep...** See John 13:12-20. This passage reminds us:
 - (5) And that a disciple only does what his Master does...it is not for us to make things up as we go...to do so means that we think of ourselves as greater than the Master.
 - (6) Theology 101- He is God, we are not!
- k. A true disciple loves the other disciples completely...**a disciple loves the other disciples with his whole heart...John 13:30-35.

3. What is being communicated in verses 1-12 to them and then to us today?

- a.** Every believer is to be drastically different from the world.
- b.** RC Sproul says, *“To be blessed of God is to receive spiritual benefits from God that last forever, and this is what Jesus is pronouncing upon the various groups mentioned in this sermon.”*

4. What does Jesus mean when He says, “Do not think (or suppose) I have come to abolish (to loose or destroy) the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them?” (vs. 17)

- a.** Follow the Law though Him.
- b.** We are living in perhaps the greatest era of “antinomianism” ever. Antinomianism= anti-law-ism- the belief that the OT law has no claim on the NT Christian because it has been supplanted by the greatness of the gospel.
- c.** “do not think”...or “do not suppose”...in other words do not let this kind of thinking even enter into your train of thought. *“Do not let this kind of thinking ever enter your mind...that I have come to do away with, abolish or destroy the Law.”* This is an extremely forceful statement.
 - (1) 1st, He is commanding, *“Do not let it enter your mind...”*...so it is a sin to think such thoughts because they will lead to changing to thrust of the law ...either watering it down...or making the legislation of men equal to it; which God forbids.
 - (2) 2nd, He is commanding them to realize He has not come to abolish or destroy the Law...these are strong words in the original language... denoting something that God cannot do...change His Word!
 - (3) 3rd, He commands, that He has come to fulfill the Law...since not one of Adam’s children can do it...only God Himself can.
- d.** Then next He says, *“For truly (or Amen! This is absolutely true), I say to you, that until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”* Making the point that the Law is not being done away with at all and ever.

5. Why would making this point so early on in this sermon be important?
 - a. So we know ahead of time that He is not changing the Law.
 - b. Bringing the people back to the foundation for all of life...
 - c. Obviously, there was a movement afoot to water down the Word...the Law...as it has been in every generation.
 - d. He will be correcting many of the misstatements of the Pharisees.

6. What does Jesus want to teach us by using the Pharisees as an example of what not to be? (see vs. 19-20)
 - a. He makes it clear how important the Law is in verse 19.
 - b. This passage makes clear that one who is NOT committed to God's Word as written is not a Christian at all.
 - c. Jesus demand nothing but obedience to His Word anything less was seen as hypocrisy...and we know how He feels about hypocrites or we will as we look through this sermon.
 - d. Jesus' high view of Scripture is an example for all true believers.
 - e. We will be judged by our response to His Word...God has not given us the right to pick and choose as we see fit as the Pharisees did.
 - f. An especially huge warning for those of us who teach His Word to be faithful and dependent upon Him and His Holy Spirit.

7. How would you summarize what Jesus is teaching His disciples and then all who are listening in verses 21-48?
 - a. So much of this sermon deals with HOW Jesus interprets the Law. In many ways this is a standoff between Jesus and Judaism. Jesus stood for the right interpretation...since it is His Word...Judaism stood for how they wanted to interpret it to their advantage over all other peoples.
 - b. These are what His people need to know so they can live the lives God requires of them.

8. But why is doing these things so hard? Because they go against everything in our natural makeup. Jesus wants the "impossible" to be and to act like His heavenly Father toward our enemies. For nothing is impossible with God.

9. Verse 48 is a "BIG" requirement. How are we to understand this verse and how would you explain its meaning to those who know we cannot be "perfect" in this life?
 - a. None of this can be fulfilled by us...it is done supernaturally through Christ and the Spirit.
 - b. Be imitators of God...
 - c. Desiring God's will so much that we seek Him in every area of our lives...holy living.
 - d. Jesus is saying and will say that God's law was never meant to be reduced to simple rules as in follow these rules and all will be well...Instead God desires and expects complete righteousness of the heart...total devotion to God's purposes...
 - e. We cannot be holy the way God is Holy or perfect the way God is perfect in this life. Jesus knows that. But as we have seen He expects that we will stick out like a sore thumb...He expects we will be different than the world because greater is He that is in us than he who is in the world. We will not be perfect in this life but by God's grace we can give a perfect effort...we can do our best to bring Him glory.
 - f. Jesus knows that this ethic is difficult for us in this life. He also knows that we adjust our personal standards to our level of performance. Instead of elevating our performance we reduce the standard. How many times have we left something untried or unfinished afraid to fail or whatever other excuse we wish to give? G. K. Chesterton once said this, *"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried."*
 - g. Jesus is explaining that God's standard does not change and His standard is perfection...thankfully for us that the perfection that is required is Jesus' and He is in us and we are in Him.

- h. In the end Jesus is saying, There are only 2 kinds of people...the Gentile/Pharisee, the tax collector...those who may claim to be of the faith but aren't and God's elect. Which are you?
- i. Sola scriptura...God's word trumps man's tradition.

C. Chapter 6

1. He makes an interesting statement at the beginning of what we refer to as Chapter 6; *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."* Before we move forward...in light of what has been said so far what point is He making here for them and for us today?
 - a. We need to have righteousness greater than the Pharisees...one that He has just described.
 - b. We are to be the light of the world...but everything that others see us doing is to glorify God not honor ourselves.
 - c. God is not pleased by attention seeking acts of piety like the hypocrites did...3times He refers to the hypocrites...1 time He says do not be like THEM.
2. How do we balance the fact that we are to be seen standing for the truth, praying and generally doing what God commands without being hypocritical?
3. Why do you suppose Jesus highlights these three: giving, prayer and fasting in verses 2-18?
 - a. Jewish piety consisted of these 3...Jesus reaffirms the positive values of these acts, but only when they are done in submission to God...out of love for Him ...not as a way to SHOW men how pious we are...how righteous we are.
 - b. By giving us so much information concerning prayer He seems to be indicating that prayer is the most important...communion with God will enable us to want to do the rest that God has commanded us whether that be in our giving or in fasting or any other method of glorifying God.
4. What characterized the hypocrites in these passages? How do we resemble them in our daily walk? What causes such hypocrisies?
5. What 2 conditions are highlighted in verses 19-34? Materialism and anxiety. Why focus on these 2?
 - a. Look at Luke 12:13-21 and 32-34 for helpful illustration. For laying up treasure.
 - b. Look at Luke 12:22-31 for illustrations for anxiety.
6. Verse 19 talks about storing up treasure in heaven. What does He mean...How do we do that? How does the answer to this help us with the other examples of verse 22-24?
 - a. Some have speculated that Jesus is talking about good works...don't let that bother you...justification is by faith alone and not by works...however, our reward in heaven will be according to our works. At least 25 times in the NT are we told that the distribution of heavenly reward is based upon our good works...we are called upon regularly to bring forth fruit of righteousness...but that really isn't the point here. The point is...
 - b. What is the point of ultimate concern that grips our life is what He is talking about here. Where is your heart? Where is your ultimate commitment? Prestige or my Kingdom? Our treasure always lies in what we cherish most in life...most people cherish their life above all things...wrong thing to cherish above all things because that will fail...
 - c. What is in your soul? What do you value most...God or money.

Matthew Bible Study
January 28, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Read chapter 5-6:1-24

- 2. As Jesus continues His sermon we are continually reminded by Him about the difference between, His children= kingdom citizen, and the world. What characterized the hypocrites in these passages? How do we resemble them in our daily walk? What causes such hypocrisies? (This brings us to the next section on anxiety.)**

C. Chapter 6 continued

1. Read Matthew 6:25-34

2. How do these verses, 25-34 make you “feel”?

- a. **“ANXIOUS”!!!**
- b. **Good, stupid and overwhelmed ...not going to have the same feeling each time you come to this text because your circumstances will be different and as fallen people our circumstances dictate even how we “feel” about the Scripture we read...even how it makes us feel.**
- c. **It is as if Jesus is looking straight at me and saying...you say you believe in the sovereignty of God...then why are you such a worrywart?**
 - (1) **Worry is the respectable sin. Christians know that they are not supposed to murder, commit adultery, or lie, or cheat, or steal, or, at least they are not supposed to admit that they do; but we all admit to one another that we worry. And perhaps we do so because we do not realize what a vital spiritual issue it is. It’s interesting, isn’t it?**
 - (2) **Matthew Henry reminds us that Jesus speaks to His disciples over and over again about the issue of worry. He is deeply concerned about worry because worry, He teaches, is a sign that our treasure is in the wrong place. Jesus teaches, is a moral deficiency that can be traced to three factors in our lives.**
 - **It can be traced to unbelief. We don’t believe that God will provide for us and so we worry about it.**
 - **It can be traced to a lack of submission to His Lordship. We want to be in control of our lives. We know that we’re not, but we’re trying as hard as we can be to be in control of our lives, and so we worry about the gap between what we’re trying to do and what we’re not sure that we can accomplish.**
 - **Worry can be traced, frankly, to worldliness - having our desires set on the wrong things - things that we know we may not obtain rather than set on those things that we know that we cannot lose if we will but set our hearts on them.**
- b. **Worry can be a great incentive to go to pray...though you have to ask yourself shouldn’t we be in prayer before we begin to worry?**

3. What is being communicated by Jesus using the word anxious (at least 6 times) rather than worry?

- a. **Being anxious is a type of worry...**
- b. **The word anxious seems to communicate something we are affected by...worry seems to be more about thinking...**
- c. **Anxiety seems to be more active on our part and worry seems more passive. Anxiety, at least the way it is spoken of here, is an action we create...making it a sin...like an anxiety attack...we allow things to get to us...we are responsible much of the time for working ourselves up...You never hear about a worry attack...**

- d. We fret over things we fear....things we don't understand...things we can control. Becoming paralyzed and fretful over things that might happen, the things that are outside of our control - anxieties controlling our lives.

4. What is His antidote to anxiety? We must also be aware and waging war against anxiety or it will win.

- a. Vs. 25, The Lord commands that we not be anxious. You say, right...like the doctor saying you have to get rid of stress. But as He commands us to love...not to lie...He equips us with what we need to not be consumed by things that are not ours to control.
- b. Anxiety is a manifestation of worldliness. It may reflect misplaced priorities, misplaced ambitions, misplaced loyalties, misplaced trust, misplaced hopes....and Jesus says, *"Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious..."* He's saying, *"Don't be anxious because of the providence of God in your life despite your trouble."*
- c. He is attacking that wearing anxiety which frets over whether God will give us what we need or that preoccupation with those things which are temporal to the point that it clouds our eyes to the most important thing in life.
- d. If you want to battle anxiety you must argue your priorities against it. You must ask, *"Well, isn't life more than what I eat and drink and wear?"* Isn't it interesting that 2,000 years after Jesus' time we're still preoccupied with what we eat and what we drink and what we wear. What are most advertisements in all the media about? What we eat, what we drink and what we wear. Amazing the status we attach to these things. But the Lord Jesus says life is more than those things. And the advertisements are saying, *"Life is these things. If you get more of them, you have more life."* And the Lord Jesus is saying don't be fooled by that lie. Life is more than that; your priorities are misplaced if you find your trust in those things and if you have put your hopes and your trusts in those things, you'll always worry and you'll wonder. When are you going to lose them or if you're going to get them.
- e. We must also argue from the fact of God's providence in fighting the war against anxiety...vs. 26 & 28-32. He teaches us there that God's providence towards His lesser creation ought to comfort those of us who have a heavenly Father. Birds of the air and the grass of the field do not have a personal relationship with the living God and heavenly Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' disciples do.
- f. He even gives us a common sense argument. **What is meant by verse 27? (How you really answer this will illustrate where your trust is.)** He's saying, "OK, go ahead be anxious. What's it going to get you? A few more ulcers is all it's going to get you. It doesn't do anything to change your situation." It isn't a positive, constructive response to the difficulties of life. Being anxious about death causes you to live less while you are alive.
- g. Vs. 32 makes an interesting point...if we don't fight being anxious we are no different than pagans. We don't like to be compared to pagans.
 - (1) How does this kind of argumentation help our decision to war against anxiety? He's telling His disciples, *"Don't fall into the trap of thinking like an unbeliever. Gentiles are consumed with these things in their lives. Gentiles can't think about other things other than this. You shouldn't be that way. Don't give into that trap."*
 - (2) You see, Gentiles/unbelievers - they really do have something to be anxious about. They are apart from God and they have only the anticipation of eternal condemnation. You, however, have nothing to be anxious about," the Lord Jesus Christ said. *"For your life is hidden with Christ in God."*
- h. He gives us a specific antidote to anxiety...vs. 33...if He was our most cherish commodity...if His Word actually ruled our being...living as kingdom citizens our highest priority...we would do well. Jesus doesn't tell us to forget our concerns but rather to focus our concern and thoughts on His Father's Kingdom.
 - (1) Jesus is saying, *"When you're dealing with worry, stop and ask yourself:*
 - (2) *What am I seeking in life? What's the most important thing to me in life? Am I seeking God's kingdom? Am I seeking to see the conscious and practical rule of the Lord Jesus Christ worked out in my life? Is that what I'm seeking? Am I seeking His righteousness? Am I desiring to see the holiness of God implanted in me by grace lived out in practical relations with my neighbors, my relations and with my friends? Is that what I want? If*

that's what I want, nobody can take that away from me. I don't need to worry about that. Nobody under heaven can take that away from me. So, if I'm worrying my heart must not be on that. I must want something that I really might lose."

- i. Faith is an antidote...the knowledge of who God is and what he has promised...and our faith is not based on what we see...but on His changing us and giving us power through Christ.
5. What is Jesus communicating by emphasizing what we must FIRST do?
 - a. He's saying, *"Look, there are many responsibilities in life. There are even many legitimate desires in life. I may desire to pursue a hobby. I may desire to pursue a relationship. I may desire to pursue a recreation. I may desire to pursue a vocation. I may desire to pursue a particular business plan. All of those are fine as long as they are not the first thing."*
 - b. You see, the cure for anxiety is to recognize that the heavenly Father knows and sees and understands our lives. And He cares for us and so we can give ourselves over to the cause of the kingdom not worrying that we will be provided for because we know that He provides for us. We can abandon ourselves into His care and give everything for Him because we know that all these things will be provided for us in the here and hereafter if we will but trust in Him. The questions are these: Where is your trust? And Where is your treasure? If the answer to these is anything other than what Jesus has been talking about then we will be anxious...every time...guaranteed!
6. What is the message for us even today from vs. 34?
 - a. He basically says that worry is wasteful. It just distracts you from doing that which is useful. Why? Because we don't know the future. And to speculate and worry about the future is ridiculous. Notice His words, *"Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*
 - b. The Lord is saying that troubles will come. We don't know what troubles will come; we don't know when those troubles will come and it does no good for us to fixate on them and worry about their coming. Instead, we must deal with those things as they come because trouble is just a part of life in a fallen world. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, the Psalmist once said. The Lord Jesus said there is no sense in speculating on what trouble may come.
7. The title for God ... "Father" is repeated often, what is the significance of repeating it so often? In Matthew 6, one of the main points, if not the main point, is our relationship as Christians to our heavenly Father. In this chapter alone, Jesus mentions the term "Father" 11 times, showing the significance and importance of that relationship (verses: 1, 3, 6 (2 times), 8, 9, 14, 15, 18 (2 times), 26, 32). Our relationship to the Father as His children is the most remarkable and incredible relationship. We have been bought with a price, so that we can be called "children of God." As our Father, He provides, protects and gives us all the things that are necessary for us to bring Him glory.

Matthew Bible Study
February 4, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What is being communicated by Jesus using the word “anxious” (at least 6 times) rather than worry?

- a. Being anxious is a type of worry...
- b. We fret over things we fear....things we don't understand...things we can control. Becoming paralyzed and fretful over things that might happen, the things that are outside of our control - anxieties controlling our lives.
- c. Anxiety seems to be more active on our part...a decision. While worry seems to be somewhat passive. Jesus makes it clear that anxiety is a sin and as a sin it is something that we decide to do...that is get anxious...to give ourselves an excuse or to use as a form of denial...

2. What are some of the antidotes that Jesus gives to help us prevent anxiety?

- a. Vs. 25, The Lord commands that we not be anxious. But as He commands us to love...not to lie...He equips us with what we need to not be consumed by things that are not ours to control. He is attacking that wearing anxiety which frets over whether God will give us what we need or that preoccupation with those things which are temporal to the point that it clouds our eyes to the most important thing in life.
- b. If you want to battle anxiety you must argue your priorities against it. You must ask , *"Well, isn't life more than what I eat and drink and wear?"* Life is more than that; your priorities are misplaced if you have put your hopes and your trusts in those things, you'll always worry and you'll wonder.
- c. We must also argue from the fact of God's providence in fighting the war against anxiety...vs. 26 & 28-32.
- d. He even gives us a common sense argument. **What is meant by verse 27? (How you really answer this will illustrate where your trust is.)**
- e. Vs. 32 makes an interesting point...if we don't fight being anxious we are no different than pagans. We don't like to be compared to pagans.
- f. He gives us a specific antidote to anxiety...vs. 33...if He was our most cherish commodity...if His Word actually ruled our being...living as kingdom citizens our highest priority...we would do well. Jesus doesn't tell us to forget our concerns but rather to focus our concern and thoughts on His Father's Kingdom.

C. Matthew 7:1-6

1. Let's clear up something right here. The word judge has 3 main possible meanings- “discern, or decide, or condemn.”

- a. The Bible constantly tells us as Christians that we must judge/discern the ways of the world against God's word. So we are to discern...evaluate...determine...between truth and falsehood.
- b. After one has discerned we must then “decide” what to do with what we have learned. The Bible instructs us to make decisions.
- c. Condemnation is a decision based on pertinent information. In making moral decisions based on God's word we have to be able to condemn that which is against God's standard...that which leads to sin and death.
- d. So all people must engage in discernment, decisions and condemnation according to what we see in God's Word.

2. This passage is given to Christians to help us know how best to deal with other Christians.

3. With this information, then, what are verses 1-6 communicating about how we are to judge?

- a. This text is NOT about NOT judging as many would have us believe...In fact it is all about judging...it tells us we must judge in at least 2 ways:
 - (1) We must judge ourselves...so we can take the log out of our own eye... we must judge ourselves more severely than our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - (2) We must judge our brother...so we can take the speck out of our brother's eye after the log from ours.
- b. We are to judge ourselves before we judge others... specifically our brother...a fellow member of the kingdom.
- c. Vs. 6 is a verse requiring us to judge...to discern...who the pigs are and who the dogs are as to not waste God's time.

4. What is the warning given here and why?

- a. So that we will not take our judging lightly.
- b. We are here told how to judge because our natural inclination is to judge our brothers harsher than ourselves.
- c. God will judge on the last day...this is not about brothers holding one another accountable...but rather that God will hold accountable the one who judges and condemns his brother unjustly and without cause...another reason why we need to live the way He prescribes in chapter 6...See also Luke 6:37-38.

5. Why do we so easily find ourselves pointing out the sin in other people's lives...especially brothers and sisters in Christ?

- a. Seeking to divert attention from our own sins.
- b. When we have planks we consider them only to be specks.
- c. Makes you "feel" better to bring someone else down.

6. What are the pearls Jesus speaks of that we should not share with people who won't listen to God's message?

- a. Interesting statement here is verse 6, Jesus seems to be saying that we should not entrust holy teachings to unholy and unclean people...dogs and pigs were examples of unclean things...
- b. He further is saying that it is futile to try to teach holy concepts to people who won't or can't listen. How many times has someone who is intoxicated sought to have a spiritual conversation with you because they know you are a Christian? Don't have the conversation...then! You are throwing your pearl before swine. Or how many times have you gotten into a conversation about the gospel with those who are only seeking to undermine the gospel...giving dogs what is sacred they will only rip it to shreds. Don't spend any more time than necessary with such a person.
- c. This is more about us than the dogs and the pigs...we need to be able to discern so that we can use God's time effectively.

7. How can we practice discernment in what we say to others?

- a. Listening to the other person...focusing on them so that you actually hear them
- b. To be intentional in our relationships.
- c. Holy Ghost wisdom to know when to speak and when not to speak...it is for their edification not for our glory.

D. Matthew 7:7-12

- 1. Jesus spent a lot of time teaching the disciples how and what to pray in chapter 6...and He ended that chapter telling His disciples not to worry about food, drink or clothes...but rather seek first God and the Father will take care of the details. Then He throws in this brief understanding about judging because it was important for His disciples to discern, decide and condemn that

which is not from God. Now He turns back to prayer. What 3 things does He highlight here in this section? Asking, seeking and knocking. What have you been taught that He is talking about here? I was taught through the years that each of these refers to different aspects of the Christian life...

- a. Asking God for what we need in this life...
- b. Seeking some goal to be reached ...
- c. Knocking at the gates of heaven in order to get in...
- d. In reality they are all three about prayer....but this is not a magical formula to get God to do what you want. The formula that is often taught in the church is this, *"If I just use the right formula in prayer and ask exactly in the right manner, believing, I can make anything happen...I can get whatever I want."* This is New Age thinking not Christianity.

2. So if this is not a magical formula to get whatever we want, then what is He saying about prayer here?

- a. This is another way of telling us that our Father delights in giving us what we ask for ...as long as it is in His will.
- b. He commands us to ask...even though He has just said that God knows what we need before we ask.
- c. Seeking is done in the context of asking...seeking His Word to make sure we know His will so that we can know that what we ask for is legitimate. Obviously, we do not know what to pray for or even how to pray or Jesus wouldn't spend so much time on this subject to make the point...that we are to ask but we are to seek out God's Words and His will in our asking....seeking the Spirit who knows all things. (See 1 Cor. 2:10-11)
- d. Knocking...is an interesting phrase...but think about it a minute...in the context of wanting to communicate with God... when you go to someone's house do you just barge in without knocking first? Even your parents' home though you may have more leeway... the idea is to be polite and knock first to announce you are there giving them the option to let you in or not...now our heavenly Father, just like our earthly parents, is not going to deny us access even if we come with the wrong attitude but it may be uncomfortable if we barge in unannounced... We come politely and reverently to God in prayer knocking...not presuming access...

3. What is the easy truth of verses 9-11? Vs. 11

- 4. Why is it good to do to others as you would have them do to you (vs. 12)?**
What is golden about the Golden Rule? It is not very hard to refrain from hurting others, but it is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for someone...taking the initiative...without being asked is what makes this rule Golden. Towards whom do we need to practice the Golden Rule more consistently?

Matthew Bible Study
February 11, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Read the Sermon on the Mount- Chapter 5-7

2. What should be some major take away points from Matthew 7:1-6?

- a. It is communicating over and over again the importance of the Word.
- b. How vital the Law is for the believer...kingdom-citizen. For it is God's Word and has not been done away with.

3. In Matthew 7:7-12 Jesus takes us back to defining our prayers what does He say about our prayers here and what does it mean?

- a. This is another way of telling us that our Father delights in giving us what we ask for ...as long as it is in His will.
- b. He commands us to ask...even though He has just said that God knows what we need before we ask.
- c. Seeking is done in the context of asking...seeking His Word to make sure we know His will so that we can know that what we ask for is legitimate. Obviously, we do not know what to pray for or even how to pray or Jesus wouldn't spend so much time on this subject to make the point...that we are to ask but we are to seek out God's Words and His will in our asking....seeking the Spirit who knows all things. (See 1 Cor. 2:10-11)
- d. Knocking...is an interesting phrase...but think about it a minute...in the context of wanting to communicate with God... when you go to someone's house do you just barge in without knocking first? Even your parents' home though you may have more leeway... the idea is to be polite and knock first to announce you are there giving them the option to let you in or not...now our heavenly Father, just like our earthly parents, is not going to deny us access even if we come with the wrong attitude but it may be uncomfortable if we barge in unannounced... We come politely and reverently to God in prayer knocking...not presuming access...

4. What is the easy truth of verses 9-11? Vs. 11

5. Why is it good to do to others as you would have them do to you (vs. 12)?

What is golden about the Golden Rule? It is not very hard to refrain from hurting others, but it is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for someone...taking the initiative...without being asked is what makes this rule Golden. Towards whom do we need to practice the Golden Rule more consistently?

6. What is Jesus communicating when He says here in verse 12, "...for this is the Law and the Prophets." (This point is made over and over again in the NT. Matthew 5:17-18, 22:40; Luke 16:16, 24:27, 44; Acts 13:15, 24:14; Gal. 5:14) Once, again this reiterates that all God's Word is His Word...sound redundant...it is... but people have a tendency to forget and compartmentalize and differentiate the OT from the NT ...the red letters from the black letter...what Jesus says from what Paul says. But Jesus is saying it All holds the same weightiness and value since all of it is His Word.

C. Matthew 7:13-20

1. What does the word "narrow" communicate in verse 13?

- a. It does NOT communicate that the way to Jesus is hard as I have been taught in the past, as in hard unto salvation...this passage is probably not even about salvation but rather...

- b. But rather that there is only ONE way to live eternally for Christ...His way...and that there is only a few that determine to walk that path. And "few" is relative as well considering Rev. 7:9. Living His way is not popular it is narrow in the mind of the world...
 - c. Before the people of the church were called Christians in Antioch they were called people of the Way...based on Jesus' words from John 14:6...Speaking of the fact that there is ONLY ONE way to the Father. Jesus was very exclusivistic in His teaching.
 - d. Limited to His elect...speaks secondarily of particular atonement/ limited atonement
 - e. Serves as a warning to hypocrites...
 - f. That not all people go to heaven...only those that have been called and adopted by the Father seek to follow Him which is counterculture.
2. What does this have to do with false prophets again? (Jesus keeps bringing them up.)
- a. The false prophet embodies this ... "all things are good attitude"... "God is a God of love. My God does not judge. That is not what my Bible says." In the OT they were the ones who called out *"Peace, peace...when there was no peace."* (See *Jeremiah 20:7b-9*)
 - b. They are also the ones who teach to pray for whatever you want and God will get it for you since you are His and if you don't get it then you don't have enough faith...or you are being punished in some way by God...since He wants to give you whatever you want.
3. How does He say we can spot these false prophets? And what is required of us? By their fruit...16-17....
4. But then we have to ask ourselves what kind of fruit?
- a. Many of these false prophets have the largest churches in America. If there message is counter the Scripture that will explain why they have such growth...since they are telling the people what they want to hear.
 - b. We need to know the Word so well that we can know...we need to be good Bereans.
 - c. If we see a door where a lot of men are going through we need to be wary of it until we check it out...
 - d. These are people who deliberately are teaching what is false.

D. Matthew 7:21-23

1. Quickly, on the heels of talking about false prophets we have this next set of verses, 21-23...possibly some of the harshest of all texts especially in the NT. What is He saying?
- a. That some people who make claims to be Christian will not be accepted on That Day.
 - b. That many will think they are "good" people saying and doing religious things which will gain them eternal life...Jesus is saying and has been saying that only one thing gets people entrance into heaven...faith in Christ which comes from Christ to His elect children only.
2. Repetition equates to importance in Scripture...and the repetition of someone's name or title denotes personal affection, soo...what does this mean for those who say, *"Lord, Lord, did we not do all these things in your name..."*?
- a. Just because they say it doesn't make it so...
 - b. Jesus said they would be deceived...for the way to righteousness is narrow.
 - c. These are people seemingly that are genuinely deluded...these are not the same as the open hypocrites like the Pharisees...They believe they are Christians...based solely on their works not on the work of Christ. Their "faith", if you will, is based on what they see...the works they are doing not on a true saving faith.
 - d. It is never a question of whether we know Christ...the devil knows Christ...it is always a question of whether He knows us.

Matthew Bible Study
February 25, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are some of the extraordinary things that come out of each event in this text?

a. Verses 1-4.

b. Verses 5-13

- (1) A reversal of roles...the Centurion recognizes who he is talking to and shows Him/Jesus respect...the respect due the occupying force.
- (2) A reversal of roles...the Centurion recognizes his own unworthiness rather than pointing out what would have been the unworthiness of the Jew.

c. Verses 14-17

2. Why are these important today?

- a. We need to look into the forest and see the trees...that is we to see the details to understand its meaning and how it applies to us...
- b. Jesus has been countercultural from the beginning and He shows us how to be countercultural today.

C. Back to Chapter 8 and 9... What are some of the extraordinary things that come out of each event in this text?

1. Verses 18-22

- a. He left the crowd...a crowd that was clamoring after Him...not like men today who would have stayed and continued to play to the crowd.
- b. Cost of discipleship requires great sacrifice...the possibility of giving up of an earthly inheritance if he didn't go and bury his father...being willing to give everything up to follow Jesus...it is not about having things...even a place to lay our heads for we are to be sojourners and exiles in this world...

2. Verses 23-27. What did the disciples want from Him?

- a. He was asleep and fishermen were afraid on familiar water...? What's up with that?
- b. He has healed others will he do the same for us? Everyone wants safety, and care in their lives...He had done that for others...
- c. We don't know what we want and then when we get it we don't know what to do with it...it is not that they hadn't witnessed all the other miracles...they had...so Jesus answers their request and they are marveled...wondering what sort of man this is...MAN...really??? Extraordinary!
- d. Jesus claims and shows His authority... He did what they didn't expect which is exactly what He had been doing up to that point...doing things that no one expected...

3. Verses 28-34.

- a. Gave the demons what they wanted...
- b. First creatures to recognize Jesus' true identity were the fallen angels that possessed this man.
- c. These demons seem to know when their end will be.... "torment us before the time. Time here is "Kairos" which speaks a special moment that takes place in time...in this case the Last Day...
- d. The town wanted him removed...would rather have had the demon possessed men than to lose their pigs. Extraordinary.

4. Chapter 9:1-8

- a. How does this account differ from the other accounts in Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26?

- (1) It is interesting, but Matthew doesn't provide the backdrop to our text that Luke does. It would be well to keep Luke's words in mind as we consider our text: *"Now on one of those days, while he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting nearby (who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem), and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. Just then some men showed up, carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and place him before Jesus (Luke 5:17-18).*
 - (2) A crowd of people had packed into a home in Capernaum to hear Jesus teach (Mark 2:1-2). The power of the Lord was also present, so that He performed healing (Luke 5:17). The place was so packed there was no way for anyone to get in the door, let alone four men carrying a stretcher. Many were eager to hear His teaching, hanging on every word. Some were probably hoping for a miraculous healing. And then there were the scribes and Pharisees, sitting there with their arms folded, checking out this newcomer, who had not sought their seal of approval (and who had, in fact, taken a very adversarial position).
 - (3) **Why do you suppose Mathew does give us all the details?** This paralytic didn't approach Jesus like all the others; he was lowered to Jesus through the roof. I would have expected Matthew to include this human interest portion of the story, but he did not. Matthew is not just telling human interest stories; he is presenting the gospel. What is more important, knowing that a man was lowered through a roof, or knowing that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins?
- b. What type of threat(s) did Jesus pose to the religious leaders of the day?**
- (1) He was dismantling everything they taught and stood for...much like today...the greatest threat to biblical truth is always from within the "church"...especially religious leaders...like teacher/professors and pastors.
 - (2) Like John the Baptist He called them hypocrites and told them they would not enter the kingdom of God lest they repented and believe in Him.
 - (3) Like John, Jesus sought to correct their teaching...even more intentionally by referencing "You have heard it said...but I say..."
 - (4) But Jesus took all this to a deeper level when He underscored His authority with miracles...the ones we have looked at and the many others we have not...
- c. What is significant about the phrase "Jesus saw their faith" in verse? Can it be compared to the faith that Jesus "saw" in the centurion in chapter 8:10? Why or why not?**
- (1) It could be nothing more than a statement of fact...they believed that He could heal their friend...but not necessarily a statement of true faith...
 - (2) Or is it possible that Jesus responded to the true faith of others when He granted this man healing, and the forgiveness of sins. What an encouragement that would be to us to pray more consistently and more fervently for others! The faith of these men, expressed by their intervention on this paralytic's behalf, brought him not only the blessing of healing, but of forgiveness of sins. Our prayers on behalf of the lost really count! The prayers of a righteous man DOES availeth much! We are the means that God often uses in His work of salvation...and prayers are a common "mean".
 - (3) I am thinking that the statement about these men and the Centurion are too similar to be coincidence...so I am of the opinion that these men were of The faith just like the Centurion...and just like the Centurion thought physical healing for their friend without considering the greater need their friend had.
- d. These friends sought physical healing, why does Jesus go beyond that?**
- (1) First, consider our text in the light of what Paul writes to the Ephesians: *"Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."* (Ephesians 3:20-21) God brings glory to Himself by exceeding our requests and expectations in blessing us.

- (2) Second, there is something here about the Lord loving this one enough to take away His fear...fear of whether or not He would be healed...fear of public condemnation...fear of not living up to Jesus' standards...whatever fear it is, it needs to be taken away. Why do I say this? Well, look at Jesus' words to the man in the Matthew account... *"Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven."* This phrase *"take heart"* can also be translated *"Have courage"* ...in the sense of *"Do not be afraid"*...the command that is given to His children continuously. (Think even Joshua 1: 6,7 and 9. Joshua, God's general had many fears...taking on Moses' mantle, struggles within himself, struggles with these people and struggles with the embedded enemy in the land of Promise..) Same words are used 3 other times in Matthew...here, 9:22 with the woman who is healed, and 14: 27 when Jesus walks on the water and His disciples are afraid. So no matter what may come...he has been forgiven and that should take away any fears in his life from this time forward...
- (3) Third, the Lord forgave this man's sins because He knew how the scribes would interpret it. Jesus was claiming to be God, and publicly granting the paralytic forgiveness of his sins could not have stated this claim more boldly. The scribes could hardly miss the point. Immediately they were thinking in theological terms. They rightly reasoned, *"No one can forgive sins but God alone"* (Luke 5:21).
- (4) Fourth, there is a time to put up or shut up! Which is more important for this man...physical healing or salvation? Jesus forgives before He heals the man's condition. Because spiritual healing is more important than physical healing...always...! He needed to live in freedom from his greatest handicap...his sin! Extraordinary! So Jesus tackles the more important and then authenticates His authority and His words by healing the man physically as well. (see verse 5-6) Here, Jesus is not talking about the ability to merely utter certain words. Jesus is asking, "Who can speak these words and show that His words actually accomplished what was said?" In that sense, it is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven", than it is to say, "Stand up and walk." You cannot immediately see the results of the forgiveness of sins, because that takes place in a person's heart, and the fruits are evident over time.⁵ Thus, it is easy to make this statement, because it can be put to the empirical test. But if Jesus were to say, "Stand up and walk," He must either validate this by healing the man instantly, or He will have shown that His words are empty.
- (5) You gotta love this, once again, like when the priest validated Jesus healing the leper, here we see these religious leaders somewhat doing the same thing. In Luke 5:21, they rightly reason, that only God can forgive sin soooo... Logic had led the scribes to reason that no one but God can forgive sins. Logic should thus lead them to conclude that Jesus is God, if He can forgive sins. And now, Jesus has added a further logical link: if He is able to heal a paralytic (the harder thing to do), then surely He can forgive sins (the easier thing to do). If Jesus can heal the paralytic, then He must be God. And so Jesus turns to the paralytic and says to him, *"Rise, pick up your bed and go home"* (verse 7). The man stood up and went home, just as Jesus commanded. There can be but one conclusion: Jesus must be God.
- (6) But then the downside of a hardened sinful heart. No one seemed to get it. The scribes are silent. The crowd is greatly impressed, but their conclusion falls short of acknowledging Jesus to be God. The crowd saw this as a work of God. They seemed to recognize Jesus was a "man of God." But they didn't recognize Jesus as God. They honored God (not Jesus, as God), for giving such authority "to men." Thus, Jesus is not seen as anything more than a man, with some kind of connection to God.

Matthew Bible Study
March 4, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What were some of the extraordinary things that come out of each event in chapter 8- 9:1-8?
 - a. Verses 28-34.
 - b. Chapter 9:1-8
2. These believing friends only sought physical healing for their friend, so why did Jesus go beyond that?
 - a. First, consider our text in the light of what Paul writes to the Ephesians: *"Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."* (Ephesians 3:20-21) God brings glory to Himself by exceeding our requests and expectations in blessing us.
 - b. Second, there is something here about the Lord loving this one enough to take away His fear...fear of whether or not He would be healed...fear of public condemnation...fear of not living up to Jesus' standards...whatever fear it is, it needs to be taken away. Why do I say this? Well, look at Jesus' words to the man in the Matthew account... *"Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven."* This phrase *"take heart"* can also be translated *"Have courage"* ...in the sense of *"Do not be afraid"*...the command that is given to His children continuously. (Think even Joshua 1: 6,7 and 9. Joshua, God's general had many fears...taking on Moses' mantle, struggles within himself, struggles with these people and struggles with the embedded enemy in the land of Promise..) Same words are used 3 other times in Matthew...here, 9:22 with the woman who is healed, and 14: 27 when Jesus walks on the water and His disciples are afraid. So no matter what may come...he has been forgiven and that should take away any fears in his life from this time forward...
 - c. Third, the Lord forgave this man's sins because He knew how the scribes would interpret it. Jesus was claiming to be God, and publicly granting the paralytic forgiveness of his sins could not have stated this claim more boldly. The scribes could hardly miss the point. Immediately they were thinking in theological terms. They rightly reasoned, *"No one can forgive sins but God alone"* (Luke 5:21).
 - d. Fourth, there is a time to put up or shut up! Which is more important for this man...physical healing or salvation? Jesus forgives before He heals the man's condition. Because spiritual healing is more important than physical healing...always...! He needed to live in freedom from his greatest handicap...his sin! Extraordinary! So Jesus tackles the more important and then authenticates His authority and His words by healing the man physically as well. (see verse 5-6) Here, Jesus is not talking about the ability to merely utter certain words. Jesus is asking, "Who can speak these words and show that His words actually accomplished what was said?" In that sense, it is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven", than it is to say, "Stand up and walk." You cannot immediately see the results of the forgiveness of sins, because that takes place in a person's heart, and the fruits are evident over time.⁵ Thus, it is easy to make this statement, because it can be put to the empirical test. But if Jesus were to say, "Stand up and walk," He must either validate this by healing the man instantly, or He will have shown that His words are empty.
 - e. You gotta love this, once again, like when the priest validated Jesus healing the leper, here we see these religious leaders somewhat doing the same thing. In Luke 5:21, they rightly reason, that only God can forgive sin soooo... Logic had led the scribes to reason that no one but God can forgive sins. Logic should thus lead them to conclude that Jesus is God, if He can forgive sins. And now, Jesus has added a further logical link: if He is able to heal a paralytic (the harder thing to do), then surely He can forgive sins (the easier thing to do). If Jesus can heal the paralytic, then He must be God. And so Jesus turns to the paralytic and says to him, *"Rise,*

pick up your bed and go home" (verse 7). The man stood up and went home, just as Jesus commanded. There can be but one conclusion: Jesus must be God.

- f. But then the downside of a hardened sinful heart. No one seemed to get it. The scribes are silent. The crowd is greatly impressed, but their conclusion falls short of acknowledging Jesus to be God. The crowd saw this as a work of God. They seemed to recognize Jesus was a "man of God." But they didn't recognize Jesus as God. They honored God (not Jesus, as God), for giving such authority "to men." Thus, Jesus is not seen as anything more than a man, with some kind of connection to God.

3. What is the end product of all of this? What was Matthew seeking to prove by all these actions seen in chapter 8-9:1-8?

- a. That Jesus is God and that He is the Christ/Messiah.
- b. That Jesus was defining His relationship to the law. The law could not save men, but could only condemn (Matthew 5:20). In particular, our text underscores the relationship of Jesus to the law. The law was unable to save, just as it was unable to heal. The law could define sickness and health, but it could not produce health. It could only condemn (declare unclean) the illness. Jesus, on the other hand, was able to heal sickness, just as He was able to forgive sins. Just like with the event surrounding the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.
- c. That this had to do with His authority as the Son of God and His calling as Messiah.
 - (1) And yet He did not come to do away with the law, but to fulfill it. But the law cannot heal a leper. It could only condemn the leper. Jesus could heal the leper, and He did. This is like our sin. The law can define sin and expose it, but it cannot remove it. The law declares what righteousness looks like, but it does not provide the means to become righteous. The law declares us all to be sinners, but the law cannot do anything to save us from our sins (Romans 3:9-20). Only Jesus can remove the filth of our spiritual uncleanness.
 - (2) Next with the Centurion, the law provided no solution to the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, but Jesus authority removed this barrier, in fulfillment of the promises contained in the law and the prophets. The law separated Jews and Gentiles; Christ brought the two together as one new man in His power. Jesus removes the barriers between God and man and also the barriers that separate men. It is only Jesus who can do such an amazing thing. The law cannot do it. The law was given to reveal our sins, and to point us to Jesus.
 - (3) Concerning the cost of following Jesus...there is always a cost in following the one in authority and we who are his must follow.
 - (4) The calming of the storm...His authority over the elements are seen
 - (5) The dealing with the demon possessed demonstrated his authority over the demons...hence His authority over Satan.
 - (6) Concerning the paralytic this story demonstrates His authority to forgive as well as heal...the best of both...fulfilling the Law and demonstrating His authority. Also, demonstrates the importance of prayer in the life of the believer.

C. Chapter 9:9-13 (See also Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 5:27-32)

1. After comparing all of these accounts, what is the first thing that jumps out at you?

- a. Possibly, that Mathew's name is different in Mark and Luke. Not to worry, many Hebrews had more than one name...Simon Peter... Thomas was also known as Didymus...even the author of Mark...John Mark.
- b. Possibly that he immediately gets up and goes with Jesus...which means he would forfeit any future job opportunities with the Romans. He was sacrificing his whole career...his whole livelihood to follow Jesus. It wasn't like Peter, Andrew, James and John. If this whole following the Master/Rabbi didn't work out they could go back to fishing...Matthew would have nothing to go back to...to the Romans he would be unhireable and to his own people he was despised because of his profession and how he had cheated them out of their hard earned money...

2. Why do you think Matthew tells this story here?

- a. First, The first 8 plus chapters focus on Jesus as the Messiah, only now does he stop to introduce himself.
- b. Second, it provides background for one of the Lord's disciples.
- c. Third, it once again emphasizes the authority of our Lord Jesus. Jesus cast out demons by the mere speaking of a word (Matthew 8:16). And now, Jesus calls a disciple, who leaves his job, at the Master's mere speaking of a word.
- d. Fourth, this ties in with all the other unclean people that Jesus is and has been surrounding Himself with...proving His point as to the needy that He has come for...the ones that could not relieve themselves of their unclean status...a status that had to be purchased for them so that they might be free.
- e. Fifth, the calling of Matthew becomes the cause of great celebration on the part of sinners, but a cause of concern for the Pharisees (verses 10-12). Matthew's career change is not done with gritted teeth or with great reluctance. It is an occasion of great joy. Luke makes it very clear that this celebration was not only for Matthew, but that it was put on by Matthew: "After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, 'Follow me.' And leaving everything, he rose and followed Him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at the table with them." (Luke 5:27-29) Following Jesus was cause for rejoicing, and celebrate he did! He invited his friends to join with him in the celebration – fellow tax-gatherers and sinners. This celebration would seem to have Jesus as the guest of honor. Tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and His disciples. It was one thing for a group of sinners to gather in celebration; it was quite another when Jesus was the guest of honor. These folks were celebrating His presence with them. But not all is happy in "Whoville"; *"And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at His disciples..."* (Luke 5:30a) and they asked his disciples, *"Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"* (Matthew 9:11)
- f. Sixth, this becomes an occasion for Matthew to point out the primary purpose for Jesus' coming (verse 13). This provided Jesus with yet another occasion to clarify, once again, His purpose for coming to earth.

3. What is Jesus saying to and about the Pharisees and Scribes in verse 13? He is quoting an OT verse here to make a point. What is it and how does it make His point?

- a. The OT verse is Hosea 6:6. But He has in mind the greater context of Hosea 5- 6:6.
 - (1) Jesus cites this passage in Hosea to show why they are sinners. They are religious leaders, and they are abusing those they lead. Their "righteousness" is ritualistic, rather than seeking to know God and abide in covenant loyalty. They, the leaders of Israel and Judah, have missed the point. They have failed to grasp true religion. They are leading the people astray. They must confess their sin and trust in the Messiah who will come to save them.
 - (2) The Pharisees saw themselves as righteous, and they perceived that their righteousness was the result of law-keeping and keeping themselves free from defilement from sinners. Jesus was breaking all the rules, so far as they could see. But it was not Jesus who was wrong; the Pharisees were wrong. They needed to give further thought to the Old Testament, for Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Messiah. This is a prominent theme in Matthew's Gospel.
 - (3) Jesus quotes this also in Matt. 12:1-8 after another rebuke by the Pharisees concerning a point of the Law.
- b. When Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic in chapter 9, it was once again to show the connection between His healing ministry and His greater ministry of forgiving sinners. His opponents objected first to Jesus forgiving sinners, and then to His fellowship with sinners. If Jesus was to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah 53, how could He not forgive sinners? And why were the Pharisees so disturbed by the fact that Jesus associated with sinners? It was because they considered themselves righteous.

4. Why is Jesus so radically different and what does His example expect of us today?

- a. He just looks radically different because He is actually doing what God had commanded His people to do that they very seldom ever did...so they had “forgotten” what true righteousness looked like...they had lost their way and they no longer served the living God... not seeking to glorify Him as Jesus did.
- b. He is righteous...He defines righteousness.

Matthew Bible Study
March 18, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. By quoting from Hosea 6:6 in chapter 9:13, what was Jesus saying here to these guys about them and their forefathers? How does this continue to make His point concerning these religious leaders?

- c. The OT verse is Hosea 6:6. But He has in mind the greater context of Hosea 5- 6:6.
 - (1) Jesus cites this passage in Hosea to show why they are sinners. They are religious leaders, and they are abusing those they lead. Their "righteousness" is ritualistic, rather than seeking to know God and abide in covenant loyalty. They, the leaders of Israel and Judah, have missed the point. They have failed to grasp true religion. They are leading the people astray. They must confess their sin and trust in the Messiah who will come to save them.
 - (2) The Pharisees saw themselves as righteous, and they perceived that their righteousness was the result of law-keeping and keeping themselves free from defilement from sinners. Jesus was breaking all the rules, so far as they could see. But it was not Jesus who was wrong; the Pharisees were wrong. They needed to give further thought to the Old Testament, for Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Messiah. This is a prominent theme in Matthew's Gospel.
 - (3) Jesus quotes this also in Matt. 12:1-8 after another rebuke by the Pharisees concerning a point of the Law.
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- b. He was also doing what the religious leaders of the OT were to be doing and weren't doing in His day, if they ever did and so He was making them look bad on many fronts. He was doing the work God had commanded them to be doing with the homeless, widows and orphans and they were defining them as the unclean and would not associate with them...highlighting the "letter" of the Law as they saw it...not understanding the meaning of the Law from God's perspective.
- c. And why were the Pharisees so disturbed by the fact that Jesus associated with sinners? It was because they considered themselves righteous.
- d. He is righteous...He defines righteousness.

C. Chapter 9:14-17...To Fast or to Feast! (We have looked at this in depth in Sunday School.)

1. Why are the disciples of John upset with Jesus or are they?

- a. If John's disciples truly understood who Jesus was/is they would not think it was time to fast and mourn...but they were more concerned with John's message and his plight than Jesus...not that much different than the disciples wondering what sort of man this is...or the crowds were afraid and glorified God who had given authority to men...they only saw Him as a man.
- b. The fast with which they were fasting was a fast of men...a rule of men...since God had only commanded the fast for the Day of Atonement though there were other times when God's people fasted in true repentance.
- c. The question may not be a protest, but rather a sincere desire to understand why Jesus and His disciples don't observe the same practice of fasting that they and the Pharisees do. Instead

of fasting, Jesus and His disciples are feasting. If Jesus is the fulfillment of John's preparatory ministry, then how does He explain the difference between His actions and the fasting of the Pharisees and John's disciples?

2. How does Jesus' answer answer their inquiry?

- a. He could have said something like:
 - (1) If you are emulating the Pharisees in any way you need to stop at least long enough to check your motivation...because theirs has nothing to do with me.
 - (2) This is not rocket science...I am here...this is a time to celebrate!
 - (3) But He didn't...instead...He pointed out...
- b. OT patterns of fasting are no longer useful after Jesus has come. This was an answer that they would not, and could not, fully understand now, but because of what John had said earlier, it would make some sense to them. (See John 3:25-30)
- c. So... Jesus' disciples cannot mourn – indeed, should not mourn – while He is with them. But when He is gone (as our Lord's words indicate), then it will be the time for His disciples to fast. But Jesus has come as the Messiah (as John himself bore witness – John 1:29). He has come to forgive sinners, as the Old Testament prophesied (Isaiah 52:13—53:12). He indeed has commenced to forgive sinners, as He did with the paralytic (Matthew 9:1-8). He has come to save sinners and to fellowship with them (Matthew 9:9-10). This is a time for celebration and rejoicing. How, then, can He or His disciples mourn, as symbolized by fasting? Joyful celebration is the proper response to the coming of Messiah. That is why John himself rejoiced greatly (John 3:29). John's disciples (by inference) should do likewise.
- d. Look at Luke's statement in Luke 5:39. The significance of this additional statement in Luke is that it informs us that people in Jesus' day thought the old was better than the new. The reason they expected Jesus to "patch up" the old garment was that they regarded the old garment to be better than a new one. (I confess, I've had clothes like this, that I liked so much I wouldn't throw them out and kept asking my wife to patch them.)
- e. Jesus came to fulfill the law, so that He, in perfect Old Testament righteousness, could die in the sinner's place, and provide eternal salvation for sinners. But He also came to inaugurate a New Covenant through His shed blood, while at the same time fulfilling the requirements of the Old. This is a covenant that does not condition our salvation on our works, but upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our place. And it is based upon His fulfillment of the Old, and His inauguration of the New, that Jesus can forgive sinners and joyfully fellowship (feast) with them. Thank God He did not conform to man's expectations!

D. Chapter 9:18-26 (See also Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56)

1. Once again why does Matthew not give us as much details as the other accounts of these 2 events?

- a. The disciples of John and the Pharisees are standing there when this first event occurred so is it possible that this was for their benefit to see how His truths were affecting the populace?
- b. There may be some indication that this ruler of the synagogue was a believer...and a desperate father. He comes as a ruler of the synagogue, in front of the Pharisees and *"kneled before him"* or rather, *"worshipped Him"*...same wording as what the Magi went they met Jesus for the first time. He may not have "come out as a believer" had it not been for this emergency. Before Peter's confessed Jesus as the Son of God this ruler of the synagogue knew the truth and he basically proclaims the truth for all to see and hear....that Jesus not only had the power to heal but also to raise the dead...for He is God.
- c. In the Mark and Luke accounts she hadn't died when the ruler first encountered Jesus but according to the Greek word death was imminent when he left his little girl to go and get Jesus, so we do not have to see an error in the texts... When in Mark we read him saying , *"My little girl is at the point of death..."* - the point of death is the word "eschatos" the word from which we get the word eschatology... "study of the last things"...So he was saying that his little girl's death was imminent....she is at her last breath...but his faith was such that he believed that death was not an obstacle for Jesus to overcome...He who created and gave life had mastery over death. His faith was much like that of Abraham when he took Isaac to the

place to be sacrificed...he knew that God would either provide something else or that he would raise Isaac up from the dead. (See Hebrews 12:17-19)

- d. Jesus stops in the midst of His work to minister...He can and does multi-task...and He can and does make time for His children...He is never too busy for us.
- e. Miracles are done within the context of faith as signs of the coming kingdom...to authenticate the message and the messenger.

2. What did Jesus mean when He says to the woman the words “*your faith has healed you*”?

- a. Again He begins this with “*Have Courage...Do not be afraid...Take heart*”..., just like He had with the paralytic...but this time she fears she had been presumptuous by touching Jesus...she was unclean and by her touch she made Him unclean according to the Law...though Jesus knew better...after all He had touched the leper... so He calms this believer’s fears...notice how He calls her “daughter”!
- b. He didn’t say, “Daughter, your touching me has made you well”... as if something she did healed her; He didn’t say, “Daughter my garments have made you well.” But He said, “*Daughter, your faith has made you well.*” ... Meaning that her faith was the means by which Jesus healed her...faith is the conduit through which God’s actions come and work...Faith is a gift of God to us His children and through it He works...Jesus healed the woman through her faith!
- c. She is standing before the One who gave her this faith and she is using it the way it was intended to be used.

Matthew Bible Study
March 25, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Matthew 9:27-34- more healings...

1. What is different about this account of the healing of the 2 blind men than the other miracles performed in chapters 8 and 9?

- a. Public in that by the time these men leave everyone will know something has happened.
- b. Jesus doesn't do anything right away...He seems to wait to confirm their faith.
- c. When you think that God is being slow in answering your pleas and cries, we need to consider that He may be testing as He seems to be here with these blind men...testing as to the strength of their faith...to keep coming back to the only source of power and healing. They were persistent...walking right into the house in which Jesus was staying uninvited.

2. What did the Pharisees say in verse 34 and why is it significant for Matthew who is not prone to details?

- a. A further condemnation on the Pharisees by their own words. Because the Pharisees go so far as to say God is a demon, thus condemning themselves...willful blindness on their part, since all of Jesus' activity pointed directly and unquestionably to Him being the Messiah. "Resisting the Lordship of Christ is not only sinful, but stupid" (R.C. Sproul in his commentary on Acts)...given all the facts that surround Him...but faith is not just intellectual assent...logic and reason only...it is these things but only after eyes have been opened and hearts re-aligned.
- b. Continuing the fulfilling of prophecy to condemn the nation of Israel.
- c. See 1 Peter 2:12...we are to be honorable always...but in so doing we need to know that people we call us evil even when we are being honorable...since their definition of what is honorable is different from God's...but we are to keep being honorable for by it even your enemy may say something that glorifies God.

C. Matthew 9:35-38

1. What are some of the things that we can glean for this passage?

- a. The long awaited Messiah has come.
- b. We need to pray for harvesters...a specific command of Jesus from His people...if we are unaware of what to ask for...here is an example.
- c. Pre-discipleship...see Philip in Acts 8:5-8, 12-13. .. *"the gospel of the kingdom...the good news of the kingdom"* ...teaching them the Law, the privileges and the obligations of being a kingdom citizen in contrast to what the Pharisees had been teaching...since they were not teaching the Word of God.
- d. Jesus is "seeing" the lost ... *"When He saw the crowds..."* ...He knew their greatest need...being Him and He goes to them...interesting insight here:
 - (1) Applies to the lost ...the truly lost...non-believers
 - (2) Maybe even to those in wayward churches as well...He has compassion on sheep without shepherds...harassed and helpless...
 - First application, of course is to the unsuspecting children of Israel with no access to the Word on their own...and relying on the false teaching of the religious leaders for generations.
 - It is harassment in that a burden is placed on them that gives them the wrong impression of God thus making life wearisome...
 - But it would seem that we are to be clear about the truth with other Christians as well...
- e. We are to look upon these with the same compassion Jesus did.
- f. Word definitions:
 - (1) In the OT, the word "harvest" often stood for God coming in judgment upon a people because of their wickedness...a reaping if you will...

- (2) In the NT, the word “harvest” comes to mean the “gathering” in of God’s people into the family.

2. Again, what is Matthew’s purpose in his telling us of all these events in chapter 8 and 9?

- a. He wants to show how Jesus is “unconventional” in the way He does things...touching, speaking, healing and forgiving those considered “unworthy”:
 - (1) Touched the leper
 - (2) Acted on behalf of the Centurions request in faith
 - (3) Not upset that this unclean woman had touched Him
 - (4) Touched the dead girl
 - (5) Paralytic
 - (6) In other words, it is the unclean that are His people and they are the ones He has come for...The Pharisees would think He should have come for the “righteous”...not the unclean.
- b. He shows the Pharisees the impact of Jesus’ words even on rulers in the synagogue.
- c. His miracles speak to His Lordship even down through the ages. He is God...He is the Messiah...He is the “ultimate” authority.
- d. Jesus the Messiah has power even over death to do as He wishes...all of this is a sign that the kingdom has come.

3. With all of the miracles we have seen in chapters 8-9 what things are similar?

- a. He touches them in some way...either physically or spiritually
- b. True believing faith is evident in some way...
- c. Jesus fulfilling prophecy...heal the lame, causing the blind to see, lepers are cleansed, the deaf are enabled to hear, the dead are raised and the poor (in spirit and in status) have the gospel preached to them... (Is. 29:18, 35:4-6)
 - (1) In this passage these blind men actually say... *“Son of David,...”* in recognition to whom Jesus is...the Messiah... *have pity on us...or have compassion on our pitiful condition.”* This is NOT a call for mercy in the place of justice as some have said...(bad translation).
 - (2) Jesus did not tell them not to address Him as the Son of David. In fact, He says.... *“according to your faith be it done to you...or be healed.”*
 - (3) Often the people were told not to say anything and they were done in “secret”...of which they did.
 - (4) Sometimes like the mute in our passage these miracles were done in public...

D. Matthew 10:1-42

1. A few general questions for the whole text before we break it down: What special “traveling instructions” did Jesus give His apostles when He sent them out?

- a. Do not go to the Gentiles...enter no town of Samaria.
- b. Go to the lost sheep of Israel...see 9:36...and proclaim the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- c. Do not be anxious about what needs to be said...He will give them the words...See vs. 7-8 when He says they are give the same message as John the Baptist and He began the ministry with... “Repent...for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”...They would understand these words as meaning, “Look around...look at what I am doing...and you will know that the kingdom is here.” And then when taken before the government they will be given what to say in the moment...vs. 19-20
- d. Heal, raise, cleanse, and cast out...in other words ...do as He had been doing by His power and in His name.
- e. Receive no payment for what is done...they are to take none of the normal things people would travel with for safety and comfort even minimally....yet God will take care of them.
- f. Stay with those who are “worthy”... believers! Interesting title “worthy”= one who receives their message favorably....place your peace...which is His peace upon the house of the one worthy.
- g. If they are not worthy...in that they will not listen...shake off the dust from your feet and move on...you don’t have time.

- h.* Do not curse them...God will take care of that later.
 - i.* *"Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves..."* - shrewdness without malice as the original serpent showed...In other words, do not be stupid like sheep be sensible and wise in my Word... be alert to your surroundings at all times... but at the same time "harmless as doves"= peacemakers. As watchful as a snake but as gentle as a dove.
 - j.* Have no fear of men!
 - k.* It is not your job to save anyone...Jesus will take care of saving and condemning.
- 2. Which of these instructions are timeless, still binding on us, the harvesters, today? All of them in one form or another...either directly or principally.
- 3. Who sent them out and what did He tell them to expect?
 - a. Jesus sent them out...they did not ask to go. They don't seem to be stepping up to do anything more than to pray for the harvesters as Jesus had commanded in chapter 9:38.
 - b. And as the sender He was honest with what they could expect to encounter. Persecution, hardship, floggings, even death from the government...from religious people...from family
 - c. How is this description different from what we think will happen today?

Matthew Bible Study
April 1, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What were some of the traveling instruction that Jesus gave His disciples as He sent them out to harvest lost souls in the general overview of 10:1-42 that we ended last time with?
 - a. Do not go to the Gentiles...enter no town of Samaria.
 - b. Go to the lost sheep of Israel...see 9:36...and proclaim the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - c. Do not be anxious about what needs to be said...He will give them the words...See vs. 7-8 when He says they are given the same message as John the Baptist and He began the ministry with... "Repent...for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ...They would understand these words as meaning, "Look around...look at what I am doing...and you will know that the kingdom is here." And then when taken before the government they will be given what to say in the moment...vs. 19-20
 - d. Heal, raise, cleanse, and cast out...in other words ...do as He had been doing by His power and in His name.
 - e. Receive no payment for what is done...they are to take none of the normal things people would travel with for safety and comfort even minimally....yet God will take care of them.
 - f. Stay with those who are "worthy"... believers! Interesting title "worthy"= one who receives their message favorably....place your peace...which is His peace upon the house of the one worthy.
 - g. If they are not worthy...in that they will not listen...shake off the dust from your feet and move on...you don't have time.
 - h. Do not curse them...God will take care of that later.
 - i. *"Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves..."*- shrewdness without malice as the original serpent showed...In other words, do not be stupid like sheep be sensible and wise in my Word... be alert to your surroundings at all times... but at the same time "harmless as doves"= peacemakers. As watchful as a snake but as gentle as a dove.
 - j. Have no fear of men!
 - k. It is not your job to save anyone...Jesus will take care of saving and condemning.
2. What did Jesus tell them to expect on their journey?
 - a. Jesus sent them out...they did not ask to go. They don't seem to be stepping up to do anything more than to pray for the harvesters as Jesus had commanded in chapter 9:38.
 - b. And as the sender He was honest with what they could expect to encounter. Persecution, hardship, floggings, even death from the government...from religious people...from family.
3. Why is the preaching of the gospel in our day in the West not as dangerous as it was for these apostles on their initial mission?
 - a. The gospel has been so diluted that it is no longer offensive...subdued Christianity...modern Evangelicalism
 - (1) Redefining marriage to be inclusive of sins of homosexuality and other deviations from God's commands.
 - (2) "Preachers" that won't use the words sin or sinner... because they are too judgmental and not therapeutic enough.
 - (3) Churches teach that there is more than one way to heaven...if you want to believe in heaven...
 - (4) The church is buying into pluralism and relativism with a desire for tolerance.
 - (5) People are not looking for "good news" because that may judge and condemn, in their view...but rather they are looking for "good advice" which they can take or leave...usually leaving.
 - b. The church does not stand holding each other accountable with a standard given by God because each person has its own standard...

- (1) Independent churches speak of being autonomous...which is opposed to the biblical concept of unity and hold each other accountable.
- (2) Not opposing the government or government officials for going against God's law.
- c. The church redefining doctrine...either seeking to define it away or give us some kind of place in it as if God needs our help or wants our help.
- d. Rampant biblical illiteracy. The Church doesn't know what the word says; we don't really know what we believe...we act differently than the Bible prescribes so we are NOT any kind of "threat". ..Or it would be more dangerous for us in the West. I.e. It is a good thing that most Muslim don't know their Koran or understand their faith or they would all be a threat.

C. Now let's break this text down from the beginning.

1. Why is Jesus giving precedents to the Jew in verse 5-8? (They are commanded to go to no one else.)

- a. First, He doesn't say...it was His command...and it must be carried out without explanation.
- b. Jesus was a Jew...and none who are His are to be anti-Semitic...the offer of the gospel is to be universal in scope.
- c. They were to proclaim that the *"kingdom of heaven is at hand."* Same message of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus (Matt. 4:17).
- d. Hence this is what Matthew is doing...telling them that the occasion that they have been looking for has arrived...Messiah has come...

2. Interesting translation to verse 8 here... *"You received without paying; give without pay."* What does this mean?

- a. Many translations have... *"Freely you have received, freely give."*
- b. He is reminding the Apostles that they "received" the kingdom...salvation through Him, as a gift. They did not buy it or earn. They did not deserve it as if paying for something. They were not even entitled to it. It would be like trying to sell something that had been given to you freely...seeking to profit off a free gift. ..(think Simon the magicians request in Acts 8.)
- c. Hence since we received our salvation the same way we should offer the kingdom to others freely. Therefore we are to offer it as a gift from Jesus.

3. How should this truth affect the way we tell others about Jesus?

4. Why is Jesus so harsh in verse 15 on those towns that will not listen to the apostles?

- a. As the original children of Israel...those whom God had originally covenanted with as long as they kept His word...they have no excuse...they were given this information 1st as it were, and they should have listened and followed God.
- b. By denying their message they are denying Jesus and by denying Jesus they are denying God.
- c. Like today...people believe the gospel is an invitation to believe; one they can choose or not choose...but God does not invite people to come to Christ, He commands that they come... *"Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."* (See also Acts 17:30)!

5. Thinking of verses 16-25 specifically, have you ever been hated because you are a Christian? Has anyone ever been hostile to you because of your faith in Christ or because of standing for the doctrines taught in Scripture? If not, then you must ask yourself a few questions.

- a. Why not?
- b. Do people even know I am a Christian?
- c. Am I forth coming on that information in the way I interact with them?
- d. Do I seek to clearly proclaim the truth of Scripture on a subject or not?
- e. Do I approach this with the love of Christ or am I simply just another pain in the side of people thus making my witness useless? Some go so far as to say

that, *"The problem with Christianity is NOT the truths or doctrines it teaches, but the problem with Christianity is Christians!"*

6. It seems in verses 26-33 that Jesus tells them on one hand to fear God (vs. 28b) and then on the other NOT to fear God (vs. 31). Why is He saying?
 - a. God has the power to cast everyone and anyone into hell, but, because of His great love for His own...shown in how well He knows each of us...we do not need to fear that He ever would.
 - b. So we are to fear and respect the fact that He could ...it is His right to do as He pleases and it would not affect His holiness, but at the same time we have no fear of Hell any longer as we are in Christ.
7. What is the point of verses 34-38?
 - a. Truth OFTEN causes conflict...hence the name "sword" for His word.
 - b. Truth can provoke separation and division with those who willingly hold onto what is false. Hence, a double edged sword! Jesus' own brother's didn't believe him...(John 7:3-5)...can you imagine the talk and arguing with family members over points of biblical truth/ doctrine?
 - c. Christ calls us to a higher mission than our own personal comfort and tranquility.
 - d. The gospel always changes hearts...one way or another.
 - e. We are to be more than willing to stand with the Christ of the Bible not the one re-defined by men.

Matthew Bible Study
April 8, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Looking again at verses 1-38 of chapter 10, what are some of the highlights...things that stand out...from this chapter?
2. What is the point of Jesus talking about bringing a sword in verse 34? *“Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*
 - a. The key here is the phrase... *“...bring peace to the earth...”* Jesus came to bring peace from God's wrath, peace to our conscience, peace with our true brothers in Christ...but He told us as well...in this world there will be tribulation!
 - b. Many mistake the design of the gospel who, in the church, think that their being redeemed will remove them from the tribulations of this world.
 - c. So He is saying, interestingly enough... *“Look not for peace in this world...look to battle!”* As Christians we take the “sword” which is His Word to do battle with the words, ideas, and cultural norms of the world...and at the same time the world brings the sword of persecution to assail against the Church bringing the sword of Truth and there will be many a battle until Christ returns...we are to remember... THIS IS WAR! And Jesus has declared War against the world.
3. How does this image of Jesus differ from the image people have of Jesus today? Why?

C. Chapter 10 continued:

1. Starting at verse 32-39, Jesus issues a number of “hard” sayings, like; *“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my father who is in heaven.”* Or... *“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother...”* Or... *Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me....Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”* (Remember He is speaking directly to His disciples who have been versed in the Old Testament Scriptures from birth.) What is the cultural significance of these “hard” sayings to these men? In other words, what is He saying to them unapologetically?
 - a. Throughout the history of this people...too many things have distracted them from their devotion to God.
 - b. Historically they have held themselves up as higher than any other people...prejudice against all non-Jews...making themselves an idol.
 - c. You have been untrustworthy as a people...you have willingly become the bride of other nations and gods. You were to be my exclusive people and you rejected that status and place.
 - d. Once again, Jesus did not come to bring peace but division...He has come to set men on opposite sides...the gospel pushes men to one side or another...civil war...brother against brother...son against father and so on...
 - e. But now you must be counter-cultural in all that you do...which is simply getting back to the original intent of the WORD and God's expectations of His people to be the blessing they were initially commanded to be.
 - f. Jesus must be our FIRST love...we must seek to know Him like no other...we must seek Him like no other.

- g. Jesus must be our Sovereign...we must obey Him and His Word at all cost. We must submit to Him and joyfully receive the reproach that was due Him (see Heb. 13:13). The martyrs of the church displayed this quality.
 - h. *"Bearing our cross"* is there to remind them and us that we are to be obedient and that we must always relate to Jesus in all things even to death. We are to bear His reproach... (Heb. 13:13) before men in this life as we go into battle every day.
 - i. Embracing the Gospel often makes life harder, because Jesus demands absolute and total allegiance that always supersedes even the closest of human relationships.
2. How do you understand the meaning of Christ's words, *"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"* (10:39)?
 3. When someone responds to Christ's call on their life what do they give up? What do they "find"?
 - a. On one hand: Our nature is so changed that many of the things we once thought were important simply are not anymore...God's grace makes them unimportant and so a non-factor as we walk forward... many have a witness where certain lifestyle desires simply disappeared never to reappear.
 - b. But on the other hand...From a Mighty Fortress is Our God... *"Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also"* we are called/ commanded to constantly put aside the sin that weighs us down so that we can run the race set before us.
 - c. We "find"...because they have been revealed to us... the truth that leads to freedom.
 - d. What we receive or "find" is a treasure that we do not want to lose...peace, hope, assurance, satisfaction...true life...at least as much as can be had in this life.
 4. What is He saying to His disciples in verse 40-42? Simply this:
 - a. *"You have been given my authority...you represent me and those that receive you receive me,*
 - b. *But just because you have this authority do not let this authority go to your heads...*
 - c. *And remember your primary calling is to serve 'little ones'...even the seemingly insignificant (those defined that way by tradition and the Pharisees) just like I have done."*
 5. J.C. Ryle ends a sermon on this passage this way: *"Let us ask ourselves, as we close the chapter in what light we regard Christ's work and Christ's cause in the world. Are we helpers of it or hinderers? Do we in any way aid the Lord's prophets and righteous men? Do we assist the 'little ones'? These are serious questions. People who give the 'cup of cold water' whenever they have opportunity do wisely and well. People who work actively in the Lord's vineyard do better still. May we all strive to leave the world a better place than it was when we were born! This is to have the mind of Christ. This is to find out the value of the lessons this wonderful chapter contains."*

D. Chapter 11:1-15

1. Think about John's question a moment found in verse 3. Think about where he was at that moment. Think about how "few" times these 2 men had ever met. And now think about what his parents would have told him about what he had been called to do. Now, why do you suppose he asks such a question and further why do you suppose Matthew uses this episode to prove the point he has been building concerning Jesus?
 - a. Some wish to ascribe doubt to John as if he was wondering why if Jesus was the Messiah...the Christ...why is John languishing in prison...when the prophecy clearly says that one of the reasons He has come is to set the prisoner free.
 - (1) BUT, I don't buy this...John had said himself that Jesus must increase and that he must decrease...

- (2) In John 1:29 when John the baptist first meets Jesus he gives the "Agnus Dei" ... "Behold, the lamb of God..." He knew who He was/is and he knew what He had come to do...in this proclamation John gives the gospel in short form.
 - (3) He also knew that it was his job to "prepare the way" for the Christ...the Messiah...which meant that at some point his job would come to an end...he also knew the times and what this might mean for his life...
 - (4) He made inquiry via his disciples to the ONLY one who could answer his question...
 - (5) True, he probably didn't envision being in the king's dungeon, but I am also sure that he knew that he would have to leave the scene somehow to keep people from following him instead of Jesus...
 - b. But John asks because while there were things that Jesus had obviously been doing that fulfilled Scripture (Is. 35)...there were things that he thought Jesus should be doing...things that he had been led to prophesy about that the Messiah would be doing like: where is the judgment and wrath that John had predicted (Matt. 3:7-12)?
 - c. John like all the OT prophets were given what they needed to say and know but none were omniscient and so there would have been gaps in the fullness of their knowledge....i.e. He was probably not able to fully distinguish between the prophecies concerning his day and the end of the age.
2. Jesus answers the disciples of John in verses 4-6. Why do you suppose Jesus didn't answer the question directly? What had they heard and what had they seen?
 - a. They had heard Him preach the message John had proclaimed... "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And they had seen the prophesy of Isaiah fulfilled.
 - b. It seems the Jesus is setting the record straight for these men.
 3. Think with me a minute. What all do you think is meant by what Jesus says in verse 6?
 - c. A word to the wise for John not to stumble (See Is. 8:13-15)
 - d. This is a curse on those who do not believe and are offended by Him.
 - e. In a very real sense, Jesus was fulfilling even the judgment part of John's prophecy... for Jesus is saying that Israel will be more fully judged by their response to Jesus and God's acts of grace through Jesus.
 - f. In fact, all along Jesus has been speaking of judgment on those who would not listen to His message and believe on His name...from calling the people to Repent and believe just as John had done...to calling out the Pharisees and all who misuse the scriptures...false teachers ...condemning those who the disciples would encounter that would not heed their message... *"...it would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah..."* Then He said that He came to bring a sword not peace to the earth...So He has been bringing judgement and John's disciples can report all of this.
 4. What does Jesus get the people to admit about John and why is that significant to Matthews's gospel? They admit that John the Baptist was a prophet for the Most High and by doing so admit that Jesus is who John says He is.
 5. What does Jesus say about John in verses 11-15?
 - a. While John may have had some doubts...Jesus had none about John.
 - b. He is more than a prophet...not just the mouthpiece of God but the forerunner of the Messiah... He is the one who ushers in the kingdom...
 - c. Of all the men who had lived up to that point in time there is no greater...not Abraham, Moses, David...no one surpasses John's greatness among men since the beginning of time.
 - d. John is the most humble of men and at the same time not at all timid.

- e. One more point...he is the embodiment of Elijah...the powerful herald...who points to the Messiah...
 - f. Which all means that Jesus is the Messiah.
6. Verse 12 is an often talked about passage. The Greek most easily reads...
"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully/violently advancing and forceful men lay hold of it." How might you interpret this passage in the context of all that has happened in chapter 10 and so far in Chapter 11?
- a. John, then Jesus and then the apostles, and then the priesthood of all believers...starting with preachers/teachers are proclaiming the kingdom...pushing the kingdom agenda with all force...
 - b. And along the way "forceful men" push back and seek to squelch the message of God...just like the warning Jesus had given His disciples before sending them out...here is John languishing in jail by the decree of a forceful man...but the message of the kingdom continues to move forward in a non-stop fashion eventually encircling the globe.
 - c. This is a reminder to all of us today that we are in a battle...that He did not come to bring peace...but the sword...and we will have to wield that sword to push the kingdom through forcefully...
7. So what does that require of His disciples at the time and for us today?
- a. Fearlessly taking the gospel to any and all...
 - b. Standing up for the truth no matter what...In His Name!
 - c. Protecting and providing for the "little ones"... "the least of these"
 - d. Realizing and expecting opposition and division for we are at WAR!!! They put Him to death...but they lost that battle because He rose again so they will seek to destroy us since they could not destroy Him!

Matthew Bible Study
April 29, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are some of the main themes of chapter 11?
2. How does this chapter support the main theme of Matthew in writing this Gospel?

C. Chapter 12

1. The Lord of the Sabbath vs. 1-14.

a. What is the connection between these first 14 verses and especially the last part of chapter 11?

- (1) In verse 1, you'll notice the words *"at this time,"* or *"now at this time,"* indicating that the events of Matthew chapter 12 were close in proximity to the things that happened in Matthew chapter 11. So you have a link in timing.
- (2) But there is also a link in content, because at the very end of Matthew chapter 11 the Lord Jesus Christ had called all those to come to Him who are weary and heavy laden, and He promised to them that His yoke was easy and His burden was light. In other words, in contrast to the religious legalism of the Pharisees of His day, He was offering a way of holiness that was not filled and encumbered with the inventions and traditions of man-made law. And so He called those who were burdened with this kind of man-made legalism to follow Him and take upon them His yoke which was light and His burden which was easy.
- (3) So here we have in the first 14 verses of Matthew chapter 12 an illustration of that very principle as the Lord Jesus sets forth the true meaning of the fourth commandment in contrast to the perversion of that commandment by the legalistic teaching of the Pharisees in His day.

b. What do we see Jesus and His disciples doing in verse 1 that the Pharisees object to? Plucking and eating the heads of grain.

c. What was wrong with this activity according to the Pharisees?

- (1) It was the Sabbath and you were not to work on the Sabbath.
- (2) Plucking the heads of the grain to eat was equated with harvesting on the Sabbath...which would bring condemnation of the Sabbath breaker and the people until the Sabbath breaker was dealt with.
- (3) You will remember that the book of Chronicles and the book of Jeremiah tell us that the reason, or one of the reasons, why the children of Israel were sent into exile, into captivity, is that they had not observed the Sabbath correctly. And when Israel came back out of captivity, it is very apparent that the rabbis and teachers were determined that Israel was not going to make that mistake twice. And so, over a period of 400 or 500 years, an entire tradition had accrued of how one was to keep the Sabbath, with hundreds and hundreds of laws and hair-splitting distinctions. Furthermore, the keeping of the Sabbath was considered to be an outward mark of great piety.
- (4) It is clear throughout this exchange in the first 14 verses, that these men, these Pharisees were not ultimately concerned too much for the Law. Get that straight. The problem with Pharisees is not that they care too much about the Law. It's not that they're too nitpicky. It's that they think that they care a great deal about the law when, in fact, they don't care about it all in their hearts.

d. What is the purpose of the Sabbath? Relationship with God!

- (1) Ex. 20:11 ties us to our Creator who is sovereign over all.
- (2) Deut. 5:15 ties the Sabbath to God's deliverance of His people...
- (3) Heb. 4:9 represents the hope of the eternal rest in God's presence.

e. How does Jesus respond to their allegations in verses 3-8?

- (1) By pointing out that it was NOT “unlawful”. Nowhere in the OT is the plucking of grain to eat on the Sabbath prohibited. If they had been farmers and were attempting to harvest on the Sabbath that would be different.
 - (2) Jesus shows that what the Pharisees are saying is...once again...based on their own oral tradition...not the Word of God...just as He had done in the Sermon on the Mount. He seems to delight in pointing out how they have taken the Law and twisted it for their own purposes...
 - (3) Jesus shows that neither David nor the priests violated the spirit of the Law and the Lawgiver even though technically they violated the letter of the law. Since the purpose of the Sabbath is to foster the relationship between God and His children any undue burden placed on the people by the Pharisees would lend itself to destroying rather than fostering that relationship.
 - (4) Jesus is telling them as He has been telling them...that it was never their job to legislate...God has taken care of that for the results that He seeks...their job was to declare God's Word and minister to the people with the Law of God.
 - (5) Jesus even places Himself above sacrifices and the temple... which only represent Him... but are not to be revered in the way they were by the religious leaders. *“One greater than the temple is here”... “And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy, not sacrifice...”* vs. 6. And vs. 7...see also Hosea 6:6.
- f. What are some of the things that Jesus is saying when He proclaims, “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” in vs. 8?**
- (1) By placing Himself over the temple and ceremony and even the priests He has already begun to speak of His sovereignty...but they would have also heard Him saying that He is their creator and has dominion over all creation.
 - (2) He is saying by calling Himself the Lord of the Sabbath that He is the Messiah...the ultimate deliverer.
 - (3) As Lord of the Sabbath He and He alone can grant His people rest...hope in this life and the life to come.
 - (4) Also, implicit in this is His Lordship over the interpretation of Scripture...
 - (5) Also, Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath Day, and Jesus' lordship period, is the very foundation of true Christian freedom. We do not feel a burden by what God commands us to do, because Christ has freed us to obey that which God has called us to obey. Christ has not freed us to obey the doctrines and commandments of men. He has freed us from the doctrines and commandments of men. And so we can rejoice that it is never burdensome to keep the Lord's commandments and it is always burdensome to feel bound to keep the inventions of men. The Lord Jesus has given us freedom, and He has made His day a glorious day for us, for we obey His word and not the inventions of men.
 - (6) These claims should have shocked them into ripping their clothing and to place upon themselves sackcloth and ash...but they were moved to wanting to kill Him rather than repentance.
- g. What is Jesus seeking to teach/show in verses 9-14?**
- (1) Reiterate that the Pharisees had a wrong understanding of the purpose for the Sabbath...they observed it wrongly...just as their forefathers had done and were consequently chastised and judged.
 - (2) There is no OT law against healing on the Sabbath since it has always been lawful to do good on the Sabbath.
 - (3) As Lord of the Sabbath...the One who sets the “rules” He knows what is good and does it.
 - (4) He is saying in essence...that this day is His day!
 - (5) Restoring the original purpose for the Sabbath fostering a positive relationship between God and His children.
 - (6) Listen to the words of J.C. Ryle on this passage. *“Our Lord does not do away with the observance of a weekly Sabbath. He neither does so here, nor elsewhere in the four gospels. Thousands have rushed to the hasty conclusion that Christians have nothing to do with the*

4th commandment and that it is no more binding on us than the mosaic laws about sacrifices. There is nothing in the New Testament to justify any such conclusion. The plain truth is that our Lord did not abolish the law of a weekly Sabbath. He only freed it from the incorrect interpretations and purified it from man-made additions. He did not tear out of the Decalogue the 4th commandment, He only stripped off the miserable traditions with which the Pharisees had encrusted that day and by which they had made it not a blessing, but a burden. He left the 4th commandment where He found it; a part of the eternal law of God of which no jot or tittle was ever to pass away."

- (7) Something else, we also see a contrast between the Pharisees and Jesus in this passage with regard to the law. The Pharisees claim to be the great lovers of the law. But, who is shown by their actions to be lovers of the law in this passage? Jesus is shown to be the true lover of God's law in this passage, not the Pharisees. And, who is shown to be truly godly in this passage? The Pharisees were those who had the reputation of being truly pious and holy, and yet their heart is shown by their action. Jesus is shown to be the only one with perfect holiness in this passage.

2. Chapter 12:15-21. This is a portrait of Jesus' character painted first by Isaiah (Is. 30:15, 42:1-4).

a. Why, again, does He order the people not to make Him known publically?

- (1) First of all, Matthew is going to explain to us in verse 17 that He did that because that was in fulfillment of prophecy. Understand that the Lord Jesus told the crowds not to reveal His identity because the prophets had made it clear that when Messiah came, He would not unduly call attention to Himself, and Matthew is going to explain that to us in the passage that He quotes from Isaiah.
- (2) Secondly, He told them not to reveal who He was because He was gradually revealing Himself. You remember He was only gradually explaining who He was, and what His mission was, to the disciples. They were having a hard time taking it in anyway, and so He very carefully revealed more and more about Himself and about His ministry, and ultimately about the death that He was going to die as He went along training the disciples.
- (3) Finally, Christ only wanted those who had accepted His lordship to testify to His name. Remember, Jesus knew that these very crowds who followed Him would desert Him in the last days of His ministry. When He would begin to preach that which was then unpopular, the very crowd that followed Him would desert Him, and He did not want them to be the prime testifiers to who He was. He wants those who accept His lordship to be the ones who testify to His name; and by the way, there's a lesson in that for us, too, isn't there? The Lord Jesus doesn't desire mere lip testimony. Prior to the testimony of our lips, He wants transformed lives. He wants people who have been changed by the Holy Spirit, and who are walking in the way of holiness, to be His prime witnesses in this life. Otherwise, people will say, "Well, look at them. They're no different from the world. They claim to be Christians but they're no different from the world."
- (4) Godliness/ Christian authenticity is not simply something that's important for our own spiritual welfare. It's not only something that's pleasing to God; it's absolutely necessary to our witness, and I have said before that the single greatest obstacle to our discipleship/evangelistic work is the lack of godliness/authenticity in Christians. And until we care seriously about sanctification, until we care seriously about the way grace changes our lives and we live differently than the world around us and we have different desires and hopes and dreams than the world around us, our word witness will be ineffective, because people will see through that testimony and they'll see that our lives are not changed. And so Christian authenticity is not only important for our own spiritual welfare and God's glory, it is important for our witness. We can't witness for Christ effectively until people can see that He is our Lord, that we have not merely accepted Him as Lord by lip, but we have accepted Him as Lord in our hearts.

Matthew Bible Study
May 27, 2015

A. Opening prayer

B. Review

3. Remember what the Pharisees asked for in verse 38 and Jesus' response in verse 39...what is wrong with asking for a sign according to Jesus...after all many do it today...dare I say, maybe some of us have? (Remember the word sign is another word for miracle. Miracle is not a word that was found in the original languages, instead the writers use words like sign, wonders, or power...the most common being sign. A sign always points beyond itself to something else. They authenticate the message and the messenger.)
 - a. First, it seems that it is *"evil and adulterous"*...harsh language for Christ.
 - b. Christians today speculate about how easy it would be to remain faithful if only God would send a sign...if He would only do as we wish for Him to do.
 - c. God is not standing by, waiting to perform for us or anyone else. Not in His nature...
 - d. He is God and we are His creation ...it is evil for us to demand that He prove Himself.
 - e. All the sign we need is in His Word...which gets to the heart of this question...by asking for a sign we are saying that what we have is not enough...just like the Pharisees...Not Enough for us to trust...to believe...to follow...if we can't see it then we will just go do our own thing...the height of arrogance and unbelief.
 - f. James Montgomery Boice once said about this: *"If God decided to give the whole world a sign about Jesus, He could arrange the stars in the sky in such a way that they would spell out the message, 'Jesus is My only begotten son.' But if God did that, people would simply say, 'I wonder what astronomical perturbation caused that chance alignment of the stars.'"* See also Luke 16:19-31.
4. What is Jesus telling them in verses 41-42?
 - a. That the Ninevites listen to Jonah and repented...but the scribes and Pharisees... those who should know better refuse to listen and to repent. So they, the Ninevites, will testify against them on THAT Day...
 - b. So, too the Queen of Sheba, would made a lengthy journey to hear the wisdom of God from Solomon, while the scribes and Pharisees demand that the one greater than Solomon do something more...
 - c. Interesting concept; sinners rising up in judgment against these sinners...these religious leaders who know better.
 - d. This chapter is full of hyperbole and irony.
 - e. Their hardness of heart is condemning them...See Rom. 1: 18-20 and Rom. 2:1-5.

C. Finishing up chapter 12:43-50

1. What is the connection between chapter 12:1-42 and verses 43-45? (There wouldn't be a gap between verses 42 and 43 since it seems to be a continuation of the same conversation. Headings are a distraction here to be sure...as if this part happens at a different time.)
 - a. An historical parable?...in that it reflects Israel's history in the OT up to and including the time of Christ.
 - b. A metaphor to be sure...not really talking about demonology. Jesus is comparing the Pharisees to the demons...not the man who had been demon-oppressed/possessed... Jesus took care of that and he will never be inhabited again. This connects them with demons and is a continuation of them being the ones who are agents for Beelzebul...He is simply building His case against these

men many of whom are totally lost, not to be saved, and just like the demons in the metaphor they can find no rest since there is nothing of God within them save His image...and since they can find no rest they take out their aggravation on Him and all that He stands for...that is what Satan does.

- c. The demon(s) in Jesus' story exhibits the restlessness of heart that is characteristic of unsaved men and women. On the other hand as Augustine said about the believer, *"You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you."*
 - d. The Pharisees are "righteous" men...in that if they see a bad habit they break it by their own strength giving a look of piety to all who need to see.
 - e. So an unoccupied house...a person without the Spirit of God invites squatters...unholy spirits. These demons are free to come and go as they see fit. Just as a house that stands vacant for some time is often used and abused by any and all for purposes other than what it was originally intended for...a home...a place of rest and refuge.
 - f. If one does not repent and commit themselves to the King these persons' final state will be worse than if the kingdom had never come.
 - g. Some clarifying points concerning "spiritual warfare" and "demons". Christians have to be careful not to give Satan and his minions too much credit...for they are not FREE to do as they please...in the end they can only do as God allows/ordains. Christians must be careful when giving excuse for behavior with the cliché that we are under "spiritual warfare" as if that is something separate from our normal life. We are in a constant battle primarily with our selves...that is our sinful nature...though it no longer controls us ...it certainly plagues us...when we forget who we are and we allow it to plague us...to weaken us...to cause us to stumble...but "spiritual warfare" is not to be an excuse for our chosen behavior. There is a war going on...every day...all the time...and when we let our guard down we get snatched...hit...shot and we are weakened... When we let our guard down in the battle...we can't blame "spiritual warfare" for our weakness...any more than we can blame Satan when we stumble. Satan and his minions can tempt...but we have to decide to go along with it. It is our fault when we flee the battle or deny it exists, or defect in any way ...it is like becoming a traitor every time we do...
2. Now what happens in verses 46-50 and how does Jesus use this event to further substantiate what He has been saying? (Once again He is not seeking to abolish family...He upholds the commandment to honor father and mother...so what is He saying here?)
- a. Nothing and no one will stand in the way of His mission...not even family...for the mission at this point is greater than family ties. He essentially shows that He lives up to His own words from 8:21-22, and 10:34-39.
 - b. He is contrasting those who would willingly seek to disrupt and disprove the Word with those who are true followers of the Word...His true family.
 - c. He came to bring the sword...which will separate...and He is demonstrating rather dramatically that commitment to Him and the kingdom are to be all true believers 1st priority, which places people in a new spiritual family!

D. Prayer for the church and for one another!

Matthew Bible Study
Sept. 23, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

6. What were Matthew's overarching purposes for writing the book besides the fact that God moved Him to do it?
 - a. Matthew's main purpose was to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Kings, to his fellow Jews and he would stop at nothing to do this as his Gospel contains more Old Testament references (up to 130) than any other book, bringing the Old Testament prophecies to bear on Jesus as He had come to do the will of His Father by saving the elect from their sins.
 - b. Matthew sought to show over and over again that God's children did not get to heaven by their "good works" as the teachers of the Law proclaimed but only by the grace of Jesus, the Messiah. He shows very clearly and powerfully that salvation is only through the work of Jesus...even in his own calling he makes the point of the Messiah's irresistible call.
7. What are some of the purposes for genealogies in the Scriptures? Why are they actually important, though we may think them tedious?
 - a. The lists are usually never complete...never meant to be seen as exhaustive.
 - b. Hope...They always ensure that God's people can see God's grace transgenerationally...to the saved and to the unsaved within the family...just because one generation is evil is no indicator that the next will be, all in God's hands.
 - c. Matthew would have been especially acquainted with lists and genealogies as a tax collector and if he didn't have the information he knew where to get it since it was a matter of the public registry.
 - d. Heritage is important to God and thus ought to be important to God's people.
8. What was the thrust of John's message after heralding the King's coming?
Jonah Gould answered this..."REPENT and BELIEVE!!!"
9. Why were the Pharisees so unimpressed with John the Baptist and his message especially considering how well he fulfilled prophecy? (Think: When did the facts ever matter to these guys?) They didn't have ears to hear...they were upset that John placed them on the same level as the Gentiles in their need to be cleansed...after all THEY were children of Abraham!
10. What would you say is the overarching purpose(s) of the Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7)?
 - a. These then are how disciples are to live by God's grace...there is no compromise.
 - b. It is not how we would expect to be defined. Following Jesus means living by standards that He prescribes...entirely different than public opinion in many cases.
 - c. This means that because of this we will probably not always be extremely popular...but our popularity is not at stake here...we were not created to lift up ourselves but God alone.
 - d. But at the same time...all of this makes us BLESSED. Being blessed as from the beginning (Gen. 1:28) is for the purpose of fulfilling what we were created for...to glorify God and enjoy Him.
 - e. It is communicating over and over again the importance of the Word.
 - f. How vital the Law is for the believer...kingdom-citizen. For it is God's Word and has not been done away with.
11. Concerning the healing and miracles we see in chapters 8-12 why are they here?
 - a. To substantiate the Sermon of the Mount...Jesus' message!

- b. To show His divinity
 - c. To show Him fulfilling prophecy
 - d. Revealing who He is to His own.
12. What was the religious elite's response to Jesus' throughout chapters 1-12? Hatred, rebellion, blasphemy. What was Jesus' response to them? Condemnation and disdain.

C. Chapter 13-

1. In Matthew 12, Jesus' character is over and over again contrasted with the character of His opponents, the Pharisees and the scribes. And in Matthew chapter 13, Matthew gives us a glimpse of another method of His teaching. Jesus likes to teach in parables.
2. In Matthew chapter 13 we have at least 8 parables recorded and from this point on to the end of the book, there will be numerous parables of the Lord Jesus recorded, indicating to us that at this stage, Jesus' teaching, to the multitudes at least, takes a decided turn and He begins to use, more than ever before, parables as a means of conveying His message. Jesus talked to the multitudes, to the crowds in parables in order to simultaneously reveal and conceal His message. We will see His ultimate purpose in a minute or two.
3. William Hendriksen said: *"Jesus now, more than ever before, begins to speak in parables in order to further reveal the truth to those who accepted the mysterious, but to conceal it from those who rejected the obvious."*
4. So let's begin by looking at vs. 1-9 and 18-23.
 - a. In the West, farmers usually plow their fields and prepare the soil before planting the seed. But in the ancient Near East, the farmers there sowed/cast or scattered the seed on a piece of ground first, then afterwards plowed the seeds into the ground. It was an inefficient way of farming and there was much loss from falling in the wrong places as they were carried along by the wind or the birds would feed on the seed beforehand...
 - b. Just for fun: what is the context of this message?
 - i. It is the same day, in the same place, where He had been speaking in chapter 12 except now He has moved out of the house and gotten into a boat to preach to more people.
 - ii. He is still preaching the kingdom...it is His one desire.
 - iii. He is preaching to "great crowds"... But it is important to remember that though these crowds had gone way out of their way to follow the Lord Jesus Christ - to hear Him - that does not mean that they truly believed on Him. Though they were very interested in hearing what He had to say, though they were very captivated perhaps by both His manner and the content of His message, yet, not all of them believed. That's one of the interesting ironies of this passage. Even as Jesus is telling a parable about how some people hear the word and don't believe Him there are people standing on a seashore hearing the word who don't believe Him. They were there to hear Him, but hearing, Jesus makes emphatically clear, will not get you to heaven. There must be more.
 - iv. He is preaching on the seashore in a boat...not the grand sanctuary of the Temple.
 - v. He also taught sitting down...not standing up...but as a Rabbi before His students. It was customary at that time for the teacher to sit and the crowd to stand for as long as the teacher taught.
 - vi. He spoke to them in many parables...as we said this begins the many parables ...at least 8 ...just in the chapter.
 - c. How would you explain what Jesus' is saying in this parable?

- i. Indeed, the proportions of the parable are staggering, aren't they? Only 1 in 4, accept the message of the Messiah. The message of the kingdom of heaven. This may be hyperbole to make the point that ... *"For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."*
 - ii. The seed is "sown"...it is passive in this instance...it goes where it is thrown and where the wind sends it. The seed does not and can not decide where it goes. The illustration does breakdown since there is wind and birds that move or eat the seed as well...but recognizing the fault in the human example doesn't take away the truth that it is God who "sows" the seed where He wills and so by His command and predestination the seed ends up where it is supposed to be. No room for chance...all destinies are in His hands.
 - iii. This parable reminds us that individuals will respond to the message differently, and their response is based upon what is in their hearts, the state of their hearts, and the desires of their hearts. The disciples expected a mass conversion and a following of the Messiah when He came. Jesus, in this parable, reveals a shocking truth. As a matter of fact, He says, individuals will respond differently to my message. It won't be that the message is different. It won't be that the messenger is different. It will be that the hearts of hearers are different, and so they will respond to the message of the Messiah differently.
 - iv. This parable itself teaches us that the way that the kingdom grows is slow, almost imperceptible, just like plants grow in a field. So, also, the disciples grow in that way and because they were not instantaneously sanctified and instantaneously wise, it is not surprising that they might have a hard time understanding what Jesus said.
 - v. The disciples were expecting mass conversion to the Messiah in the age of the kingdom of the heaven, but, in fact, the Lord Jesus says, by the parable of the sower, that there would be many who would reject His teaching. And even some would follow Him at first, but, at last, be falling away because of the love of the world, and of riches. And only those who believe and embrace Him, the seed that fell on the good soil, would, indeed, follow the Messiah. And so He was correcting the disciples' misunderstandings about, their misconceptions of the kingdom by telling this parable.
- d. The seed of course is the gospel/ the message of the kingdom...the Word of God. So what is the soil? Vs. 19= the hearts of men. How many types of soils does Jesus highlight here? 4 types. What are they?
- i. Unresponsive heart- vs. 4 and 19...a person who refuses the word...a hardened heart... think a minute of where they are...on a beach not a place rich in growing power. Being on the beach is a picture of the unfertile hearts of some of the people.
 - ii. An impulsive heart- vs. 5-6 and 20-21...A person who seems to accept the word ...they are the one that raises their hands or goes to the aisle excitedly at an evangelistic service...they respond almost immediately to the gospel being shared yet later on they seem to walk away not persevering in the faith... they seem to make progress in the word and personal growth only to retreat at the first sign of struggle or conflict or trial.
 - iii. A preoccupied heart- vs. 7 and vs. 22...a person who hears the gospel maybe even seems to accept the gospel but never seeks to change their lifestyle...or desires ...the things of the world are more important or they may want to be associated with a church or a group of people for personal gain....and after a while whatever desire they may have had towards the kingdom is choked out all together by their other interests.
 - iv. A fruitful heart...vs. 8 and vs. 23...it is amazing how many people preach/teach this as different types of Christians or 3 kinds of Christians and one unbeliever...but what we have here is a true Christian...one who does the will of the One who sent Him (Remember Matt. 12:50; see also Luke 8:21)...the other 3 are not Christians at all... for their lives do not reflect the character of the 4th plus they do not endure to the end. Fruitfulness distinguishes this soil...this heart from the rest. This description doesn't need to talk about the thorns and the weeds that grow up ...in an agrarian society everyone who know that while the heart is fruitful it is not perfect...and has to be cultivated properly. ...Oh and what makes it a fruitful heart/ good soil- a regenerated heart...a heart that has been changed by God not by anything within ourselves.(These 4 designations are not mine...you find them in many

places ...so many no one seems to know where they originally came from. Explanations are mine...well, as much as I can claim since all of this knowledge comes from the Spirit anyway.)

5. Some notes on parables:

- a. The meaning of the word “parable” is somewhat elastic in the Scriptures. The word “parable” refers to a teaching device whereby two things are compared. It can refer to proverbs, wisdom oracles, fables, allegories, riddles, and even dark enigmatic sayings. We have to determine its meaning from its usage. So when the word appears on Jesus lips, it already has a frame of reference, a history. What might that be? The Hebrew Scriptures. The few examples of “parables” in the OT would be very revealing:
 1. We’ll start with Matthew’s quotation of Psalm 78 in Matthew 13:34-35. Matthew says: *“All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoke by the prophet: I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”* Asaph begins Psalm 78, a long historical song, with the words: *“I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old”* and then he proceeds to recount the rebellion, sin, and failure of God’s people as a warning for future generations. They kept not his covenant is a constant refrain. The story of God’s people and their failure is parabolic. Who will listen to it and hear? Psalm 78 is a Psalm of judgment that warns the present generation of the wayward example of Israel in the past. Those who sing this Psalm are expected to have the wisdom to be able to decipher and apply the “parables.”
 2. Balaam speaks in parables in Num. 23-24 that turn out to be a curse to Midian, Amelek, and the Kenites. Parables speak of judgment against God’s enemies.
 3. Job’s final speech (Job 26-31) against his three friends is cast in the form of a parable (mashal). It ministers judgment against his three accusers.
 4. Nathan the prophet is sent by the Lord to rebuke David after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba. The first word out of his mouth is the parable of the ewe lamb (2 Sam. 12:1ff). Without any explanation. David understands it to refer to someone else. The parable has masked the truth. Nathan must speak plainly: you are the man!
 5. The prophet Isaiah sings a parable to the people of Israel, one of his most famous, the parable of the Vineyard (Isa. 5). It is spoken in righteous indignation as a judgment against Israel. Later the Lord says to Isaiah, “take up this parable against the king of Babylon, and say: “How the oppressor has ceased, How his fury has ended” (Isa. 14:14).
 6. The Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel in Ezek. 17, *“Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel”* It is propounded to *“the rebellious house of Israel.”* Again, in Ezekiel 24, the Lord says, *“utter a parable to the rebellious house, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh: “Put on a pot, set [it] on, And also pour water into it.”’*
7. The prophet Micah speaks: *“Therefore thus says Yahweh: “Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks; Nor shall you walk haughtily, For this [is] an evil time. In that day [one] shall take up a parable (mashal; “taunt song”) against you, and lament with a bitter lamentation, saying: ‘We are utterly destroyed!’”* (Micah 2:3-4).
8. Now, finally, when Jesus appears *“teaching them many things in parables”* and *“he said nothing to them without a parable”* what are we to conclude? The parable is the medium of judgment, the grammar of God’s wrath and curse against his obstinate people.
9. You may be beginning to see a pattern here...so let’s turn back to the text to hear Jesus in the text.

6. So, why is the Lord speaking this way? What does he tell us specifically in vs. 10-17 and 34-35?

- a. It seems like the Lord Jesus is deliberately trying to obscure His message by speaking in these dark sayings, these parables, these similitudes, and these symbols.
- b. He tells them the parables, and then He only gives an explanation of the parables to the disciples. And the disciples are all confused about this.
- c. The parable is proclaimed to a people that deserve His judicial blinding (Matt. 13:12-13). Parables are uniquely suited to engage and challenge the hearers to judge their own situation. The parables by their very nature as wisdom devices, call for careful thought and spiritual discernment.
- d. Parables mask...they veil the truth. See vs. 34-35. They hide as much as they illustrate. And unless you are predisposed to search out and understand the meaning, like the disciples, and unless you are graciously enlightened by God, as the disciples were, you will not only not understand them but they will serve as a judgment against you. Tragically, figuring out a parable is precisely what dull-hearted, conscience-seared people are not inclined to do.
- e. Now, the question becomes acute: who are these thick hearted, spiritually dense people who deserve nothing but the judgment of veiled truth? They are the people of Israel, God's own covenant people, especially as exemplified in their leaders: the Pharisees, Sadducees, teachers and scribes of the law, Priests, and the Herodians.
- f. For them the parables serve as a judgment. God punishes their disobedience and stubborn ears by veiling the truth. That's why Jesus speaks in parables. Parables are *"the genre of obfuscation"*...seeking to make obscure, to confuse or bewilder. *"He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."* (Prov. 29:1).
- g. Vs. 13-15, Jesus wants them to see these parables in the context of OT prophecy. Remember, we said that over and over in these eight parables, He tells us about the unexpected nature of the kingdom. The disciples were expecting the kingdom to be one way, and Jesus shows them that the kingdom is another. Well, in this passage whenever He quotes from Isaiah chapter 6, vs. 9 and 10, He shows us again a way in which the disciples were expecting the kingdom to be different from the way it really was. Jesus gets more specific in verses 13-15. He says, because many see His miracles but do not understand them or embrace the truth which He teaches; therefore, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled. Because of the hardness of their hearts, because they have seen Christ's miracles, and they have heard His preaching and they have not embraced that, because they have seen and heard and yet not understood and believed, therefore, God will judge them in fulfillment of prophecy by speaking to them in dark sayings.
- h. And finally, in verses 16 and 17, Jesus reminds the disciples again of the blessing that they have, of the spiritual sight which has been granted to them by the Lord. And we ourselves must determine more fully the glory of the gospel privileges that have been granted to us. Look at His words again: *"Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear, for truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desire to see what you see, and did not see it, and hear what you hear and did not hear it."* God's gospels, and even the parables, are a great blessing to the disciples in a double way:
 - (1) First of all, they are a blessing because the disciples understand these parables. Even though these parables mean nothing to those that are perishing, they mean a great deal to the disciples. And even though they don't fully grasp the full extent of their meaning they know they are good news of the kingdom because they do in fact have ears to hear. That's why you look at these parables and you scratch your head and you say, how could these people not understand that? The answer is crystal clear. It's crystal clear because God, in His grace, has granted you to understand. It's plain. It's crystal clear because He has revealed it to you. But for those who don't understand the content, they might as well not come that day. Think about the doctrine of election: many go for years without seeing it then one day they see it everywhere...and you wonder how others can't see it...some don't want to...others aren't matured enough to see it...others will never see it.
 - (2) Second, they are blessed because Jesus says that they have been granted to see something that even the prophets had not been granted to see. Abraham, Moses, and David, Jeremiah and Isaiah. They had longed to see the things that the disciples had. God had not granted

to show those things to them. Do you realize the privilege we have? In the last day, Bertrand Russell and all of the other skeptics will be standing around the throne of judgment and they will be arguing vigorously with the Almighty, *"But you didn't give us enough evidence."* There's going to be an Old Testament saint like Abraham, or like Jeremiah, WHO is going to stand up and say, *"I believed, though I had not seen in the fullness which you have, and yet with all the light that God gave you, you rejected the truth."* And they will cast their vote of "Yea, and amen" when the Almighty casts the unbeliever into hell. Do we realize the privilege that we have, and have we embraced the gospel in all its life?

Matthew Bible Study
Sept. 30, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What did we see last time that was the primary purpose of parables?
 - a. Judgment! The disciples seemed to know this from the OT teachings...hence the need or desire to ask Jesus why He was using such an obvious teaching style (vs. 10-11). Specifically vs 11b-13 speaks to what most of the people would here...dare I say all except the disciples.
 - b. Secondary purpose? Blessing of God's people! Vs. 11a
 - c. Can you remember any evidence to support this point? Vs. 14-15 from Isaiah 6:9-10
2. What is the subject that most parables have in mind...especially Jesus' parables here in chapter 13? The Kingdom of God. And as such must speak about believers and non-believers and what will happen to each.
3. What was the purpose and point of this first parable...the parable of the Sower?
 - a. To, in a way, proclaim judgment upon all those who aren't His and to basically put the fear of God in those who are. What do you think of that answer?
 - b. Indeed, the proportions of the parable are staggering, aren't they? Only 1 in 4, accept the message of the Messiah. The message of the kingdom of heaven. This may be hyperbole to make the point that ... *"For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."*
 - c. The seed is "sown"...it is passive in this instance...it goes where it is thrown and where the wind sends it. The seed does not and cannot decide where it goes. The illustration does breakdown since there is wind and birds that move or eat the seed as well...but recognizing the fault in the human example doesn't take away the truth that it is God who "sows" the seed where He wills and so by His command and predestination the seed ends up where it is supposed to be. No room for chance...all destinies are in His hands.
 - d. The parable is proclaimed to a people that deserve His judicial blinding (Matt. 13:12-13). Parables are uniquely suited to engage and challenge the hearers to judge their own situation. The parables by their very nature are wisdom devices, call for careful thought and spiritual discernment.
 - e. It is given in answer to Chapter 12:50 or Luke 8:21. So His disciples would know how this works. His true followers are those who produce good fruit to His glory. Hear His Word. Understand His Word. Do His Word.
4. We said last time that the soil talked about in this parable is the hearts of men (see 13:19) and we went on to talk about 4 types of soil/hearts. Do you remember what they were (using your own designations or the designations I gave)? Only one of the soils/hearts is described as "good". What makes it good?
 - a. Jesus/God says it is good...think back to Genesis 1.
 - b. It is a "good" heart because it has been regenerated by God...once again this is not something that the heart can do on its own.

C. The next set of parables- 13:24-43

1. What would you say is the overarching message of these parables? (There are at least 3 here- parable of the weeds-vs. 24-30, the parable of the mustard seed-vs 31-32 and the parable of the yeast/leaven-vs.33) The unifying theme of these 3 passages is the encouraging promise of the survival and then the growth of good seeds planted in good ground that meet with elements that seemingly are set against them producing good fruit. In other words, the "good" ground is still here on this Fallen earth and so there will be many obstacles along the way but those planted in the good soil...those whose hearts have been regenerated will endure to the end producing a wonderful harvest. Or to put it simply: God's kingdom will grow in God's way and in God's time.

2. If all you had was verses 24-30 (without vs. 36-43) do you think you would have a hard time figuring this one out? Why or why not? They are blessed because Jesus says that they have been granted to see something that even the prophets had not been granted to see. (Vs. 16-17) Abraham, Moses, and David, Jeremiah and Isaiah. They had longed to see the things that the disciples had. God had not granted to show those things to them. Do you realize the privilege we have?

3. Do you see anything you haven't seen before?
 - a. Interesting that the weeds always reveal themselves...they are not hidden...the servants can see them immediately, but who are these servants...God's angels...having God's mind they can tell the difference.
 - b. Another interesting fact is that from the perception of the untrained mind...most men...these weeds and wheat would not have looked different enough to know which was which. The Greek word here is "*darnel*" a weed like weed... That is true in the world of men as well. There is nothing in our physical appearance that necessarily changes when we become Christians to immediately set us off from the rest of humanity...time may give us a way to be sure. But as Christians we sin throughout our lives and often the non-believer does things that outwardly look "good"... sometimes better than what we do. It is often immediately impossible to single out a true Christian in a crowd even by observing their public behavior.
 - c. That it is God's will that the good wheat and the weeds grow together...in the world but obviously not of the world...the difference is obvious. Every "good" farmer weeds his garden, doesn't he? God's angels will at the end of time.
 - d. This seemingly confirms a proper end time view...that the wheat and the weeds will grow together until that Last Day. There will be no "premature" harvesting (read rapture as the Dispensationalists teach) of God's people. We are "in" this together until the end.
 - e. We don't often think of the symbol of the harvest as talking about the Judgment Day. Many parables told by OT prophets, Jesus and even the rabbis of the day were at their heart eschatological in nature...pointing to the Last day.
 - f. The mustard seed is NOT the smallest of seeds...hyperbole again, to a degree (it was the smallest seed that any Jew would have ever seen)...and then compared to the wheat seed or other grains and crops it is extremely small...size DOESN'T matter in God's economy. While it starts out small and almost unseen and takes a while to break through the ground... it will grow in the end to much higher than any other crop from 4 to 6 feet.
 - g. Could this be an illusion to Ezekiel 17:22-24? I think so...which talks about the birds/Gentiles coming to know about the God of Israel...to come and perch on His branches...though it is a different tree... in Ezekiel it is a noble cedar.
 - h. Yeast/leaven is talked about in a positive way...illustrating like the mustard seed that enormous growth can come even from the tiniest beginnings.
 - i. Interestingly the first couple of parables seem to be focused on the typical role of men and now this one on the typical role of women. (vs.35) Jesus is probably seeking to relate to both genders. "3 measures of yeast/leaven" would be enough when mixed with flour to make bread for over 100 people... another fruitful exchange from something that started out small and insignificant.

4. How does all that we have just talked about explain for us the kingdom of heaven in this life?
 - a. Jesus says His kingdom of heaven, the kingdom He is establishing is like this...He sows good seed...many respond to it and grow up in faith, but at the same time, the enemy, the evil one, Satan, is working against His kingdom. Satan sows tares/weeds (lookalike weeds), so that sons of light and sons of darkness coexist in this kingdom. The disciples ask, *"Should we not then root out the sons of darkness?"* Jesus response is, *"No, I have specialists for that. I will send My angels to make that final division at the end of time, at the judgment."*
 - b. This parable undoubtedly applies to the Church. There is no other parable in all of Jesus' parables where the Church and the Kingdom are so close. They're almost synonymous in this parable. The wheat are the sons of the kingdom - the members of the visible and invisible church - then the tares/weeds..."darnel"- wheat like weed... are members of the visible church who are not members of the invisible church. In other words, they made a confession, but the reality of Christ is not in them. But, they're intertwined with those who are truly believers. In this parable it is said that the tares/weeds will be gathered by the angels, not out of the field, not out of world, but out of the kingdom. The tares/weeds will be removed, they will be gathered out of what? The kingdom! This indicates that this parable refers not simply to the work of Christ in the world in general, but even to the institutional form of the kingdom of heaven, and that is the church.
 - c. Jesus stresses that tares/weeds in the kingdom are a deliberate plot of Satan. We must expect this. We must expect to see those who are hypocritical, those who teach falsely, and those who profess faith falsely, even within the bounds of the visible church, because Jesus warns us that it is the case. It's very interesting that Jesus and Paul and Peter all go out of their to tell us that there will be people who profess to believe who are not, in fact, believers. They will be part of the visible church, they will look like - at least in their profession - sons of light, but they will be in fact, sons of darkness. And so, when we see hypocrisy and unbelief in the church, that is not a proof that the Bible is wrong; it's proof that the Bible is right.
5. What does Jesus' explanation teach us as followers of Christ that we should do in this life? It's very interesting that even though these disciples struggle to understand, they humbly go to Jesus to have their own thinking corrected. He explains to them point by point what the story represents and they allow their own minds to be corrected by the word of Christ. And that's an important lesson for us because Christians must go to Christ when they are baffled by the questions and circumstances of life, and we must go to Christ to have our ideas and our thinking and our desires and our expectations corrected as we look at life. **How do we do that?** We go to the book. We go to the Holy Scriptures. We sit under its examination. We allow all our thinking to be tested according to its authority and to receive its criticism and to have our minds corrected according to Holy Scripture. This is so important in the church today.
6. Richard Baxter said, *"We must not misinterpret God's patience with the ungodly."* God's patience is not an opportunity to be apathetic about the final judgment. It is an opportunity for today - and for today only - to realize our sins, to flee from them and to run to Christ.
7. Can you think of any examples of big things happening from small beginnings in history?
 - a. Rosa Parks...an unassuming Black woman who refused to sit in the back of the bus...whose action helped spark the Civil Rights movement One hundred years after the Emancipation proclamation.
 - b. Growth of the church in China even during the era of Chairman Mao.
 - c. Explosive growth of Christianity in Sub-Sahara Africa in the midst of famine, tribal wars, and ethnic cleansings by corrupt governments and terrorist factions.

8. Other than what we have already talked about concerning verses 34-35, what else might Matthew be communicating here by placing these verses here in the midst of these parables? Again showing for any that might be asking how Jesus' behavior and teaching fulfills Scripture.

D. And yet more parables- Matthew 13:44-52

1. Given what we have talked about in the last 4 parables, what would you say is the overarching sub-theme(s) of these 4 parables? That the Kingdom of heaven is a treasure!
2. How do these parables encourage us to examine our values?
 - a. Christ has said up to this point that what we should most value is Christ and His kingdom and the fact that we are part of that kingdom...if not then we are no better than those who are totally confused by these parables.
 - b. He reminds us that the true value of the kingdom is hidden to some.
 - c. He reminds us that belonging to the kingdom is worth more than everything else.
 - d. He teaches us that though the kingdom is mixed in this age, yet it will be purified in the judgment. And if we are truly citizens of the Lord Jesus' kingdom, then these truths will make a practical difference in our lives, in our thoughts, in our attitudes, and in our priorities.
 - e. When I read of this kingdom that's worth more than everything else. I am left with asking myself some important questions: "Is it really? Is it really worth more than anything else for me? Is it worth more than money? Is it worth more than relationships? Is it worth more than children? Is it worth more than family? Is it worth more than status? Is it worth more than influence? Is it worth more than popularity or beauty? Is it worth more than anything in my life? Am I ready to say I will give up everything if only I can rest assured in a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and be a part of His kingdom? Is that where I am?"
3. What are some practical every day lessons we can learn from these parables?
 - a. Zachary said, *"We need to learn the stories"*...i.e.- God's Word!
 - b. That we should live with a sense of urgency for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
 - c. True disciples come from all walks of life...farmers, wives, merchants, fishermen, scribes (read preachers/teacher).
 - d. True disciples are fishers of men...starting with our children and then moving out to the world around us.
 - e. True disciples are those who recognize that God's kingdom is so valuable that it is worth whatever sacrifice it takes to be its citizens.
 - f. We must embrace God's truth as the treasure of life.
 - g. We are to seek with all our power to understand it. Matthew Henry, said, *"It is the will of Christ that those who read and hear the word should understand it. It is therefore good for us, when we have read or heard the word, to examine ourselves, and to be examined as to whether we have understood it or not."* (See also Rev. 1:3)
 - h. Just like in the last parable...vs. 52...all who "find" these treasures are meant ultimately to tell others about what they have found, they are meant to share what they have found with others...our faith is to be on display for all to see.
 - i. Based on the last parable in vs.52...that as a preacher I must be faithful to sharing the true word of God all the time.
4. There is urgency in each of the people illustrated in these parables but especially the ones here in this latter section of Matthew 13. What are some reasons why we don't live with such urgency before the face of God today?
 - a. We don't always tell the truth...completely!... Look at vs. 51, and then think back to what we know about the disciples and their responses and behaviors elsewhere in the Gospels. Do you

think they entirely understand... or maybe they are just a little faking it, hoping to pick up what they need to know as time goes on?

- b. We are generally selfish, self-centered people even in our redeemed place before God. Our forgetfulness about what is ultimately important is easily replaced with what is important at the moment.
- c. As a fallen people we do not appreciate things unless we can relate to them physically...family, friends, and pets. And even these things that are closest to us we take for granted.
- d. As a people we don't often truly sacrifice anything or truly give ourselves to service to others without thinking of what we might get out of it. We don't count the cost and seek to give even more for Christ who gave it all for us.
- e. We don't really believe in hell as a dangerous place. I find it interesting that Jesus talks so much about hell and judgment and we, the Church, do not. Polls can tell us something:
 - (1) 84% of Americans believe in some kind of afterlife.
 - (2) 82% say they believe in heaven.
 - (3) 75% believe the Bible is God's Word
 - (4) 69% say they believe in some kind of hell...various explanations about what that means...from a hot beach to continual everlasting punishment.
 - (5) Almost no believes that he or she is going to hell.

E. Jesus at Nazareth- 13:53-58

- 1. In many places in the chapters we have considered up to this point we have seen that the people were "amazed" or "astonished" at Jesus' teaching. How would you describe what "astonished" means hear? They are indignant...they are unbelievers. They are offended by His teachings. They are upset...what right does He have to set Himself up like this...who is He really to us? (See Jer. 11:2-21, 12:6)
- 2. Why doesn't Jesus do more miracles in His hometown to substantiate who He is? Since there appears to be little no belief here...why waste the energy which is a judgment on them.

Next time: Chapter 14

Matthew Bible Study
October 7, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

5. What did we see last time that was the primary purpose of parables?
 - d. Judgment! The disciples seemed to know this from the OT teachings...hence the need or desire to ask Jesus why He was using such an obvious teaching style (vs. 10-11). Specifically vs 11b-13 speaks to what most of the people would here...dare I say all except the disciples.
 - e. Secondary purpose? Blessing of God's people! Vs. 11a
6. What are some practical every day lessons we can learn from these parables?
 - j. Zachary said, *"We need to learn the stories"*...i.e.- God's Word!
 - k. That we should live with a sense of urgency for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
 - l. True disciples come from all walks of life...farmers, wives, merchants, fishermen, scribes (read preachers/teacher).
 - m. True disciples are fishers of men...starting with our children and then moving out to the world around us.
 - n. True disciples are those who recognize that God's kingdom is so valuable that it is worth whatever sacrifice it takes to be its citizens.
 - o. We must embrace God's truth as the treasure of life.
 - p. We are to seek with all our power to understand it. Matthew Henry, said, *"It is the will of Christ that those who read and hear the word should understand it. It is therefore good for us, when we have read or heard the word, to examine ourselves, and to be examined as to whether we have understood it or not."* (See also Rev. 1:3)
7. There is urgency in each of the people illustrated in these parables but especially the ones here in this latter section of Matthew 13. What should we do today to "re-capture" that urgency in our own lives? A reverence for the Word leads to see it as a great treasure that you can't do without!

C. Matthew Chapter 14

1. Matthew 14:1-12

- a. A Little history...(just cause it seems appropriate). The line of the Herods is not an easy one to map with so much intermarriage and so many similar names but let's give at least the main characters a go for our purposes here. King Herod (who came to be known as Herod the Great, was from the line of Esau, who by this time were mortal enemies of the Israelites... much like the Palestinians today), was what was called a client or vassal king of the Roman Empire. He ruled Judea from around 37BC until his death approximately 4BC. When he died, his kingdom was divided among his heirs into several parts. His son Archelaus became the ethnarch (a ruler over a nation, one rank lower than a king) of Judea, the territory that included Jerusalem. Herod's son Antipas (known as Herod Antipas), was called a tetrarch (one ran lower than an ethnarch...ruling a smaller territory). He ruled over an area west of the Sea of Galilee and another to the east of the Jordan, known as Perea. Though he was officially a tetrarch he assumed to himself the title of king. Another of Herod's sons, Philip, half-brother of Archelaus and Antipas, received a territory east of the Sea of Galilee. The Herod of our account is Antipas.

- b. Why do you suppose Matthew takes this opportunity to recount this event that seems to have taken place awhile back? (See Luke 3:19-20- it appears the John the Baptist was put to death almost 2 years prior to this account.)
- (1) He has just told us that Jesus would recognize that a prophet of God would not be welcome in his own country or house...this was true of John the Baptist even before it was true of Jesus. Confirms for us how the world "feels" about God's servants. And how persecution does await His servants. How ungodly leadership acts towards the truth.
 - (2) This is the fulfillment of John's own prophecy...and Matthew likes to show prophesy fulfilled in his gospel. (John 3:28-30)
 - (3) Given the explanation of the reason for parables, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of heaven, but to them it has not been given."* ... and, *"He who has ears, let him hear."*...Herod Antipas seems to not have heard of Jesus.
 - (4) Places things in historical context so that when the question comes up in Chapter 16 they will have already discussed it.
 - (5) Matthew shows us that John the Baptist followed a long line of martyred OT Prophets...confirming that he is not the Messiah just as he said.
- c. Why would Herod Antipas, by all accounts an intelligent man but with no faith (as was normal for the Herods), react the way he does with such wild conclusions?
- (1) Guilty conscience...his atheism that has led to despair and superstition...fear in the irrational. Prov. 28:1, *"The wicked flee when no one pursues..."* Also, the fools will always fear what they cannot understand... Ps. 14:5, *"They are in great terror for God is with the generation of the righteous."* Even though he doesn't want to believe in such things the reality of the supernatural work of God brings fear on those who will suffer in the end.
 - (2) Fear that his rule would be supplanted...
 - (3) John the Baptist had done no miracles (John 10:41)...so there really wasn't a credible reason to say what he said other than fear...something that the Herods were prone to and something the people hated because this is when their cruelty would show itself on them usually.

2. Matthew 14:13-21 (See also Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15...Of all the recorded miracles this is the only one that is in all 4 Gospels...and that means it is of utmost important for us to understand.) Matthew chapter 14 you are coming to the end of what biblical scholars call the great Galilean ministry. It's estimated that Jesus began this long ministry in Galilee sometime maybe at the end of the year A.D. 27, maybe in December of AD 27. And that that long ministry in Galilee continued until about April AD 29, so a two year ministry in Galilee is now coming to an end once you have gotten to Matthew chapter 14. William Hendricksen says this: *"One more year and the Lamb of God will by means of His death on a cross render satisfaction for the sins of all who trust in Him."* When you get to this point in Christ's ministry, He is only one year away from the betrayal and crucifixion at Calvary. At this significant point, Jesus performs what is perhaps His most famous miracle--the feeding of 5,000+ in the midst of his ministry on the northeast shore of Galilee.

- a. Mark 6 and Luke 9 tell us of another event that had occurred before this great miracle...and is the sending out of His disciples right after His rejection at Nazareth. They went out proclaiming that the people should repent and they cast out demons and healed many. It is after they returned that this great miracle occurs.
- b. Verse 13 begins, *"Now when Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself."* Heard what? 14:1-2. He heard of what Herod Antipas was saying...and his continual inquiries into this Jesus and He knew He must leave

Galilee...similar to when He was a baby and His parents left. He was not afraid of Herod but He was probably concerned with what he might do if he got more agitated.

c. **Why do you think Jesus goes off seeking solitude with His disciples (as told in the other accounts)?**

- (1) When you have been around crazy people so long you naturally need rest.
- (2) Jesus knew that He needed rest and He desired some solitude. He desired time to pray and to be with His heavenly Father.
- (3) He knew that His disciples were tired as well. So He withdrew from His public ministry, got into a boat with His disciples, went to the other side of the lake seeking some solitude.
- (4) But when He got there the crowds had already anticipated His movements and they had made their way from little towns like Capernaum and elsewhere, to the seashore so that when He stepped out of the boat they were already there. Hundreds and hundreds of them waiting for Him to minister.

d. **What was His response? What would have been your response? When Jesus steps ashore and sees the crowds, His reaction is immediate and instinctive. He does three things when He sees the multitudes.**

- (1) First, Matthew tells us He feels compassion on the multitudes. And this is not simply a feeling; this is not simply an emotional response, because it motivates two more things. The Greek word for compassion is only used in association with Jesus or the Godhead...pointing to the fact that His compassion is different than mere men.
- (2) Next Matthew tells us that He began to heal their sick.
- (3) And though Matthew doesn't tell it, Mark and Luke and John tell us that He not only had compassion on them and healed them, but He also taught them... *"...because they were sheep without a shepherd so He began to teach them many things."*
- (4) And in spite of His own weakness and need for rest He kept this up until late in the day.

(5) **What was the disciples response?...(look at all the accounts)**

- Maybe they were concerned for the people not having anything to eat and drink...but I am not completely buying it. It appears to me that they were annoyed. Have you ever noticed how the disciples often respond to someone coming up to Jesus by a simple "go away"?
- They wanted to rest. They have just returned from a grueling jaunt around the country side and they were probably exhausted.
- Since they are still thinking of an earthly kingdom where they are Jesus' court they were doing what the job would have required...protecting the sovereign from the people.
- Maybe they were concerned for Jesus as well.
- They wanted one on one time with the Master. Not a bad thing but...

e. **What are some things that you can see from all the accounts of the same miracle that Jesus might be wanting to teach the disciples?**

- (1) Patience.
- (2) The ministry often happens when you least expect it...so we need to be ready "in season and out". Life and ministry is not about our personal comforts and needs for those who are called to fulltime pastoral ministry...but about others. Jesus wants them to "see" the need and engage in the ministry just as He does. He wants them to be aware and to seek Him for guidance so He says... "You feed them." Impossible for them but they know the One in whom it is not impossible. He is calling upon them to be shepherds of the flock.
- (3) Jesus is modeling perfectly self-denial...a crucial Christian characteristic...for the sake of ministry and compassion on people who were hardhearted. If you read John 6 which gives a long account of this —it is very clear that the people were quite attracted by Jesus' ability to heal. Surprise, surprise. But they were not interested at all in His claim to be the Messiah who was setting up, not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom.
- (4) **Given the stuff Jesus had been doing why would they doubt Him here?**
 - Maybe they were just simply thinking, "You do it" ...you're the Master...get-r-done and get rid of them...

- Or, Jesus said what He said to them because He had commissioned them with the power to do miracles and they hesitated by such a great need.
 - **And besides what did they have to give?** Jesus the Bread of life...who knows all needs believer and non.
- (5) To look around and understand how God had provided for them up to this point (2 years into Jesus' ministry) and then trust God to provide and to deliver as He has always done. They may not know how He will provide but obviously they had not put 2 and 2 together that it had been God who had been providing for them all along.
- f. **Now, how does Jesus make this happen?**
- (1) By the power of His word. The text says He looked up to heaven (engaging His Father in this miracle...showing us what we should do in similar situations of meeting people's needs) and said a blessing upon the 5 loaves and 2 fishes. It is that simple.
- (2) **If it is that simple, then why have so many questioned the truthfulness of this miracle through the years?** Hard hearts can't believe the truth. People with hard hearts want to question miracles...if they can come up with an explanation then they can mock God...if they can't come up with an explanation then it didn't happen. Or like Israel forefathers who had seen God do such great things in the desert when leaving Egypt they were not elect so they were unaffected by the miracles and so they died in the wilderness.

Matthew Bible Study
October 14, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review- Matthew 14:1-12

1. Why do you suppose Matthew takes this opportunity to recount this event that seems to have taken place awhile back? (See Luke 3:19-20- it appears the John the Baptist was put to death almost 2 years prior to this account.)
 - a. He has just told us that Jesus would recognize that a prophet of God would not be welcome in his own country or house...this was true of John the Baptist even before it was true of Jesus. Confirms for us how the world "feels" about God's servants. And how persecution does await His servants. How ungodly leadership acts towards the truth.
 - b. This is the fulfillment of John's own prophecy...and Matthew likes to show prophesy fulfilled in his gospel. (John 3:28-30)
 - c. Given the explanation of the reason for parables, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of heaven, but to them it has not been given."* ... and, *"He who has ears, let him hear."* ...Herod Antipas seems to not have heard of Jesus.
 - d. Places things in historical context so that when the question comes up in Chapter 16 they will have already discussed it.
2. Now: Read Matthew 14:13-21...What are some things that you can see from all the accounts of the same miracle (See also Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15) that Jesus might be wanting to teach the disciples?
 - a. Patience.
 - b. Jesus' compassion for the masses...expressed indiscriminately to all.
 - c. The ministry often happens when you least expect it...so we need to be ready "in season and out". Life and ministry is not about our personal comforts and needs for those who are called to fulltime pastoral ministry...but about others. Jesus wants them to "see" the need and engage in the ministry just as He does. He wants them to be aware and to seek Him for guidance so He says... "You feed them." Impossible for them but they know the One in whom it is not impossible. He is calling upon them to be shepherds of the flock.
 - d. Jesus is modeling perfectly self-denial...a crucial Christian characteristic...for the sake of ministry and compassion on people who were hardhearted. If you read John 6 which gives a long account of this —it is very clear that the people were quite attracted by Jesus' ability to heal. Surprise, surprise. But they were not interested at all in His claim to be the Messiah who was setting up, not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom.

C. Matthew 14:13-21 continued...

1. All through Matthews's gospel he shows us how Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT promise.
 - a. God, through Moses, had provided manna to the children of Israel in the wilderness.
 - b. God, through Elijah, provided a continuous supply of flour and oil for a widow in need.
 - c. God, through Elisha, fed 100 men with only 20 barley loaves and had some left over.
 - d. God, though His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, fed 5,000 and more (probably at minimum 15,000 people...speculation would be to figure a wife and at least 3 children which would make the number more like 25, 000, and since they usually had more children than that ...oh well)...but we don't know how many more. The writers just tell us 5,000 men...we just don't know how many women and children were there; and there were 12 baskets left over.
 - e. The Lord is showing us here His exceeding sufficiency. Listen to what Matthew Henry says: *"Those whom Christ feeds He fills."* See, He didn't give them a little bit of food. He gave them enough to eat until they were satisfied. (vs. 20) And He had 12 baskets leftover and Matthew Henry observes, *"One for each apostle."* For they had complained that there wouldn't be enough! Christ is more than sufficient for every need we have.

1. Like the disciples, why don't we trust and believe that God through Christ is sufficient?
 - a. We are limited and can't comprehend the unlimited nature and actions of God in Christ.
 - b. The only thing standing between us and His filling of that need is our willingness to admit we have a need, but you see we are prideful and we don't want to admit that we are poor and in need of compassion. We don't want to admit that we are sinners who have offended Him and offended one another. When we act this way we show forth the reality...we do not believe.
 - c. Mark 9:24- *"I believe; help my unbelief."* Can we...do we really believe in these miracles?
2. This miracle is the only miracle that is recorded in all 4 Gospels...bottom line it for us...why is this one so important?
 - a. So that we will remember the sufficiency of God.
 - b. Common grace of God is evident. God provides for believer and non-believer more than we can ever imagine.
 - c. The power of prayer...He simply lifts His head in expectation and gives thanks and God the Father provides.
 - d. We have a hard time comprehending the scope of such provision...the sheer size of it boggles our minds making it "harder" to believe.

D. Matthew 14:22-33

1. Since the disciples were having such a hard time trusting in His power what does Jesus do next for them?
 - a. Sends them off across the lake, then He sends the people home because He perceived that they would come in force to make Him their king(John 6:15) and then He goes off to pray.
 - b. Jesus leaves them on the lake for a long time battling the conditions. He had trained them well and He now left them for a while...stretching them and growing them in the midst of the gale. Character and leadership are strengthened in adversity.
 - c. Then He came to them and what a way to come...Half way across the lake they got the scare of their lives...Jesus comes walking across the waters towards them.
2. Why do you suppose they were so afraid/terrified?
 - a. Too dark for them?
 - b. Sea too rough.
 - c. They saw the impossible "again" and it was too much for them at the time.
 - d. They couldn't make any headway... it appears that they were headed into the winds...and were stuck in the middle of the Sea of Galilee.
 - e. They had grown too dependent on Jesus?...while we ARE to be dependent upon Christ for everything we are then to use what we have been given and not be paralyzed but do!
 - f. Late in the morning...4th watch- between 3-6 am. So they were exhausted...long week of ministry then a long day, lots of people, pressure from Jesus to do something they were not prepared to do, then there was the miracle and all the euphoria that would have come with that, and now the wind that will not let them get to the other side.
 - g. A darkness seems to fall upon us all when we perceive we are out of God's presence. They were out of His presence for a long time...maybe as much as 6-10 hours.
3. What was Jesus' response? What is always His response to us being wrongly fearful...in distress? *"Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid."*
 - a. *"Take heart"* - they would have heard His voice and immediately been calmed yet still somewhat confused.
 - b. Next he said, *"It is I. Don't be afraid."* The Lord Jesus speaks His word of peace, and suddenly again they realize His sheer power over nature. They had seen Him command the wind to stop on this lake. They had seen Him do it: "Stop." They had seen Him the day before turn 5 loaves and 2 fishes into a meal for 5,000 plus people and have 12 baskets left over. They had seen His command, His power over nature. Now, they were watching Him walk on water.

- c. Interesting observation: Philip Doddridge, a Puritan from the 18th century says that “The Egyptian sign, the hieroglyph, for an impossible thing, is two feet on water.” I don't know. I don't read Egyptian hieroglyphics. But if that is, I couldn't think of a better sign of something impossible than two feet on water.
 - d. One more observation: The Greek actually says, *“It is I am who I am. Do not be afraid.”* So at that moment He revealed to them that He is God and He, that is God, was coming to them...as God comes to all of us in our time of need. And that would have settled their heart just as it should ours.
 - e. Now this should have been enough to satisfy them, but...
4. **What does Peter do?** After asking permission Peter gets out of the boat and for a moment he walks on the water.
5. **And what does Jesus reveal to Peter and to us as well at that time?**
- a. Jesus reveals that He is sufficient. Peter knew he couldn't do this on his own so he asked Jesus to command it and he went. By the power of His Word. One little word... “Come.” That is all and he went.
 - b. Peter's response was instinctive. It was an act of faith. The opposite of the fear, which he and all the other members of that boat had been expressing a few minutes ago. It was an act of recognition. He saw that it was his Lord. The word “if” there should be translated *“since”* and so it would read *“since it is you, Lord, let me come to you.”* And his act was an act of trust. Sounds like Peter had a lot of faith. He asked properly and he responded to the Lord's call. He even cried out to Jesus to save him when he began to sink from his being distracted.
6. **So, let's say this is all true about Peter, why then does the Lord say, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt.”?**
- a. Jesus is simply pointing out the obvious concerning the general weakness of all men...a statement of fact...in this life we are easily distracted from Him...like a child who is easily distracted...it doesn't mean necessarily that they don't love the parents when they take their attention off of them...it is just part of their nature. Peter turns away in that moment and he begins to sink but turns immediately back to God and Jesus saves him just as He has always promised to do when we turn to Him in faith.
 - b. Many say that Peter could have walked further if he had just had enough faith. Well, he had already exhibited more faith than most of us ever would. So that can't be it! Peter showed great faith at this point in his life, but he took his eyes off Christ for the moment and looked at the sea...he made the sea the object of his focus and he began to sink.
 - c. This tells us that we must remember, it is not the strength of faith that saves us, it is the object of faith that saves us - the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not the strength of our faith in Christ that saves us. It's Christ that saves us. And when our focus is taken off of Him even for a moment, our faith falters..., it is that easy to falter, but “Take heart; His hand is there to catch us!”
7. **Again, we see Jesus great patience and grace towards His own. How did He respond?**
- a. Not like we would respond...letting Peter get good and wet to prove the point... or berating Peter for being so weak in his faith...though we would be missing the point...since he did have faith ...imperfect as it was ...in the object of his faith to save him...Jesus Christ.
 - b. Yes, Jesus chastised Peter for doubting but only after He caught him and kept him from sinking into the deep.
8. **I don't know about you but I always come away from this story wondering why Peter wanted out of the boat in the first place? What does this event mean for me?** Often in our lives we get all “uppity” in our faith. We “feel” we are super spiritual...super faithful and we jump out without thinking. We exhibit faith...or at least it looks like that at the time...by jumping into some kind of ministry to be able to use all the wonderful faith God has given

me...all my zeal and all my energy is poured into this moment... without even thinking. Seeking to show how strong my faith really is...maybe without even consciously thinking that at the moment. Peter has a tendency to leap before he looks or considers the ramifications of his actions or words...(See John 13:36-38). So I am left wondering if maybe...just maybe...Peter would have shown more and more trust in Jesus had he just waited on Christ to come and give him directions rather than being presumptuous on Jesus' grace?

9. Tell me, when you hear the disciples exclaim, *"Truly you are the Son of God"*, what do you think of this profession?

- a. It could show how shallow their faith is...how immature ...actually similar to the people that needed the miracles to keep them going. Their "faith" it seems in this instance is based on what they saw Jesus do rather than on who He is.
- b. Or...since it begins by saying, *"And those who were in the boat worshiped Him"*...maybe just maybe there is more going on than my first comments allows...and maybe just maybe there is more maturity than exhibited elsewhere...but after being with this man for 2 plus years at this point they still wonder "who" He is given their reaction at the feeding of the 5000 and here and then again in Matthew 16 when He asks them who they say He is...only Peter, once again speaks up.
- c. They show us that we all struggle with "belief. And need to constantly be seeking forgiveness for this and asking God to "help our unbelief?"

E. Matthew 14:34-36- How do these verses fit with the rest of chapter 14?

1. People are drawn to Him...in every generation, even those who seek to discredit Him are drawn to Him.
2. Jesus' mercy and might are set forth again. And we Christians can never reflect too often on the compassion and power of Jesus Christ. And there's another multitude waiting for Him to minister to them. In fact, it is very clear again that these people did not come to Him because they wanted to hear Him preach. They didn't want to hear Him preach. They didn't want to hear His claims. They wanted Him to heal. And yet our Lord, in His mercy, heals them. Though He knows that they do not trust in Him as a disciple, but yet in His mercy He heals these multitudes that come to Him. (Think common grace.)
3. The point is that Christ has power and love which stagger our imagination. And Jesus' mercy to these undeserving multitudes is a call, an emphatic call, to us to show the same kind of mercy to those who are undeserving, in our experience.

Next time: Chapter 15

Matthew Bible Study
October 21, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review- Matthew 14:22-33

1. Since the disciples were having such a hard time trusting in His power what does Jesus do next for them?
 - a. Jesus sends them off across the lake.
 - b. Jesus leaves them on the lake for a long time battling the conditions. He had trained them well and He now left them for a while...stretching them and growing them in the midst of the gale. Character, faith and leadership are strengthened in adversity.
 - c. Then He came to them and what a way to come...Half way across the lake they got the scare of their lives...Jesus comes walking across the waters towards them.
2. And what does Jesus reveal in this miracle to Peter and to us as well?
 - c. His compassion for "all" people.
 - d. Jesus reveals that He is sufficient. Peter knew he couldn't do this on his own so he asked Jesus to command it and he went. By the power of His Word. One little word... "Come." That is all and he went.
 - e. Peter's response was instinctive. It was an act of faith. The opposite of the fear, which he and all the other members of that boat had been expressing a few minutes ago. It was an act of recognition. He saw that it was his Lord. The word "if" there should be translated "*since*" and so it would read "*since it is you, Lord, let me come to you.*" And his act was an act of trust. Sounds like Peter had a lot of faith. He asked properly and he responded to the Lord's call. He even cried out to Jesus to save him when he began to sink from his being distracted.
3. So, let's say this is all true about Peter, why then does the Lord say, "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt.*"?
 - d. Jesus is simply pointing out the obvious concerning the general weakness of all men...a statement of fact...in this life we are easily distracted from Him...like a child who is easily distracted...it doesn't mean necessarily that they don't love the parents when they take their attention off of them...it is just part of their nature. Peter turns away in that moment and he begins to sink but turns immediately back to God and Jesus saves him just as He has always promised to do when we turn to Him in faith. It is important to remember that "our" faith is fragile...weaker than it should be...Oh, in Christ we can do anything...but "our" faith is fragile easily distracted.
 - e. Many say that Peter could have walked further if he had just had enough faith. Well, he had already exhibited more faith than most of us ever would. So that can't be it! Peter showed great faith at this point in his life, but he took his eyes off Christ for the moment and looked at the sea...he made the sea the object of his focus and he began to sink.
 - f. This tells us that we must remember, it is not the strength of faith that saves us, it is the object of faith that saves us - the Lord Jesus Christ. And when our focus is taken off of Him even for a moment, our faith falters..., it is that easy to falter, but "Take heart; His hand is there to catch us!"

C. Matthew 15:1-14 (See also Mark 7:1-23)

1. Notice, these Pharisees came to Jesus from Jerusalem. These were not local Pharisees and Scribes. These came from Jerusalem making their way all the way to where Jesus was ministering for the expressed purpose of stopping Him in His tracks. We may read between the lines as to what may have happened. This young Rabbi was making great waves in Israel. He was collecting a tremendous following, and someone in the region who had heard

Jesus writes to some like-minded friends in Jerusalem, and says, “Look somebody has got to come up here and straighten this man out, because there are a lot of the things that He says that are right, many of the things are in direct contradiction to the Rabbis, and we’ve got to get someone up here who knows some theology.” And so off from Jerusalem go these Scribes and Pharisees for the purpose of setting the Lord Jesus Christ straight. And when they meet Him, their first word of accusation to Him is this: “You allow your disciples to boldly, openly confound and neglect the tradition of the elders. Why they don’t even practice the sacred tradition of ceremonial hand washing.” But what Jesus is going to show in this passage is that the things that THEY ADDED actually took away from the authorities of God’s word.

2. Why do the Pharisees and scribes refer to the traditions of the elders as they do (vs.1-2)?
 - a. Some history... Over the centuries since the Jews’ return from the Babylonian captivity, hundreds of religious traditions sprung up and were added to God’s laws. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law considered them all equally important. Many traditions are not bad in themselves...certain ones can add to the richness and meaning of life and worship...but we should never believe that just because certain traditions have been practiced for years that they should be elevated to the same level as Scripture. Traditions may help us to understand God’s Word better but they do not ever become laws themselves.
 - b. They were under the assumption that they had the right to legislate further than God’s word...after all in their mind, at least at first and maybe even later they were seeking to protect the people from God’s wrath so they came up with more laws since the former generations had not been obedient to God...hence they were cast into exile. Because they were still under the assumption that the only way you got close to God was by keeping the law perfectly.
 - c. See note in ESV Study Bible- The oral law... *“the traditions of the elders”* ... The Mishnah...was considered as having equal authority as with the written law...with God’s own Word. And this oral tradition spoken of here in Matthew 15 was eventually compiled into a book called the Mishnah, and then there was a commentary on the Mishnah that was eventually called the Talmud. I have been told and I have read from other authors that there’s a passage in the Talmud that says, “The teaching of the rabbi’s is more important than the Law.” And those things are around still today.
 - d. And by the way, this exchange here also reminds us of another truth that our mother’s taught us when we were young: The road to destruction is paved with good intentions. There is no doubt that the Pharisees, when they began their work on more laws, did it with the best of intentions.

3. What is it about this charge that the disciples are neglecting the sacred tradition of not washing their hands when they eat? Why do they start charging with this one, first?
 - a. They were not charging Jesus with being, as it were, a bad mother who didn’t have his children wash their hands before a meal. This is not a hygienic charge that they are bringing.
 - b. In the tradition of the elders, there was a great concern for the obedience to certain of the stipulations of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament. Cleanliness was a condition of holiness...so...
 - (1) One of those stipulations says that if you were to come into contact with something which was unclean, you were, therefore, unfit for worship before the living God. And, therefore, you had to go through a purification rite before you were ready again to serve the Lord in worship.
 - (2) Now, somewhere along the line the Pharisees decided that you may be going through a marketplace and you might accidentally pick up unclean food. You don’t eat it, you just accidentally touch it. Or you might be going through the marketplace and you might

accidentally brush into a Gentile, a filthy, unbelieving Gentile. And then before you come to sit down for a meal, you've been defiled.

- (3) So they legislated a solution for that...to institute a new practice, the practice of ceremonial washing so that you lift up your hands, you have water poured over your hands, and therefore if you were to become accidentally unclean by someone or something, you will have been ceremonially/ ritually washed, and thereby able to partake of the meal.
- c. Now the disciples were not doing that. They were not ritually washing their hands, and the Pharisees basically say to Him, "Jesus, do you realize what a bad example these people are setting for all the other godly people in Israel? They are not following the traditions of the elders in Israel.

4. What is Jesus' reply to them in vs. 3-9? What is He saying to them?

- a. You gotta love it ...He basically calls them the "pot"...that is in the "pot calling the kettle black".
- b. He doesn't answer their question but poses a pointed question Himself back to them. The Pharisees had attacked His disciples. Jesus responded directly to them. Jesus responded by saying, *"Why do you break the commandments of God?"* And so in an exact parallel, Jesus responds to the Pharisees.

5. What particular tradition of men was He talking about and how does it break the commandments of God?

- a. He juxtaposes God's commandment in verse 4 with the teaching of the elders, a teaching that these Pharisees have either invented or endorsed in verse 5 called the Rule of Corban... an offering to God...(see Mark 7:11).
 - (1) If your parents who were needy saw something of yours, materially, furniture, money, other resources that might help them in their time of need, they might ask you. But if you pronounce that that particular resource was Corban, that it was a gift of God or was devoted to God, then that gift could be legally and ethically withheld from your parents even though they were in need.
 - (2) Anyone who made a Corban vow was required to dedicate money ...the worth of the item...to God's temple that otherwise might have gone to support his parents in their later years. Corban had become a religiously acceptable way to neglect parents...so they wouldn't be a drain on the kids...circumventing God's law that required them to take care of their parents.
 - (3) The practice conferred prestige on the giver because this act was a public act...and these religious leaders were allowing such an injustice of the word of God to occur and many suffered because of their desire to fill the Temple coffers.
 - (4) And the Lord Jesus says that by inventing that practice, you have actually circumvented the whole point of the commandment of God in honoring and caring for your parents. And so, He says, by your traditions you have made the word of God null and void. In other words, your traditions, rather than upholding the word of God, has actually undercut the authority of the word of God, by adding to God's word, you have taken away from God's word.
- b. Jesus' criticism is that they have undercut the authority of God's word. (vs. 6b-7a) They are ignoring God's law, and they are undercutting their authority by adding to it. And in fact, it is Jesus who is the one who is upholding the law and not them as they say, and He illustrates the reason why they are doing this is because their hearts are not right vs. 8-9. These verses come from Isaiah 29:13 and Ezek. 33:31.

6. Why is Isaiah quoted so much in the NT? (Isaiah seems to be Jesus' go to guy.)

- a. For emphasis! The Pharisees and the Scribes were always bringing up Isaiah in their illustrations and their interpretation of what they said the Word meant.
- b. The people, too, would have had a knowledge of this particular prophet...so Jesus calls upon their knowledge of the scriptures to expose the hypocrisy of the leaders.

7. What specifically is Jesus saying to and about these religious leaders in front of the people? By using this passage from Isaiah 29 and Ezek. 33, He tells them that they prefer lip service over real worship of the Lord. That their hearts, though they pretend to love the Lord are, in fact, far away from Him. That their worship is empty, it is vain, it is mere form, and they are following a manmade religion to doctrines of precepts of men.

8. What is Jesus communicating to the people by using the imagery of the law here in verse 10-11?
 - a. The words *"Hear and understand"* at the beginning of this statement is designed to warn them and us that something important is about to be said. You need to really listen closely because something very significant is going to be said.
 - b. Here Jesus is telling us about the nature of true holiness, and He's warning the crowds about the teachings of the Pharisees.
 - c. Jesus says something that would have absolutely horrified the scribes and the Pharisees. He says that, *"Moral defilement is more important than ritual defilement."* Now these are the people who love the ceremonial law. And what's more, they love all the additions to that code that has been passed down by their elders, the Rabbis. The implication of Jesus' statement is that He is abolishing the ceremonial code for His followers under the covenant. Mark makes that clear in Mark chapter 7: 19. Mark adds this comment after the passage (that is like the one in our text), *"He made all foods clean."* In other words, He's saying that no longer was the ceremonial requirement valid for all the followers of the Lord with regard to clean and unclean food.
 - d. Jesus, in verse 11, is aiming for the heart. He is telling us that it is not what is superficial that makes this holy. J.C. Ryle: *"What is the first thing we need in order to be a Christian? A new heart. What is the sacrifice God asks us to bring to Him? A broken and a contrite heart. What is the true circumcision? The circumcision of the heart. What is genuine obedience. To obey from the heart. What is saving faith? To believe with the heart. Where ought Christ to dwell? To dwell in our hearts by faith. What is the chief request that wisdom makes to everyone? My Son, give me your heart."*
 - e. And so He warns the crowd that it's not the things that enter into them that make them unclean. It's what's on the inside that makes them unclean....and that needs to be cleaned and made holy....and these manmade rules will not do that!

9. What is Jesus' warning to His disciples in vs 12-14?
 - a. Look at how this passage goes. The Pharisees come to Him in verses 1 and 2. In verses 3 through 9, He turns to the Pharisees and responds to them. In verses 10 and 11, He turns to the crowd, and He warns the crowd. In verses 12 through 14, He now turns to His disciples and speaks. In responding to His disciples, He reminds them of the importance of right doctrine. His disciples come to Him, and they make a clueless comment. This is perhaps, in all the stupid statements of the disciples, the most stupid statement that they ever made. *"Master, are you aware that what you just said offended the Pharisees?"*
 - b. Why would they make such a statement?
 - (1) Maybe it is because of the fear of rejection by men...that is the crowds...if Jesus is too harsh against the leaders people might walk away.
 - (2) Or maybe it is the fear of men from the perspective that they are "hedging their bets"...in that, it may show a lack of trust once again on their part for Jesus...what if He isn't the Messiah...then we better not "tick" the religious leaders off too much since maybe they hold the right way to heaven.
 - c. What do you think? What was Jesus' purpose in saying the things He says in public to the Pharisees and to the people?
 - (1) He meant it to offend them. That was precisely His purpose to show them that He had no time for their teaching...that it was not what God taught, and that He was offended by it Himself.

- (2) So He goes on to say, *"Let me warn you against being too swayed by what the Pharisees think."* They are not who you think they are...they are not men of God and so their teachings are irrelevant.
- (3) Jesus seems to be seeking to address the 2 possible reasons referenced above for their making such an outrageous statement. This parable is like the parable of the weeds...we need not fear the crowds or the leaders...The Lord will deal with each on the Day of His return.
- (4) He is telling His disciples here that false doctrine kills. It is like the blind leading the blind. False doctrine leads us in the false ways of living. Jesus is alerting us to the spiritual danger of false teaching here by reminding us of its two consequences. False teaching leads to judgment by God, and unfortunately, false teaching leads many astray into false ways of living. Bad doctrine will lead to bad practice.
- (5) He reminds His disciples and thus us as well about this "basic" issue because we are so weak and so easily distracted and so easily swayed by the arguments of others. In the flesh we seek to find appeasement on every side...we seek to be peacekeepers rather than peacemakers which holds each side to the same standard... God's! We too easily seek to make everyone comfortable when that just may not be the best course of action to bring God glory.

10. So...with all of this background what are some applications for us today?

- a. Are we more concerned about our man-made customs/ traditions of the church..."we have always done it that way" than we are of the very commands of the word of God?
- b. Or do we long for and desire to sound truth of the word, so that it might work forth by God's grace in transforming our lives from the inside out?
- c. Do we practice a biblical Christian liberty?

Next Time: 15:15-39

Matthew Bible Study
October 28, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review-Matthew 15:1-14

1. In what ways do the traditions of these religious leaders and the law of God stand at polar opposites?
2. This is not the first time Jesus has had this conversation with these leaders. What was the result of the last confrontation on such matter? (See Sermon of the Mount.)
3. Verses 15-20 basically reiterate what Jesus had already said to His disciples and to the crowds and the religious leaders. What was Jesus' purpose in saying the things He says in public to the Pharisees and to the people?
 - a. He meant it to offend them. That was precisely His purpose to show them that He had no time for their teaching...that it was not what God taught, and that He was offended by it Himself.
 - b. So He goes on to say, *"Let me warn you against being too swayed by what the Pharisees think."* They are not who you think they are...they are not men of God and so their teachings are irrelevant.
 - c. Jesus seems to be seeking to address the 2 possible reasons referenced last week for the disciples making such an outrageous statement. This parable is like the parable of the weeds...we need not fear the crowds or the leaders...The Lord will deal with each on the Day of His return.
 - d. He points out the basic problem...the heart! There, evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts lies and blasphemy is born and gives birth to sin in words and actions. James 1:15 says, *"When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, when it is full-grown, it brings forth death."*
 - e. He is telling His disciples here that false doctrine kills. It is like the blind leading the blind. False doctrine leads us in the false ways of living. Jesus is alerting us to the spiritual danger of false teaching here by reminding us of its two consequences. False teaching leads to judgment by God, and unfortunately, false teaching leads many astray into false ways of living. Bad doctrine will lead to bad practice.
 - f. He reminds His disciples and thus us as well about this "basic" issue because we are so weak and so easily distracted and so easily swayed by the arguments of others. In the flesh we seek to find appeasement on every side...we seek to be peacekeepers rather than peacemakers which holds each side to the same standard... God's! We too easily seek to make everyone comfortable when that just may not be the best course of action to bring God glory.

C. Matthew 15:21-28 (See also Mark 7:24-30)...Jesus leaves the area of Galilee and went in a most unexpected direction...Phoenicia, which was part of the Roman province of Syria. Both cities exist today as part of the country of Lebanon. This is the only time that Jesus left the ancient borders of Israel and went into a primarily pagan land. Interesting fun fact: At the time of the allocation of the inheritances of the land by Joshua Tyre was within the borders of the inheritance of the tribe of Asher, but had not ever been really subdued.

1. What is the significance of Matthew pointing out the fact that this woman is a Canaanite?
 - a. The worst of the Gentiles...mortal enemies...a constant reminder of how their ancestors did not fulfill the law of God and devote them all to Him when they possessed the land.
 - b. True Jews had no contact with these people...
 - c. But Jesus does...or will.

2. Mark calls her *“a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth”*. Have we just found a contradiction in Scripture? If not, how do you explain this?
3. Now what would be considered remarkable about this woman’s appeal to Jesus? Why?
 - a. Duh! She’s a woman and she is a Gentile...that is remarkable in itself...not going to let such “minor” things deter her from the Lord.
 - b. She addresses Jesus as *Lord, Son of David*. If she had simply said Lord we could have marked it up as a title of respect but she also called Him, *“Son of David”*, which adds knowledge to her request concerning Jesus being the Messiah...the prophesied One. Matthew begins this gospel with calling Jesus the Son of David. So is this woman a woman of faith...newly converted and believing? Hard to say...is she like the God-fearing centurion...once again it is hard to say? But the gospel is for all His people in every nation, tongue and tribe.
 - c. She, like the centurion before her, were willing to identify Him as the Messiah when so many in Israel...most all of the crowds He had just been with...were unwilling to do so. Jesus said of the centurion, *“Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have a found such faith.”*
4. Given all that we talked about in Chapter 14, why would you think that Jesus is silent in vs 23?
 - a. Remember, this is unlike any response we have seen from Jesus before concerning the urgent pleas of someone in true need. His ministry was marked as we have said with compassion for the believer and the non-believer.
 - b. Obviously, she immediately turns to His disciples to heal her daughter...remember they had been sent out and commissioned for just such a reason...remember also, Jesus had been placing more and more responsibility upon the disciples...Jesus did tell the disciples to feed the 5000, after all. Word about Jesus had gotten to Phoenicia...there is no reason to think that word about His disciples hadn’t also reached Phoenicia.
 - c. So was His silence to see what His disciples would do? I think so. He had been testing them...stretching them...preparing them for the ministry.
5. What did the disciples do then?
 - a. They pushed her back to Him ...expecting Him to fix her problem or worse yet and probably more to the point ...send her away because she is a Gentile and even worse...a Canaanite.
 - b. Had they learned nothing yet? Jesus had shown them to be merciful and compassionate. As long as they were in Israel and He could heal Jews...they were okay with that...even being concerned that He might offend the religious leaders who were obviously blaspheming God and His Word...but then to heal a Canaanite was seemingly too much for them...even though that is apparently why Jesus went into the mostly gentile area.
6. What was Jesus’ response and why? (vs. 24 and 26)
 - a. Jesus’ words do not contradict the truth that God’s word is for His people from every tribe, nation and tongue. (See Ps. 22:27-31; Is. 56:6-8; Rom. 15:8-12). After all, Jesus had come into this region it seems to minister on a mission to the Gentile peoples in fulfillment to the OT prophesy concerning the rescue of God’s people from among the Gentiles.
 - b. It seems like Paul, who also had a dual ministry...to the Gentiles and to the Jews...He was making it clear what His first priority was...to the “lost” sheep of Israel...the elect in Israel.
 - c. He was not rejecting the woman...simply informing her of His first priority...after all, once again He has come into that region to minister to the Gentiles. In Mark 7:27, the full sentence seems to indicate that the children must eat first...in other words...the elect of Israel would get Him first...they have and for the moment He has come to the Gentiles. But the fullness of their salvation would come after He has gone and won salvation for all His people in all places.

7. Rather than being angry with Jesus for what could be considered insensitive remarks, (and would be in this day and age) what is her response? (vs. 25 and 27)
 - a. Matthew says, "She came and knelt before Him (which is the same word in the Greek for worshiped Him) and cried out saying, *"Lord, help me"*. The 3 most important words any person can utter when they recognize they have come to the end of themselves in the presence of the Lord Jesus.
 - b. She recognized Him as God...the only One who could do as she asks.
 - c. She was persistent...because she seems to know that He WAS the Only help there was. She doesn't argue the cultural point. A dog is a dog...even though within context, interestingly enough He was calling her a dog...."a little dog" which spoke of a house pet of sorts...part of the family...the dog that protected the family and the livestock perhaps...but still part of the family...so as a possible believer He was making a concession that she recognized.
 - d. And she is not presumptuous enough to think she deserve a blessing like the Israelites believed about themselves. She understands her place on the spiritual food chain even if she is a believer at this point...she knows that He owes her nothing... she did not come to Him with a sense of entitlement. Not that much different than Paul recognizing that he was wretched above all men...or Martin Luther calling himself a worm. I absolutely love this quote by Martin Luther; *"The first thing I ask, is that people should not make use of my name, and should not call themselves Lutherans but Christians. What is Luther? The teaching is not mine. Nor was I crucified for anyone... How did I, poor stinking bag of maggots that I am, come to the point where people call the children of Christ by my evil name?"*
8. Jesus does eventually heal her daughter, doing what He had intended to do all along. (vs. 28)- Just like the centurion, Jesus remarks concerning her great faith.
9. What application(s) can we learn from this event?
 - a. Unlike this woman, we all have a tendency to think too highly of ourselves.
 - b. All of us are tempted from time to time into thinking that God owes us a little more than He has given, and/or... that we deserve what He has given to us...and/or that we have earned what He gives us. We feel and believe that we are "entitled". This is deadly thinking!! The only merit we have before a Holy God is the merit of Christ's righteousness given to us...for it is by His grace alone that we enter into His kingdom at all.

D. Matthew 15:29-39

1. What do we see in verses 29-31? Jesus continues to spend time in the mostly Gentile areas north of the Sea of Galilee in the area known as the Decapolis ...He will be crossing back in a bit. Jesus is healing even more Gentiles on His mission to reveal His total Messiahship. The prophets had prophesied that the light would come to the Gentiles and here he is fulfilling those prophecies.
2. How would you define the word *"they wondered"* in this context? Vs. 31 seems to indicate that they held nothing back in glorifying the one true God. The light had come and they would not hide the light under a basket but shine it brightly as a people who had been set free.
3. The feeding of the 4000 (vs. 32-39) is a separate event from the feeding of the 5000 in chapter 14. Some through the years have tried to make them one. Mark 8:19-20 makes that point well. Now what is going on with these guys? Are they suffering from "some-timers" or something? It hadn't been that long since Jesus had fed the multitude in Israel. What is up with them?
 - a. Just like with us, how easily we throw up our hands in despair every time an "impossible" (read difficult) situation presents itself. We often forget, just like the disciples, that if God has cared for us in the past that He will do it in the present and the future.

- b. Just like with us...there may be a bit of prejudice involved here as well. They expected Him to take care of His own people...these are only Gentiles. As His people we must always check ALL our motivations as to why we will or will not minister to someone in need.
- 4. Rather than being upset with His disciples lack of faith, what does He do?
What should this say to us today? Jesus is patient with us and we need to be patient with each other. Our growth curves are all different. We are all hardheaded on any given day and that affects our ability to believe and trust and to “play well” with others.

Matthew Bible Study
November 4, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. We see some interesting behavior by Jesus in Matthew 15:21-28. Give a synopsis of the event and what Jesus was seeking to communicate.
2. What application(s) can we learn from this event?
 - c. Unlike this woman, we all have a tendency to think too highly of ourselves.
 - d. All of us are tempted from time to time into thinking that God owes us a little more than He has given... and/or that we deserve what He has given to us...and/or that we have earned what He gives us. We feel and believe that we are "entitled". This is deadly thinking!! The only merit we have before a Holy God is the merit of Christ's righteousness given to us...for it is by His grace alone that we enter into His kingdom at all.
3. The feeding of the 4000 (vs. 32-39) is a separate event from the feeding of the 5000 in chapter 14. Now what did we say that was going on with these guys? Were they suffering from "some-timers" or something? It hadn't been that long since Jesus had fed the multitude in Israel. What is up with them?
 - c. Just like with us, how easily we throw up our hands in despair every time an "impossible" (read difficult) situation presents itself. We often forget, just like the disciples, that if God has cared for us in the past that He will do it in the present and the future.
 - d. Just like with us...there may be a bit of prejudice involved here as well. They expected Him to take care of His own people...these are only Gentiles. As His people we must always check ALL our motivations as to why we will or will not minister to someone in need.

C. Matthew 16-

1. Matthew 16:1-4

- a. Many people throughout time have said, "If I could just see a real miracle, then I could believe in God." What is wrong with this thinking?
 - (1) We already have had plenty of evidence...Jesus' birth, death, resurrection and ascension, centuries of Him working in other believers, even things like the miracle of birth...all around us there is evidence that there is something/someone greater than us. Instead of looking for more...we need to be satisfied with what God has provided...like His Word and all the rest.
 - (2) Miracles hardly ever really convince the skeptic. You might be swayed for the moment but then they will want more evidence as evidenced by the Pharisees who had already demand a sign before.
 - (3) Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."- John 20:29
- b. In what ways is this demand for a sign different from the same demand in Matthew 12:38-39?
 - (1) The text specifically says this time that they were trying to test Him.
 - (2) First time Jesus confronts and is confronted by the Sadducees. It is strange that these two parties would have even be seen standing in the same space...they did share the Sanhedrin but each group had their own side, if you will. To come together like this shows their mutual distain and distrust for Jesus and that they see Him as a viable threat to all they hold dear.
 - (3) They demanded this time a sign "from heaven"...before the Pharisees and the scribes asked for a sign "from Him"... A sign from heaven means they were trying to explain away His other multiple miracles as some kind of shell game or coincidence, or even use of evil

powers. They wanted something more from Jesus since many of the past prophets had done similar things. Both of these groups agreed that only God could do a sign from heaven...in the sky.

- c. **What was Jesus' response?** Interestingly, Jesus gives them a natural sign using their own hypocrisy against them. ..They are better weathermen than they are theologians and Bible scholars. Just seeking after a sign...wanting something more proves they are a wicked and adulterous generation worthy only of condemnation.
- d. **Why didn't He do something spectacular that could have proven once and for all that He was who He said He was?** He could have easily impressed them...think making the Sun and Moon standing still...or was that making the earth stop rotating? ☺ ☺ But He refused, knowing that it would do no good... for they were lost... most all of them were not to be saved...God had not elected most of them.
- e. **What did He mean by bringing up the sign of Jonah thing again?** Only the sign of Jonah was necessary. In other words...enough signs had been given nothing but the end would satisfy them...and even that...His death and resurrection they would seek to conceal and lie about. See Matthew 28:11-15.

2. Matthew 16:5-12

- a. **What lesson is Jesus seeking to teach His disciples?** (They had just gotten there for some reason. They should have left when He did but they didn't get there until after Jesus has this confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees.)
 - a. They were so concerned that the Master would be upset that they didn't bring any bread with them...as if it was necessary...that they once again were more consumed with themselves than with what Jesus was saying. Just like us ...we often have something else on our mind when we should be concerned with what the Lord has to say...like in worship or in study.
 - b. *"O you of little faith"* was becoming a catch phrase like "padowan" ... He could always sense when they were confused...and He knew when they hadn't learned the lesson He had proposed... so He tells them that they should have known that He could provide bread and meet all the necessary needs.
 - c. Also He repeats what He has just said so that they could knock out the cobwebs and understand...after He points out their weakness.
 - d. He wants to make sure that they do not think as they once did. That they reject the teaching of the false teachers who have been misleading the people for hundreds of years. That they not concern themselves with these men or their standing in the Temple...for One greater than the temple was with them. He keeps reiterating this point about the religious leaders...remember Matthew 15:15-20.

3. Matthew 16:13-20

- a. **Why do you suppose that Jesus asked the question to His disciples as He did?** (The Greek reads, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?")
 - (1) In His question He provides the answer that the people should have been saying by this time...His favorite title for Himself... "The Son of Man"- which speaks of the divine who is sent into the world from the Father and then returns to receive a kingdom from Dan. 7:9-14.
 - (2) This is a common teaching tool...a leading question.
- b. **The disciples rattle off a list of men. Why these particular men?**
 - (1) John the Baptist... really? Possible...since there were no Fox News Alerts... people may not have heard about John's death even 2 years later. Not likely but possible.
 - (2) Elijah? Well, Malachi (Mal. 4:5) had foretold the return of Elijah and no one knew what Elijah looked like only that He was a prophet full of power.

- (3) Jeremiah? There was no biblical promise of Jeremiah's return...but there were some "traditions" that taught at the time of the Messiah Jeremiah would return.
 - (4) Another prophet? This could be a default position when one was confused or they may have been loosely referring to the prophet Moses speaks of in Duet. 18:15-22.
- c. What is the reason for Jesus pronouncing such a blessing on Peter in vs. 15?
- (1) Since Peter was normally wrong in his assumptions and answers...☺ ...Jesus blesses him for getting one right! Lol!!
 - (2) Jesus pronounced Peter blessed here because the Father had done a wonderful thing for him. God had revealed truth to Peter that had formerly been a mystery. Jesus told him that his confession was not the result of an ordinary reflection on his observations. This was not a connecting of the dots...or a 2 plus 2 equals 4... moment. It was not in any way the product of human insight. It was a conclusion that he could have never come to on his own. He might speculate but without certainty. Instead, God revealed it to him. God had worked supernaturally by faith in Peter's mind to enable him to see Jesus as the true Messiah of the OT. True recognition of who Jesus truly is always comes only from God.
- d. What is so significant about Peter's confession in vs. 16?
- (1) On this confession of faith Jesus...the One True rock...see Duet. 32:4...will build His church...using the confession and the Apostles and His people as living stones to do so.
 - (2) Jesus will keep on building His church on these as well...
 - (3) And nothing will stand in the way...not even death would be able to overcome His Church.
- e. What "power" is Jesus giving to His disciples that "trickles down" to the church officers in vs. 19? Why? The ministry of discipline...lovingly holding the church accountable... instructing them in sound doctrine...discipling them to become disciples who make disciples of others. Building the church through time by God's grace and through His power.
- f. What is the reason for Jesus' command in verse 20? Even the disciples were not totally clear yet as to what kind of Messiah Jesus had come to be...they were still thinking perhaps that He would set up a political kingdom like David's... rather than the suffering servant He had come to be...

4. Matthew 16:21-23

- a. Many people say that this is the "first" time Jesus makes this claim about His death and resurrection. Is this true? Support your answer. Think Matthew 12:38-42. So, if this isn't the first time... what is meant by the phrase, *"From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must..."*?
- (1) Simply put, it points out a "new" emphasis on this teaching that He had not been exactly clear about before.
 - (2) With His identity clearly in the mind of His disciples after Peter's confession He now seeks to fill them in on what lays ahead. They were still uncertain of His reasons for coming so now and from this time forward He would emphasize the completion of His mission...He came to die and resurrect.
 - (3) The word "must" here doesn't mean much to us ...but in the Greek when speaking about the activity of God... it is a divine must ...nothing can change this future...it has been predetermined and predestined to occur just as it was supposed to. See Acts 2:23.
- b. Once again, what did the disciples seem to hear? It seems they stopped listening after the words "suffer and be killed" as many would who hadn't learned to listen yet to their Master.

c. What is so amazing or ironic...or you might think of other words...about Peter's rebuke of Jesus?

- (1) Wow...after making such a confession about who Jesus is...to now treat Him like a common man.
- (2) Peter is so far off that he says... *"May God forbid that this should happen to you."*...Greek for *"Far be it from you, Lord."* Peter is speaking to God...and God has just said what would happen. Who does Peter think he is to question the mind of God?
- (3) This statement shows us even Peter's lack of understanding concerning Jesus' ultimate mission for His people. It seems that Peter may be wanting to act as a Security guard, if you will, wanting to make sure that Jesus is protected even from Himself. There could be self-sacrifice in that but given his lack of understanding he is probably more concerned with protecting "his stake and investment" in the Lord for the future kingship that he still supposes Jesus will have.
- (4) How often do we do that?
- (5) But it is also instinctive of loved ones who are concerned for the safety of their loved ones who may be headed into danger...Don't go. But Jesus is not just some loved one...He had a clear mission to complete for His people.

d. What is Jesus' point in His remarks to Peter, after all Peter is a believer... weak in faith to be sure...but still a believer?

- (1) Jesus first tells Peter to get out of His way...don't stand in the way of His mission...don't resist me. Not very nice of the Master to His padawan?
- (2) To follow up with telling Peter to get out of His way...He now calls him Satan. Ouch!!!! From the "rock" to Satan all in just a few minutes. **Why so harsh?** Who was the last one who had put such a temptation in front of Jesus... yep...Satan. Peter would certainly had known of those events in Jesus' life. The text from Luke 4:13 ends by saying that Satan departed from Him until an opportune time...was this one of those times?
- (3) Next Jesus calls Peter an "offense" or hindrance...Greek= *scandalon* ...sound like any English word you know...scandal!...a temptation to do something that one should not do...Peter was urgently seeking to keep Jesus from doing what He had been sent to do.
- (4) Then Jesus says... *"You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men."* Who had He just said that to? The Pharisees and the Sadducees...and over and over again Jesus had told His disciples not to be like them...and here Peter is being like them in his ignorance.

Next time: Chapter 17

Matthew Bible Study
November 11, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What is Jesus teaching Peter and the other disciples in verses 21-23? He /they do not know what they think they know...and they need to listen closer to God when He speaks and not seek to change things that God says...a problem for 21st century Christian to be sure.
2. If you were to wrap chapter 16:1-23 up with a few comments what would you say is being communicated here for us today? What is the salient point of this chapter so far? *"For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men."* Who had He just said that to? The Pharisees and the Sadducees...and over and over again Jesus had told His disciples not to be like them...and here Peter is being like them in his ignorance.

C. Matthew 16:24-28

1. This is one of the clearest statements made concerning the Christian life in all of Scriptures. What does it mean to deny yourself and follow Christ?
 - a. We must always live in the shadow of the cross.
 - b. We must be ready, willing and able to give up our "perceived rights" for others.
 - c. We must be ready to die for Christ...physically and spiritually.
 - d. No cheap grace in Jesus' evangelism. The benefits of faith that He talks about is death to this life and life eternal. So it is in losing that we gain.
2. What is the meaning for us in the questions He asks in vs.26?
3. Again, Jesus speaks about rewards. After telling us what we must lose to gain...what is He talking about when He speaks of rewards here in our text?
 - a. Interesting play on words...He will reward each according to "His" works...or "his/our" works which are the works the Father prepared for us to do beforehand (Eph. 2:10) for us to do with and for Him...the idea/command to be building His church again.
 - b. So we are encouraged *"to lay up treasures in heaven"*...do the works that God has prepared for us to do...stay focused on His calling and live the life that He has given us to live.
 - c. We are to set our minds on the things of God...not on the things of man.
4. Lastly, what does Jesus mean by His emphatic statement in verse 28?
 - a. His transfiguration that we will see in the next chapter? Since they will see Him in His glory...as he will look when He comes again.
 - b. His ascension?
 - c. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost?
 - d. His final coming?

D. Matthew 17

1. Matthew 1:1-13

- a. What would you say is the overarching message of the Transfiguration for the disciples and for us 2 millennia later?
 - (1) The Pharisees and the Sadducees had asked for a sign from heaven and they were denied for they were condemned...but Jesus chooses to give these men a sign from heaven to affirm everything that He had said and done up to this point.
 - (2) Also, to alleviate any further question concerning who He really is.

- b. Information: Transfigured is the English word of choice for the Greek word “*metamorpoo*”...this verb literally means “*a change of form*”. It normally comes into the English language as the word metamorphosis. But “transfiguration” includes the prefix “trans”= “across”. What was crossed in the transfiguration...hence the reason for this word rather than the standard word metamorphosis? Jesus seems to have crossed the line from the natural world into the supernatural before the disciple’s very faces. His glory became visible. Matthew says, “*He was transfigured before them.*” His form changed but also He crossed over into the heavenly realm where His glory shines forth...all in front of these 3.
- c. What does the description of Jesus remind you of? Exodus 34:6-7, 29-30; Acts 9:3b; Hebrews 1:3; Rev. 1, 21:23. What is being communicated by all this “whiteness”? (See also Mark 9:3.) (I am not looking for just one answer here.) That the Son is absolutely pure...radiant...no darkness...no shadows...bright like the sun is bright...*“I believe in Christ for the same reason I believe in the sun, not because I see it but because by it I see everything else.”* C.S. Lewis Things are made clear by His light.
- d. Of all the OT believers, why Moses and Elijah?
- (1) Moses, the servant of God was a type of Christ to the people...deliverer... also, prophet priest and king. Moses also represents the Law of God and God’s covenant. He had predicted the coming great prophet (Deut. 18:15-19)
 - (2) Elijah represents all the rest of the prophets who foretold the coming Messiah.
 - (3) Moses and Elijah’s presence confirm Jesus’ Messianic mission...a mission that the disciples had a hard time seeing. i.e.- The law and the prophets spoke of Him...as in Luke 24, *“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets..”*
 - (4) In essence the Law and the prophets came to Jesus to encourage Him in His mission just the same way the angels came and ministered to Him after the Temptation.
 - (5) Note about the cloud...God spoke to Moses through a cloud over Mt. Sinai so God speaks through a cloud here as well.
- e. What was “wrong” with Peter’s suggestion about the tents? What wasn’t he doing again?
- (1) He wasn’t listening again. He appears to have no clue what he is saying...He “needs” to say something so he does...He is so excited by what he sees...he can’t help it but to speak...
 - (2) This was a time for worship not a time for him to be doing anything as if anything he would do would make a difference.
 - (3) Peter wanted to capture the moment, if you will ...he felt like he must do something when nothing but worship was to be done.
- f. Why does Jesus, once again, tell His disciples...these 3...(vs.9) not to tell anyone about what they have just witnessed? And how does their question in verse 10 substantiate Jesus telling them this?
- (1) He knew they didn’t fully comprehend what had just happened and that they wouldn’t until the Spirit came to clarify everything. So he didn’t want them speculating about what they saw and heard.
 - (2) Their question in verse 10 reveals their lack of understanding. They knew Jesus was the Messiah but they needed to learn more about the mission and His death and resurrection. It didn’t matter that the scribes were teaching that Elijah had not yet returned...so the Messiah could not be here...because here was Elijah...in the form of John the Baptist... one

like Elijah...who had come to prepare the way for the Christ...and the scribes knew it very well.

- (3) But they do eventually “get it”...this event seems to have had a profound effect on their lives when they did “get it”...see John 1: 14...this seems to be a reference to what he saw that day. And then II Peter 2:16...when did they see His majesty...but on this day... and also perhaps at His ascension...And based on what they “got”...they turned the world upside down for Christ... Acts 17:6.

2. Matthew 17:14-21

a. A familiar story to be sure. What was Jesus seeking to teach the people here with this event?

- (1) The English translations use the term “epileptic”...which describes the disease based on the symptoms mentioned. The Greek uses the word “lunatic”...we think insanity...they considered any behavior out of the ordinary and erratic to be lunacy.
- (2) Showing just how faithless they were... only wanting signs to appease their desires. When Moses came down from the mountain he was faced with the faithlessness of the people as they worshiped the golden calf...
- (3) And perverse= “twisted generation”...speaks of their default to sinful behavior. They lacked trust in the truth of God and their sense of right and wrong is all twisted...much like today... “right is wrong and wrong is right in the eyes of men.” They embraced vice and ridiculed virtue.
- (4) That He did not come to fill up their passions...their fleshly desires...He wasn’t a show...so He says out loud, *“How long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?”*
- (5) He is not going to be here much longer...what are they going to do once He is gone for the next exciting thing? Will you never come to enough maturity to live by faith rather than by sight?

b. What was Jesus seeking to teach the disciples here with this event?

- (1) Jesus had given the disciples power and authority over demons...(Luke 9:1)...and they had rejoiced in the power He had given them to drive out demons ...(Luke 10:17). They were focused on the task at the time...but a lot has happened in the last couple of days to shake their faith both for good and ill. There doesn’t appear to have been any problem driving out demons until now. Everything they tried to do failed with this boy.
- (2) They hadn’t learned it all yet...they have so little faith or He could have said again...O you of little faith...or oh my padawan... somethings are a mystery yet to you though you have been shown so much!
- (3) Their faith was not one of trust alone...hence little faith. It was still diluted with the thinking of the world...they were still easily distracted. Things had gone well for them in their travels until they got to this boy...in their minds it was now time to give up...it was just too hard. On this occasion they were too easily distracted and their unbelief was in play.
- (4) Just like the disciples we believe but there are so many voices vying for our allegiance and our attention that we can be overcome by our unbelief from one moment to another.
- (5) Moving mountains through faith was part of the Jewish lore of the day...He spoke to them with an image they would understand...if they had had sufficient faith...not being distracted by the world... they could move mountains and surely they would have been able to cast out one little demon.
- (6) Now if verse 21 is there in Matthew as it is in Mark 9:23, then we have before us the sign of unbelief that Jesus was talking about. They were seeking to bring this out on their perceived power forgetting that only God actually can remove these...This one was harder than all the rest so they should have sought the Lord through prayer and fasting ...but instead they sought to work on their own and seemingly got frustrated and fearful. Their faith is evidence in knowing God and knowing it is He who works through us...not we working or God acting at our beckon call. Just because I am a Christian I still cannot be presumptuous concerning God.

- c. **Why do a miracle here for these obviously “faithless and perverse” peoples when He wouldn’t do anything for the Pharisees and the Sadducees?**
- (1) Though the people were faithless and Christ was provoked He still healed the child. “Suffer the little children to come unto me.”...He would be heard to say.
 - (2) These people...or at least some of them might be swayed by His power. He had not fully condemned them yet as He had the religious leaders.

Next time: Chapter 18

Matthew Bible Study
November 18, 2015

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Re-read Matthew 17:1-21. What would you say in the most important points of this section of the chapter for us today? Jesus is God! He is who He says He is! How much we need to believe and trust this to be true today!!
2. What is Matthew seeking to communicate to his audience about the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth? He is God!!!

C. Matthew 17 continued:

3. Matthew 17:22-23-Why does Jesus say this again? (See also Matt. 12:40, 16:21, 17:9 and 12)
 - a. Because their paradigm must change. It seems that no one remembers the Suffering Servant Messiah...they only want one like King David to take all their land back and to live at peace...well, Israel today has most of its land back ...it is a world power...is it at peace? Of course not... it never will be without belief in Jesus.
 - b. Once again it appears that they do not hear the promise of the resurrection or at least they don't understand it since they are "greatly distressed."
4. Matthew 17:24-27- Matthew is the only one to record this event.
 - a. Turn to Ex. 30:11-16. What do we see here?
 - (1) All Jewish males 20 years or older were required to pay a temple tax to support temple upkeep. Temple tax collectors, probably the Levites and then the temple scribes at this time, set up booths just for this purpose. This had nothing to do with the civil tax that was paid to the Romans... Jesus would speak to that on another occasion.
 - (2) Now obviously money does not purchase atonement, but by obeying God's statutes to take care of the tabernacle and later the temple the people were honoring the One who made atonement possible.
 - b. This is an interesting event with a really cool twist. Re-tell it in your own words.
 - c. Now, what is Matthew seeking to communicate about Jesus with this event?
 - (1) Jesus knew that the whole function of the Temple would be irrelevant soon enough...the veil would be torn in half...and then by 70 AD it would be cast down completely.
 - (2) Mainly, God is the King of the temple and He is the Son of the King...and as the Son He is not liable to pay the tax... *"The sons are free"*... Jesus was once again declaring His identity to Peter as the Son of God.
 - (3) But...Gal. 4:4 tells us that He was born under the law, so in the end He picks His battles, if you will, and paid the tax as not to offend. Jesus had submitted to every law that God had imposed upon Israel...He fulfilled the Law... He could pick and choose His battles because this law had no inherent moral bearing. It was after all a ceremonial law...a good principle for the upkeep of the church but yet a ceremonial law.
 - (4) But He was also saying that they, the disciples (read: all believers) were sons of God and as such were not required to pay the tax either...but *"not to give offense"*...not an issue that rises to the importance of a "fight".
 - (5) And the method of paying the tax also showed who He is...Only God could do that...hence removing from Peter all preconceived ideas or conventional wisdom. A fisherman bringing

in a fish that was bringing in the tax...at Jesus' say so! Not only that but, enough tax to cover both Jesus and Peter. God supplies for His own, if we would only believe.

D. Matthew 18

1. Matthew 18:1-6 (See, Mark 9:33-35; Luke 22:24-30...and also, Matt. 20:20-28)

a. Thinking of human nature in general, what kind of things must be going through the mind of the disciples to ask such a question of the Savior in verse 1, as, *"Who is the greatest in the kingdom?"*

- (1) Jesus had, at first, encouraged Peter at his confession...giving Peter a fresh sense of leadership,...so on that basis he even dared rebuke Jesus for speaking of His death...
- (2) And then there was the Transfiguration which included Peter, James and John.
- (3) In the previous verses the tax collectors perceiving Peter to be the leader of the group came up to him to seek payment.
- (4) See Mark 9:33-35. How does this add to the conversation? They had been having a dispute on the road...which Jesus obviously knew about, given the lesson He teaches after they refuse in the shame to tell Him about their quarrel. I mean, after all, Peter had been getting the lion's share of the Lord's attention...of course, he was the most reckless of the bunch and put himself out there more often...for both praise and discipline. This won't be the last time...Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-30.
- (5) The leadership of Peter had obviously not been acknowledged by the others yet...jealousy abound.
- (6) "Greatest in the Kingdom"...the Greek word for "greatest" speaks to their desire concerning their individual offices in the earthly political kingdom that they were still expecting.

b. How did Jesus respond to their question in verse 2-6?

- (1) Called to Himself a "little child"...since it was Peter's house it is possible that this child is Peter's own...and set them in the midst of all of them.
- (2) *"Unless you turn and become"*= "unless you convert"...unless you change your thinking away from personal ambition...and become like this little child...the English just says "you will never enter"...but the Greek uses a double negative, saying... "never, no never will you enter" into the kingdom let alone have a place in its leadership.
- (3) What is it about little children that Jesus wants them to emulate?
 - Before the child gets too old they are still dependent upon their parents for everything and they know they must look to their parents to meet their needs. It is supposed that the child used was under the age of 4 or 5...an age when the child still looks to the parent thinking that everything they need can only be found in their parents.
 - These little ones don't think they know everything ...yet! Little children still think their parents know everything and look to them for wisdom...they are humble still...they do this naturally before their parents...whereas as we grow it becomes hard to humble ourselves before others in submission.
 - Also, their willingness to receive from their parents what they cannot provide for themselves.
- (4) In the big picture, who does this child represent?
 - The disciples...totally dependent upon Christ...
 - All true believers who look to Jesus through the Holy Spirit...disciples.
- (5) What is Jesus communicating when He uses the idiom "in my name" when describing how His true disciples are to be received? The true disciple is Christ's direct representative...ambassador. And if they are received the one who receives is receiving Jesus Himself...and if one seeks to lead His children into sin they will be dealing specifically with God...blasphemously and are due just condemnation and punishment to be cast utterly into the utter depths of darkness and corruption never to see

the "light" of day again. Remember what God promised His children in Gen. 12:1-3 that He has never gone back on...so too here.

- c. How does Matthew 16:24-26 complement and add to Jesus' teaching here?
More definition concerning humbling ourselves.

2. Matthew 18:7-9 (See also Psalm 1 and Matthew 5:29-30.) What is He saying to His disciples and us in these verses? (See also II Cor. 11:19)

- a. Jesus recognizes the inevitability of stumbling blocks, traps, hindrances...(scandalous acts) that the world will use to tempt us...but He doesn't absolve the man who sets the trap...even though they must come as part of our on-going sanctification.
- b. He is instructing them and us to be aware:
 - (1) the world is not our friend
 - (2) the world will seek to lead astray
 - (3) the world will seek our demise
 - (4) the world ...but also our fallen nature is not to be trusted...think Psalm 1!
 - (5) Be aware of where we walk and what we walk into on purpose
 - (6) Be aware of what we allow our eyes to dwell on...
- c. We must remove all stumbling blocks that cause us to sin...requiring us to be alert to what is sin in God's eyes. For us, any activity, relationship or practice that leads to sin must be stopped.
- d. In the church, any teaching, person or practice that threatens the spiritual growth of the Body must be excised!

3. Matthew 18:10-14

a. What is curious about verse 10?

- (1) "See that you do not despise" = "think down on" as one superior to...since they are not. Jesus has been teaching an exceptionally high view of children...especially the youngest and most needy among us...which would have been different, again, from what the culture taught then as well as what our culture teaches today concerning the importance of children. We need to hear this message again for a number of reasons to be sure. Harkening back to what He has already said...anyone who would seek to abuse these...His children...are put on notice.
- (2) "Angels"...what is meant here?
 - In the Bible we see angels and their purposes in many places, Gen. 18-19 with the care of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and then in Exodus 32:34, God says to Moses: *"my angel shall go before you."* Then in Psalm 91:11: *"For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;"* (Cf. Psalm 33:8 and 34:5) The belief that angels can be guides and intercessors for men can be found in Job 33:23-6, and in the Daniel 10:13. Also consider Heb. 1:14.
 - Jews taught that each nation had a guardian angel...even teaching that each person has their own personal angel.
 - The concept of guardian angels and their hierarchy was extensively developed in Christianity in the 5th century by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.
 - In the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church the belief is that guardian angels serve to protect whichever person God assigns them to, and present prayer to God on that person's behalf.
 - The Reformed/ Presbyterian Historic position has been 2fold:
 - That each elect child has a guardian angel, or that a group of children are covered by one guardian angel...hard to make an individual case ...not so much anymore.
 - That this passage speaks of how angels are there for all believers...another way that we are never alone...not our own personal angel but God's angels to care for all His children. We can take comfort in that FACT that God cares for His children through His angels.

- (3) Verse 11 note...only found in later manuscripts agrees with Luke 19:10 so was probably a marginal note at some point and was received into the text by the copiers.

b. What is He teaching by this parable in vs. 12-13?

- (1) For the Trekkies in our midst: Mr. Spock once said, *"The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few or the one."*...A great sentiment, but how is this different than what Jesus teaches?
- (2) Sheep absolutely need a shepherd or they will get lost and they need one when they wander for sheep will wander.
- (3) These are sheep who do not know they are lost. We interact with people every day who are lost in their sin and do not realize it ...even believers who are caught up in some sin...they very often do not realize they are "lost" at least at first. See Ps. 139:7-10
- (4) Just so we are clear, this parable, here, in this context, (He is talking about His children in the verses previously and then the reference in verse 14) is NOT about evangelism but about shepherding the existing flock that wander from the fold. We see the parable again in Luke 15:4-7 and it is about evangelism...so this illustration has different applications even within the Gospels.

c. What is verse 14 saying specifically?

- (1) That none who are His will be lost...they may wander for a bit...think prodigal son...but they will not ultimately be lost.
- (2) Linking that with the mission of the angels...they will watch over us until we come back.
- (3) The shepherd to the sheep...the shepherd will drop everything to seek out and restore the one who is wandering from the fold...they will keep searching until they find them or they will keep searching until it is evident that the person doesn't want to be found.
- (4) Jesus, the Good Shepherd, bought us with His own blood so that we would not ultimately be lost to eternity.
- (5) Those who are God's will not be given up on!!!

Matthew Bible Study
January 27, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. In Verses 15-17, what did we say was Jesus' purpose in giving us these passages?

- a. His purpose is to exhort us to brotherly love, even in the face of personal offences. And I think it is interesting that He chooses the term, brother, because our tendency, especially when we are offended, is to view one another, not as family, but as someone who is out to hurt, someone who is alien and alienated from us... an enemy.
- b. Brotherly love= biblical love has one goal in mind...drawing each other closer to Jesus...drawing the net of family closer and closer. It is not about helping someone feel better about themselves...it isn't about self-esteem...it's about drawing each other closer to Christ so we reflect a Christ-image...and doing whatever it takes to that end. Christ laid down His life showing us how far He was willing to go for those who would become His brothers and sisters before God the Father. That is what 1st borns do!

2. How do these passages, which can seem rather harsh and devoid of emotion, express this brotherly love?

- a. These steps are also given to us so that we can love properly as brothers and sisters. If we show no concern for the sins of our brothers and sisters then we do not love them as Christ expects.
- b. Jesus is not telling us to do this as a way of getting satisfaction for a personal grievance, but as a way of seeking to help one another. Go, in this instance, may mean more than one visit, because the point is we need to look out for our brothers' spiritual interests even when our brother has offended us or others.
- c. This can promote unity when we step back look at our own sins as He has already told us in Matt. 7 and then seek for our brother and sister to be restored.
- d. Now if going to your brother privately doesn't work out: Jesus foresees a circumstance where the brother will not see his sin, he will not see his wrong, and that reconciliation will not occur after you go to speak to him. And Jesus says, so you do this... just like the law says, you go and take one or two witnesses to confirm the facts. These are what the Bible refers to as peacemakers...those who will hold both parties to the same standard but also can be people who will point out the sin that is evident.
- e. *"It would be a good contest among Christians, one to labor to give no offense, and the other to labor to take none."*- Richard Sibbes

C. Matthew 18:15-20 continued

1. What is He communicating in verses 18-20?

- a. By apostolic authority, church elders can admit people into the church, exclude them from church membership and excommunicate members who are unrepentant.
- b. That God oversees and authorizes and affirms those actions of the church that are done rightly in His eyes.
- c. And to confirm this even further, vs. 20 has Jesus in the midst of our judgments validating the activity of the church. We use this passage to "prove" that Jesus is with us whenever we are with other Christians...and He is...but this is not the correct meaning and interpretation of the passage. The rest of the Bible supports God's presence with His people.

2. What are some reasons that church discipline is so hard? Heck, forget church discipline, a minute, why is it so hard to hold our brothers and sisters accountable for destructive behavior?

- a. We don't believe in hell...really. If we did we would be scared of it...at least a respect about it that would drive us to want to keep others out.

- b. We believe that once saved always saved...and that is true but it doesn't stop the consequences...or it doesn't guarantee that if a person's life is defined by sin that they are not saved in the first place...hence going to hell....
- c. We don't really believe that this stuff works.
- d. We don't consider what "one" brother or sisters sin will/can do to the witness of the Church. Think 1 Cor. 5.
- e. The Southern way to deal with offences is usually denial. You know, we just kind of pretend, *"O.K., that didn't happen, I'm not going to say anything about it in public, I'm not going to say anything but I'm going to boil inside, and I'm probably going to talk to a lot of other people about it."* That is the way we deal with it. But to go right to another person and deal with it is a very unnatural thing. For most of us. And yet, Jesus says this is the way that He wants us to relate to one another, because He is concerned for the peace and the purity in the family.
- f. When the offense has been in private, and we publicly expose it, it naturally brings up that person's defenses to think about not what they have done, but what you have done to them.
- g. So we have to ask: do we care more for a brother or sister's good or our own embarrassment when someone tells us to kiss off?

A. Matthew 18:21-35

1. According to his question in verse 21, what had Peter heard Jesus saying especially in these last verses?
 - a. In all of this talk about discipline he heard Jesus talking about forgiveness.
 - b. Or was he just trying to show himself benevolent by saying 7 times...since the rabbis taught forgiveness towards those who offend you but only 3 times after that no more.
2. How does verses 21-22 and the parable (vs. 23-35) illustrate what He has just been talking about?
3. What does this say to us...Are we to just unilaterally forgive and forget every offense of a brother or sister no matter how bad?
 - a. Some believe that is the case. Since Jesus seemingly forgives so easily those who killed Him and mocked Him and abused Him it seems to some that we are required to always forgive and forget no matter what.
 - b. What Jesus' action ought to show us is that we should be quick to forgive even to a fault... "70 times 7"...means that we are not to keep track of how many times we forgive someone...
 - c. This passage alongside of the rest of scripture does not in fact support unilateral forgiveness (forgiving and forgetting) the context will not allow for people to go that far. It basically says in context:
 - (1) That we who have been sinned against have the "right" to forgive... but we do not see this as a divine directive to forgive and forget. It would be a bit disingenuous to expect that people could forget offenses...since God doesn't forget... But what is expected is that those offenses be set aside not to be brought up again. When you say you forgive that is what you are supposed to be doing.
 - (2) When others abuse and violate us or others and then repent we have no choice but to forgive them (Mark 11:26 ...which doesn't mean that the relationship is totally restored...the relationship obviously will change...we will naturally be more cautious of them in the future until their repentance plays out...)
 - (3) If we are required to forgive out of hand, what would be the point of Matthew 18:15-20? By which we are to confront and ultimately excommunicate if one is not repentant.
 - (4) The one in the parable that was forgiven was not forgiven again but held accountable for his lack of true repentance. The king had forgiven him for embezzlement so it was the king who held him to account...so to the heavenly Father.

- (5) Parents love their straying children by confronting them with unbiblical behavior...it is actually unloving not to...because we are aiding in their demise physically and possibly spiritually...if we don't say anything their blood will be on our hands.

4. Given what we have been talking about... what are some ways to summarize this whole chapter?

- a. Jesus is focusing on the family dynamic in this whole chapter...He is expecting that we will look at things differently than we do...that our default would not be to seek revenge or pay back or even restitution first...but that brotherly love dictates that our motivation would be to draw each other closer to Jesus to seek reconciliation between the offender and His Lord whether or not there can be total reconciliation between us and them.
- b. So this chapter is also about mutual accountability. This whole chapter is about thinking as part of a family of faith. About seeking the interests of one another. Being willing for the glory of God and the good of His people to uphold God's ways, will and law which will be mutually encouraging to all His people.
- c. If you review it, if you look at verses 1 through 14, they deal with self-discipline, how I need to conduct myself for the sake of the brethren.
- d. If you look at verses 15 and 16, they deal with mutual discipline, what do brothers do when brothers get at odds with brothers?
- e. And then when you get to verse 17, it deals with church discipline, so from self-discipline, to mutual discipline, we come to church discipline.
- f. And the whole point of this is that the disciple is to look out for the spiritual interests of his brothers and sisters, even when they have offended, not only when they are weaker, wandering sheep, but when they are offending brothers.
- g. John Calvin said of this text, *"Christ bids us disciples to forgive one another in such a way as nevertheless to try and correct one another's faults."* But this can only be done *"in prayer and fasting"*, if you will... because there is nothing more difficult than to be forgiving for sin and at the same time to confront others about their sin.

Matthew Bible Study
February 3, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. If you were to wrap up chapter 18 in a couple of words or a phrase...what would say is communicated there?
 - a. Jesus is focusing on the family dynamic in this whole chapter...He is expecting that we will look at things differently than we do...that our default would not be to seek revenge or pay back or even restitution first...but that brotherly love dictates that our motivation would be to draw each other closer to Jesus to seek reconciliation between the offender and His Lord whether or not there can be total reconciliation between us and them.
 - b. And the whole point of this is that the disciple is to look out for the spiritual interests of his brothers and sisters, even when they have offended, not only when they are weaker, wandering sheep, but when they are offending brothers.
 - c. John Calvin said of this text, *"Christ bids us disciples to forgive one another in such a way as nevertheless to try and correct one another's faults."* But this can only be done *"in prayer and fasting"*, if you will... because there is nothing more difficult than to be forgiving for sin and at the same time to confront others about their sin.
2. Look at Colossians 3:12-17 a minute. What does this passage have to say to us about how we show brotherly love?
3. Once again, why is there so much in Scripture about how we are to one another one another?
 - a. Because of the Fall our default is to protect ourselves at all cost.
 - b. We truly have never grappled with the question, "Am I my brother's keeper" to and real extent.
 - c. God takes seriously family...more seriously than we do.
 - d. There are times that reconciliation cannot occur or if it does it is strained at best...God makes provision for these times in His word...for we are to be discerning holding one another accountable. Just like the story at the end of chapter 18.

C. Mathew 19- Matthew 19:1-12

1. What is the topic that the Pharisees want to talk about? Divorce. What is the topic that Jesus talks about? Marriage. Why is this distinction necessary?
 - a. Talking about divorce doesn't get to the issue of what a person thinks about marriage...and his faith or lack thereof. For these leaders divorce was an out ...a freedom given to men...they lacked the spiritual insight to know better...
 - b. Marriage is what God ordained as a creation ordinance...divorce was allowed upon certain condition because of sin.
 - c. God designed marriage to be permanent. Instead of looking for reasons to leave each other, married couples should concentrate on how to stay together.
 - d. A clear understanding of marriage dispels the need for divorce.
 - e. Also, historically, it seems that divorce was as rampant at this time as it is today...and the Pharisees had been giving divorce a justification as so many pastors do today. In fact, a growing number of ministers are divorced especially with the growing number of women in the pastorate.
 - f. An example of the on-going problem is Josephus, the famous writer of the Antiquities, and the Jewish War? To be a Pharisee you had to be married. He was a divorced Pharisee. There was significant divorce even amongst the clergy of Israel and there were great differences among those clergy as to what the biblical views of marriage, divorce and remarriage was. And so, as it was a controversial issue it is a controversial issue now. The United States has the highest divorce rate in the world.

- g. Divorce is striking at the very fabric of our society. And that debate was going on in Jesus' time. And the Pharisees in this passage take the opportunity to press Jesus on this matter to make Him articulate His views publicly...and He does so without hesitation...because it is a creation ordinance.
2. Why would the Pharisees question be phrased the way that it is; ***"Can a man divorce his wife for any cause at all?"***?
 - a. Well, because in Jesus' day, so also in ours, most men are usually the initiators in divorce.
 - b. Also in Israel, a man could get a divorce very easily. In Israel, a man didn't even have to see a judge to get a divorce. All he had to do was to have two witnesses and write a bill of divorce, and he was out of there.
 - c. Now if a woman wanted to get a divorce, she had to go get a judge, and there had to be a trial and there had to be cause. And so there is a real sense in which Jesus is protecting the rights of married women with what He says in this passage.
 - d. In Jesus' day there was a problem with lax divorce, just like in our day. It is easier to get out of marriage than it is to get in a marriage. And Jesus is speaking precisely to that situation, which was so often precipitated by a man.
 3. What is Jesus saying when He asks the Pharisees, ***"Have you not read that He..."***?
 - a. Creation ordinance supersedes.
 - b. They wished to trap Him in an on-going controversy and He took them to Scripture not to His opinion...which is Scripture by the way...but He let the Word that they had professed to uphold and teach faithfully do the talking...
 - c. All that were there understood exactly what He was saying...they were not using Scripture to evaluate the culture...they were using their own desires and cultural choices to redefine God's Word. They were the fools.
 - d. Jesus takes the argument out of the Deuteronomy controversy that they have corrupted and took it back to Genesis...to God Himself... because they hadn't thought of the foundation of the Deuteronomy text...that is to say...if Moses wasn't clear enough...or if you feel the need to reinterpret Moses... will you do that with God's own Words?
 - e. Jesus basically says to the Pharisees, "Once again your problem is not that you care too much about what Moses said, it's that you don't care enough about what Moses said because you haven't read the foundational statements of Moses about marriage from Genesis 1 and 2 carefully enough."
 4. Why historically have all human societies believed that marriages were their businesses? J.C. Ryle said: *"Nations are nothing but a collection of families. The good order of the family depends entirely upon keeping the highest standards of the marriage tie. And so we ought to be thankful that the great head of the church had a definite opinion about marriage and family."*
 5. How does Jesus define marriage? There is no ambiguity here just as there was none in Genesis. God said it...it does not change...and never will change! What is Jesus' provision for divorce...when does He say a divorce is warranted?
 6. What were the misunderstandings of the Pharisees concerning the laws about divorce from Deut. 24:1-4 that led to their question in verse 7-9?
 - a. They thought that Moses was giving a justification FOR divorce, when he in fact was given this law by God making provisions in the case of divorce...man's sin against man and God.

- b. It was a permission to grant divorce in certain circumstances, it was a concession to the hardness of their heart, and you will notice that Moses built into that concession two restrictions on the man who was seeking divorce.
 - (1) He had to give his wife a divorce. Men didn't just give things to their wives in that culture. And that indicated that this poor woman was not at fault for sins in sending her away, which left her free to be married at some point.
 - (2) 2nd, notice that in that passage in Deuteronomy 24, Moses says, *"If you divorce her, and she subsequently remarries, you cannot be married to her again."* So know what you are giving up forever when you do this. And so Moses is putting the pressure on them in that passage. He's not giving them a blank check to fill out. You've got to recognize that this is a serious thing that you are doing as you send a woman away. Jesus thus explained that Moses' divorce law was permission, not command.
 - c. Jesus is also saying that violation of the marriage is a violation of the 7th Commandment. It's adultery. Now you remember that the Pharisees were hard on immorality. They were hard on adultery. They were ready to execute two people who were caught in adultery. But they would let anybody who walked in the door get a divorce. And Jesus was saying, "Divorce and remarriage is tantamount to adultery. You are promoting adultery in Israel. So know what you are giving up forever when you do this." And so Moses is putting the pressure on them in that passage. He's not giving them a blank check to fill out. You've got to recognize that this is a serious thing that you are doing as you send a woman away.
 - d. He's using hard words against the Pharisees to catch their attention... to condemn their behavior and as such calling them to repentance or judgement.
- 7. Who are more loving and caring of the people in this case...the Pharisees who wish to make divorce as easy as possible...or Jesus who seeks to keep the restrictions established by God?
 - a. The Pharisee's didn't care about the people...they only brought the topic up to test Him...to see if they could trap Him...they aren't concerned about the people in anyway shape or form.
 - b. The Pharisees, are not asking, "What does God intend marriage to be?" They're not even asking, "How can we help hurting people in broken relationships stay together?" They're asking this one technical question: "When can I get out of the commitment I made before God?" That's the question that they asking. And it's Jesus that loves and cares for us and who wants the best for us who comes back and says, "You're asking the wrong question. The question is, 'What does God intend for marriage to be?'"
 - c. Jesus was out in the midst of the people healing them...who are they going to listen to...even if He has something tough to say? He is standing for something...unequivocally...better than the Pharisees that didn't have a stand on anything.
 - d. Jesus' view is that divorce is a fundamental denial of God's created order and the nature of marriage and as such should be only allowed in the worst of occasions.
 - e. Obviously, God's ways are more beneficial even if we can't see then at the moment...
- 8. Now, what's up with the disciples in verses 10-12?
 - a. Now the disciples are allergic to commitment. The disciples themselves had the same attitude as their contemporaries. They are basically saying, *"If I don't have the escape hatch of being able to get rid of my wife whenever I want, my, it would just be better to stay single!"*
 - b. He says to them, "Look, the marriage state is not to be neglected because of its challenges. Sure I know I am demanding commitment. That's what marriage is. It is commitment. It is divine contractual commitment to one another made in vows before man and God. It is hard. But I want to tell you what you have just said is far harder than anything I've said. You've just said you don't want to make a commitment, a life commitment to a woman; you'd just rather stay single. You'd just rather be celibate. So let me tell you something else as men we are not hardwired that way."
 - c. Jesus says there are 3 ways to be single in God's eyes:

- (1) You can be born that way in the sense that there has been some sort of physical deformation that keeps you from being able to have marital relations and so requires a form of singleness.
- (2) There can be mutilation by man. You remember in the near East, there were cultures where men would have the job of looking over the harem, and so they would actually be physically mutilated in order that they might be "trusted" to be in charge of the harem.
- (3) Being a spiritual eunuch for the sake of the kingdom...being called to celibacy for kingdom work. Being convinced through prayer and affirmation that this is God's special calling on your life.
- d. The disciples were saying...we will just stay single because marriage is hard...heard that one before?...But Jesus says, No, marriage is good, even if it's hard. Commitment is necessary. Singleness is a calling. So the disciples, like many in their age and ours, are so allergic to commitment that they declare celibacy better than Jesus' view of marriage. And Jesus responds by emphatically rejecting their rationale. Marriage is good; celibacy, singleness is a calling that only a select few are called to.

9. In what ways do Jesus' words clash with the value and definition most people have for marriage today?

- a. As people, generally we are also allergic to commitment...except on our terms...which, of course, can change with the wind.
- b. Jesus' words completely reshape the debate itself, and ask us to rethink what we're doing when we commit to one another in marriage. When we make these vows, this isn't just some ritual of no significance that we go through up here when we marry. We are making vows before God and man.
- c. Jesus' emphasis is on making divorce hard...the Pharisees was on making it easy. Jesus' way upheld the sanctity of marriage...the Pharisees way open the door to all kinds of licentiousness...multiple divorces leading to the breakdown in the society and a decline of people following God's standards...which leads to God's judgment against the society starting first with the Church.
- d. When people believe in consequences to their sins...sin is restrained...so Jesus gives little room for divorce... so sin is restrained...the Pharisees basically said sin as much as you want as long as you are happy...do whatever is right in your own eyes. We know where that takes a culture!
- e. Everyone should devote themselves to helping to strengthen the family. If you've gone through divorce you have an opportunity to minister to struggling marriages and our family, to be able to say, "Let me tell you what I had to go through in that. And let me encourage you how to overcome and to stay together."
- f. Perhaps there has been an irreparable situation. A situation where the marriage vow has been so grossly broken, that the opportunity for reconciliation is not there. You still need to gather around and say, "It is not my lack of respect in regard to the marital estate, but rather the opposite. My high esteem leads me to say that this marital relationship must end because of the infidelity that has occurred."
- g. The point to remember is that Jesus has a very high view of marriage...higher than any of us for He wrote the book on the need for commitment. And as His people we are to work at our marriages...because we made a commitment to God and to one another. Work at it...
- h. Divorce was given by permission of God because of the sinfulness of men...it is never mandated! It is not a creation ordinance.

Matthew Bible Study
February 17, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review- Matthew 19:1-12

1. What is the topic that the Pharisees want to talk about? Divorce. What is the topic that Jesus talks about? Marriage.
2. In what ways do Jesus' words clash with the value and definition most people have for marriage today? Why?
 - a. As people, generally we are also allergic to commitment...except on our terms...which, of course, can change with the wind.
 - b. Jesus' words completely reshape the debate itself, and ask us to rethink what we're doing when we commit to one another in marriage. When we make these vows, this isn't just some ritual of no significance that we go through up here when we marry. We are making vows before God and man.
 - c. Jesus' emphasis is on making divorce hard...the Pharisees was on making it easy. Jesus' way upheld the sanctity of marriage...the Pharisees way open the door to all kinds of licentiousness...multiple divorces leading to the breakdown in the society and a decline of people following God's standards...which leads to God's judgment against the society starting first with the Church.
 - d. When people believe in consequences to their sins...sin is restrained...so Jesus gives little room for divorce... so sin is restrained...the Pharisees basically said sin as much as you want as long as you are happy...do whatever is right in your own eyes. We know where that takes a culture!
 - e. Divorce was given by permission of God because of the sinfulness of men...it is never mandated! It is not a creation ordinance.
3. What about the divorced Christian? What does this passage say to them? How can it bring comfort and hope which is Jesus' desire for all His children?
 - a. Hard to receive these words but they do eventually heal for knowing the truth is what will set us free.
 - b. Everyone should devote themselves to helping to strengthen the family. If you've gone through divorce you have an opportunity to minister to struggling marriages and our family, to be able to say, "Let me tell you what I had to go through in that. And let me encourage you how to overcome and to stay together."
4. Questions came up after we ended the class about the Pharisees question to Jesus and Jesus' actual response to the divorce question.
 - a. First question dealt with the Pharisees question. What did they mean by "any cause"? Were they saying there were multiple causes or were they asking for a specific cause for divorce? My answer was that it was probably both...
 - (1) They were always trying to pin Him down...
 - (2) Plus they had given multiple reasons to themselves and to the people they "led" for why divorce was acceptable.
 - b. Second question dealt specifically with Jesus' specific response; *"And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."* Was he speaking generally or was He actually giving a specific answer to their question? Once again I think it is both and.
 - (1) This answer was specifically giving answer to Moses commands found in Deut. 24:1-4..."And I say to you..."= "Let me clarify since you seem so dense and so willing to place divorce in the same category as marriage." In other words, this "permission given through Moses by God was because of sin...that means divorce is a sin for whatever reason...so we must start there.

- (2) Is He in fact giving simply a single reason in answer to their inquiry knowing that there are others but also that they weren't really listening anyway...since there is no good reason for a divorce in God's eyes especially among Christians...but sexual sins and desertion...breaking of the covenant vows can be reasons for dealing with this sin. Also, maybe giving them a single reason ...knowing how literal that they were in their interpretation so as to make it clear how HARD...how DIFFICULT, it should be for people...especially "devote" people to divorce.
- (3) They may have been saying gives us a cause or many causes and Jesus simply said ...ok I will give you one...here it is...sexual immorality...which is a big word...broader than simply adultery...as Moses talked about in Deut. 24.

C. Matthew 19:13-15

1. The story itself is straightforward. Some parents have come to Jesus asking Him to bless their children, to pray for their children, requesting their infants to be taken in the arms of the Savior and blessed. The disciples have attempted to keep these parents from bringing their children to Jesus and Jesus responds, not by rebuking the parents, but by rebuking the disciples.
2. What things come to mind as far as what Jesus may be illustrating with this short teaching?
 - a. No one is to be rejected for coming before the KING.
 - b. The receptiveness of children stands in a direct contrast to the skepticism of the religious elites...and even His own disciples.
 - c. We must aspire to child-like lowliness and humility if we want to be in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Jesus wants to make it clear again that the kingdom that He is setting up belongs to the humble.
 - (1) Think how often He continually presses that truth home to the disciples. Chapter 18 opened up with that declaration that the one who is great in the kingdom is humble. And now, Jesus, speaking to His disciples who are beginning to grasp that He is the Messiah of Israel, the rightful king of all God's people, but who also think that, "Well if He's the king and He's the Messiah, then we're pretty important. Which one of us is greatest in this kingdom? And surely He would only be concerned with those who are great and important in the land."
 - (2) Once again Jesus says, if you want to be in My kingdom, you've got to have child-like humility. Jesus is using this event as an opportunity to instruct His disciples in the necessity of humility.
 - d. Jesus is not just blessing and praying for those who are child-like in their humility here; He is blessing and praying for children specifically, as well. It is children who are being brought to Him. He is praying for children. He is laying His hands on children.
 - e. He is also making the point that these children are being "drawn" to Him by His Spirit to hinder them or any that would come is to stand opposed to God just as the religious elite have been doing. He is saying, "Don't be like them." This is very important in light of two things that we see, one in the Scripture and one in Jesus' time.
 - (1) In the Old Testament, for instance in the book of Genesis, very often the patriarchs prayed for God's blessing and favor upon their children by the laying-on of hands.
 - (2) In Jesus' time it was indeed a practice on the evening of the Day of Atonement, for good, faithful, observant Jews to take their young children, their infants in arm and take them to the scribe and to ask the scribe to pray for two things. They would ask the scribe to pray that the child would not depart from the way of righteousness and that the child would grow up into a full understanding of the knowledge of the law.
 - (3) Now these parents are taking their children, not to a scribe, but to Jesus. You see, these parents believe in some measure on the Lord, Jesus Christ. The passage doesn't tell us how much they knew, or how much they understood, but they apparently recognized Jesus is the one that they wanted to bless their children. Not only to pray that their children would not depart from the way of righteousness but that they might grow up in the knowledge of

the Lord. So the Lord Jesus welcomes these children to Himself, and He prays and He blesses them. The laying on of hands for the purpose of blessing the children was done by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus responds to the faith of these parents with His favor.

- (4) And J.C. Ryle says, *"Let us learn from these verses that the Lord Jesus cares tenderly for the souls of little children. Young as they are, they are not beneath His thought and attention. That mighty heart of His has room for the babe in its cradle as well as the king on his throne. He regards each infant as possessing within its little body an undying principle which will outlive the pyramids of Egypt and see the sun and moon quenched at that last day, and so He cares for their souls."*

3. Why do you suppose Jesus repeats Himself? (See Matt. 18:4-6)

- Because they obviously didn't get the application the first time.
- Here are children...they are to be considered a blessing in need of blessing and caring for.
- The disciples have only been concerned with their position up to this point...pointing to the world instead of Christ for direction...wondering along with the Pharisees about Jesus' teaching on marriage and all.
- The disciples had just been saying...we will just stay single because marriage is hard...heard that one before?...But Jesus says, No, marriage is good, even if it's hard. Commitment is necessary. Singleness is a calling. So the disciples, like many in their age and ours, are so allergic to commitment that they declare celibacy better than Jesus' view of marriage. And Jesus responds by emphatically rejecting their rationale. Marriage is good; celibacy, singleness is a calling that only a select few are called to.

4. How humble are we? Thinking of the disciples, the Pharisees and the children...which one are you most like much of the time? Why?

- Gospel humility, even in the dark providences of life, recognizes that behind that frowning providence is the smiling face of the loving God and Father. And gospel humility accepts from the hands of the Lord the trials, the losses and crosses that He brings into our experience and asks His Holy Spirit to help us endure.
- Jesus uses children, in other words, as a metaphor to speak of those who are child-like in their humility. He's saying, my kingdom belongs to those who will humble themselves like these children, to those who will be child-like in their humility.

5. How do these verses tie in with His teaching on marriage? He begins by talking about the blessing of marriage and then He continues on talking about children in marriage...as well as our responsibility for them and the blessing we receive in watching and experience their growth.

6. His teaching on the kingdom?

- Children have a place and a role in the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- That role is seen in placing the sign and seals upon them at birth in baptism and then enabling them as early as possible to come to the Lord's Table for them to grow in His graces from as early as possible.
- The church is to recognize what children bring to the table...family, humility and purity... and learn and remember.
 - Basil, said, *"The apostle praised Timothy who had known the holy Scripture from infancy, and he also instructed that children be reared in the discipline and correction of the Lord. So we consider every time of life, even the very earliest, suitable for receiving persons into the community of faith."*
 - Calvin would say this, *"That Jesus embraced children was a testimony that Christ reckoned them in His flock."*
- The church is to recognize the grave responsibility it has in directing these little ones to Christ well. We will be held liable if they are hindered in anyway.
- The church needs to be so integrated in its life and ministries so that every member young and old feels that they have a purpose and role to play...and all are important part of this family unity.

D. Matthew 19:16-22

1. How is this man like so many in our culture today?

- a. We all think we are good people...
- b. Everyone wants an easy way to believe and be counted among the group that they want to be a part of...what's the easiest way to be a Christian? What's the easiest way to fit in? What's the easiest way to be a politician? Can I buy my way to heaven? What must I do to be saved?

2. Put in your own words this man dilemma and his seeming desire? He a rich young man who is looking for answers. His heart seems to be aching. He wants something he has so far been unable to find. Verse 16, *"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"* Verse 20, *"What do I still lack? I'm lacking something, Jesus. Can you help me?"* He wants Jesus to show him the way to life.

3. What is Jesus' response to the man?

- a. He begins by telling him 2 things that won't work.
 - (1) The way of moral performance. This wealthy young man had everything he needs materially but spiritually he is bankrupt and he knows it. And so he comes to Jesus to discover what to do about it. The assumption behind his question is that the solution to his soul-sickness is a moral one. *"What good deed must I do to have eternal life?"* We think the answer's got to be something for us to do, some duty for us to perform, some moral code to maintain in order to gain acceptance with God. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments, but your commandment keeping better measure up to the standard and God's goodness stands alone. So you can never measure up that way. *"You know what, no matter how hard you try you will never, never, never be good enough to earn eternal life. Never. The way of moral performance does not work."*
 - (2) He seems to grasp, at this point at least, that the way of morality is futile; it's a dead end. So what about the way of material prosperity? *"What do I still lack?"* That's his question of Jesus. Listen to the answer. *"If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven. And then come and follow me."* It must have hit this young man like a thunderclap. *"Sell it all, give it away, follow me."* That's pretty radical, isn't it? *"Sell it all, give it away, follow me."*

4. Why is Jesus being so radical and so straight forward at the same time?

- a. Part of the answer actually has to do with the Ten Commandments that He has quoted earlier. What Jesus didn't say at that earlier point in the conversation was just as important as what He did say.
- b. Lest we forget, the Ten Commandments are divided into two sections - the first 4 commandments deal with our love to God and the second 6 that Jesus has quoted to the rich young man, the second six deal with our love of neighbor which is why Jesus appeals to Leviticus 19:18, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"* as a summary of them.
- c. When Jesus quoted from the final 6 commandments, however, He omitted the last commandment all together - *"You shall not covet."* And He did so for a reason. It turns out that that is the one area of this young man's life where he is unwilling to submit to God. And so in verse 21 Jesus circles back around and puts His finger right there on his materialism, on his love of money, on his covetousness. And as He does, He exposes its terrible and enslaving power. And the young man, confronted with a choice between following Jesus or the love of his money, verse 22, *"went away sorrowful."* He was grieved and he left. Either Jesus or money; that's the choice set before him. *"Sell it all, give it away, follow me."* Either Jesus or money. And he chose money.
- d. With a single blow, Jesus has unmasked the superficiality of this young man's earlier confidence that he had kept the Ten Commandments after all.

5. Now is Jesus telling us all that we have to give away our money?

- a. Yes, if our God is our money...if the way we define ourselves is with our money and position...if we believe we can buy our way into heaven...then our money is a hindrance and must be dealt with.
- b. No, for our day to day is involved with using money appropriately...it is for us to control the money, not the money to control us.

E. Matthew 19:23-30

1. What lesson is Jesus seeking to teach His disciples with this event?

- a. Being rich won't get you anywhere with God. For them, and for the culture in which they lived, riches were one of if not the great evidence that God loved you, that you were in God's favor if you were prosperous and wealthy. And so they're thinking, *"If the rich have a hard time entering the kingdom of God, well what hope is there for the rest of us? If they've got a problem, then who can be saved?"*
- b. Being a ruler...in the synagogue or any other religious institution will not guarantee you a place in heaven. Another given in this time.
- c. Jesus called a rich man to follow Him and he left to pursue his riches instead. It's easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. But there is hope.
- d. "Follow me," Jesus said. Why? "Because I'm more than enough for your heart. I will do for you what neither your morality nor your material prosperity can ever do. The God who is so good that you will never measure up to His standards is also so loving that He will stoop down to do it for you in Me!" That's what Jesus is saying. If you try to DIY your life, you will ruin it for time and eternity.

2. How is this event and the command to let the little children come to Jesus and do not hinder them go together? How does this event build on what Jesus has been teaching throughout this chapter?

- a. There is more to Jesus' teaching than meets the eyes sometimes.
- b. The old traditions and teachings all need to be measured against God's word.
- c. Should not be so disturbed when worldly wisdom is found in error. They have just had a lesson on marriage, children and not the rich and spiritual and they have been taught something completely different than they have assumed from their culture.
- d. The radical message we all need to hear is this: Christ separates us from the world; or, the world separates us from Christ.

F. Matthew 19:27-30

1. What would you say has prompted Peter's question in verse 27?

- a. He is asking, 'Lord are there kingdom rewards for faithful disciples? When you call on us in discipleship to leave all and follow you, may we expect to be rewarded for that? Is there some compensation for that when you call us to that in discipleship?' Peter, in light of what Jesus had just pronounced about the rich man, is asking about the status of the disciples. Notice he uses we and us. He doesn't say, 'Lord, what about me?' He says, 'what about us Lord? We left everything and followed You. What about us? What is our status in Your kingdom?' In other words, he's saying, 'Lord, if we have lost the world for Your sake, I mean, if we have risked being kicked out of synagogues, if we have risked losing our family connections, if we have risked our trade, our vocation, our material ability to provide for our families for Your sake, can we expect there to be some sort of reward? Have we done this in vain?'
- b. This is a vital question, no matter what we think of Peter's motivation. I would suggest to you that just like in most of the other questions of the apostles, there was a mixture. Some good motives. Some bad motives. But let me say that the question is vital. It is vital because the Lord does call not just His twelve apostles, but all those who followed Him, all those who are

His disciples, to leave everything and follow Him. And that means, at least, that there can be nothing in this life that has a priority over Him. This is the right question at the right time...for there are rewards on earth and in heaven for those who follow the Lord. That's the nature of the call to discipleship.

2. How does Jesus' answer give him and every other disciple of God great comfort, hope and peace?

Matthew Bible Study
February 24, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are some of the themes that Jesus is teaching in Chapter 19?
2. How do they tie in with His overall teaching on the Kingdom?

C. Matthew 20:1-16

1. Read again Matthew 19:30. Given their reaction to Jesus' positions on marriage and divorce...His position on children...His position considering working your way into God's favor...His positions concerning the rich and famous...how would you think the disciples would react to this statement and why?
 - a. This is the first time they have heard this...along with the other "radical" things Jesus has said just in what we have in chapter 19.
 - b. Of course, there is nothing more radical about these statements than any of the other things He has said up to this point...concerning the Pharisees and the traditions of the law.
2. So why do you think Jesus tells a parable here in response to His statement in 19:30?
 - a. Did they recognize this to be a warning? That really is a challenge for the disciples. You remember in Matthew 19 verses 27, 28, and 29, Jesus says to the disciples, *"Yes, God will bless you, He will reward you in the here and the hereafter as His disciples. For everything you lose, you will receive many times over in this life and in the life to come."* But then He gave them this warning: *"the last will be first, and the first last."* What did He mean by this? That statement clearly concerned the disciples as well, and so, He gives this parable as an explanation.
 - b. It also clarifies what He meant in verses 28-29.
 - c. They were obviously confused about things they should not have been confused about.
 - (1) He did not say to them that God was going to give to them in accordance with their deeds. In other words, He did not say, if you will do this, then God will do that. He did not say, your deeds of service in His kingdom will earn you these blessing that He will give.
 - (2) And apparently the disciples were confused about the nature of these kingdom blessings, which Jesus saw as a very serious spiritual problem. The blessings, you see, of our service, in the life of the kingdom, are personal blessings, the personal satisfaction that we get from serving in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our whole outlook on life, are both directly related to our view of God.
 - If we think that God has to be coaxed into blessing us, and that we have to earn His favor and His love and His attention for us, then we will become bitter and suspicious people.
 - If we think that God, instead of being generous, benevolent, just, and kind and merciful, is begrudging in the way He blesses us, that He is frugal in the way He cares for us or gives us His love, then we will eventually become bitter and angry people. It will affect our relationships not only with one another; it will directly affect our relationship with God.
 - And Jesus saw the potential for just that kind of problem in the disciples. And so He told this parable to explain His statement, the first will be last, and the last first.
3. How does Matthew 20:1-6 answer the question of who's in mind in the statement... *"But many who are first will be last and the last first."*? Those who by human measure, by human perception, might be the people that you would think that would get the most honor, and glory, and blessing from God, turn out not to. And those who are often overlooked

and least noticed, and yet faithful in His service, those who are last, turn out to be first. Because God's blessings are not according to human measurement. They are not according to our perceptions.

4. What are some of the radical things that happen in this parable?

- a. He pays the ones who work an hour first.
 - (1) Now that is not only so that those who began working first can see what it was that they would be paid, because that is very important for Jesus to make the point of the story,
 - (2) But it is also important because even in that patterns we see a reversal of what your expectations would be. From an earthly, human perspective you might expect those blessings to be handed out, those wages to be handed out from first to last.
 - (3) So, Jesus gives us hints that the way God gives blessings, is different from the way we give blessings and wages, by the very fact that He has those who go out last, paid first.
- b. He pays everyone the same daily wage.
 - (1) He gives the ones who worked less the same as he gives the ones who work all day...and being the land owner it is his prerogative to do so.
 - (2) He is trying to make a specific point about the difference in the way God's blessings work, from the way that we handle remuneration in our lives.
 - (3) Money is so "precious" that people pay attention when money is used as an example or illustration.
- c. This landowner has the audacity to keep his agreement with the first group.
- d. It is clear that the overall message is that Jesus is the object here that the disciples and we should be focused on.
- e. We are Not to be jealous of each other's gifts...ever!
- f. That the last 3 groups were able to take him at His word when he said, *"...whatever is right I will give you"* and they went with no negotiations.
- g. The first group thought that they needed to set the wage and the benefits before they would work, the land owner ends up with the last laugh.
 - (1) They did not and would not recognize the landowner's sovereign rights.
 - (2) They again wanted to be the arbiters of what was fair and what was right and wrong.
 - (3) They were there only for a job...not to be happy in the opportunity to work.
- h. The first group represents non-believers...God gives them common grace that they take for granted and seek to set the rules about.
 - (1) They were seeking to give meaning to their work using their own definition. If I can't negotiate then it is not worth it...if I can't set the rules...
 - (2) They are complaining about His generosity towards them and others...he can define His generosity anyway he chooses...but keeping his word and giving them a job was generous as well.
 - (3) God says to them, *"Take what belongs to you and go."* They receive all the reward they will ever get in this life.
 - (4) The Sovereign choose who He would give His greater grace to ...men do not ever set the rules for salvation...

5. Aside from the fact that this is a parable: what are some of the modern day applications of this text?

- a. We forget who has provided us with the work...and it is that work that is part of the here and now blessing that Jesus spoke about in Chapter 19.
- b. We forget that this work given to us by God is given as a grace... for we were created to work...we are fulfilled in work so God has given us work as a grace for us.
- c. We forget that we are not entitled to a job...that the business owner is not entitled to give us a job or to keep us unless like the first group an agreement/contract has been struck.
- d. We forget all too often that we are working for someone else. This is not our business...we do not set the wages or the benefits.
- e. We forget that the owner has the right to do as he pleases and we should not compare what we have to others.

- f. We forget that we are never promised that life will be “fair” from our perspective. Now it is that protest, lifted up by the laborers who had worked twelve hours, that Jesus uses to make His point. He wants you to focus in on their attitude, and understand by a negative example, what kind of an attitude He doesn’t want you to have towards the heavenly Father.
- g. Many live from job to job...looking for another job when they got this one.
- h. What He is saying here is that what happens on judgment day when God pours out His final blessings, is kind of like what happens when payday comes.

D. Matthew 20:17-19..

1. What a change in topics...or is it? How does this relate to everything else Jesus has been talking about?

- a. He shocks them again. They would have been mulling over all that Jesus had been talking about on the trip...and rather than addressing what they were probably talking about He decides instead to talk about something else shocking.
- b. He had been working on their understanding of humility since they began with the question in chapter 18 about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. They shouldn’t work in the kingdom with the spirit of a hireling, thinking that we’ve got to do certain things in order for the Lord to bless us. Thinking that somehow He’s going to shortchange us. If we serve in the Lord’s kingdom like that, not only will we be miserable, but we are endangered of missing the kingdom itself. Our Lord is generous and gracious, and He promises to reward His children far more than we deserve, and we need to work with that spirit in mind. Human measurements don’t apply in the kingdom of heaven. God is sovereign, all His gifts are gifts of grace, and therefore we need to bow before that and acknowledge that. And so it’s important for us as we serve in the kingdom not to serve with the spirit of wanting to get more honor and more recognition and more authority given to us than to our brethren.
- c. He takes this opportunity again to define what true greatness is...servanthood...the type that willingly lays down their life for others.
- d. He focuses them on His choice to die. What’s He saying? If you want to be great in My kingdom, you have to die to self. I am the first in my kingdom. How am I first? I have made myself last. I will die for your sakes. Jesus is showing the disciples here what they must do.

2. Look at Matthew 12:40, 16:21, 17:9,12, 22. What, if anything new does Jesus reveal here that He hasn’t before?

- a. The very fact that He takes His disciples aside is filled with significance. This was an exceedingly hard truth to swallow. What Jesus was going to tell the disciples - you remember before had struck them with dismay, it had absolutely unnerved them - how kind it was of Him to take His disciples aside and to explain in detail what was going to happen to Him so that they did not have to hear this news in front of everyone else.
- b. Self-denial is a spiritual fruit which manifests our heart obedience to the first commandment. What is the first commandment? *“You shall have no other gods before me.”* What is the greatest challenge in our lives to the first commandment? To want to be God. We want to be our own God. We want to put ourselves first. And self-denial says what? No, I am not first. My God is first and His people are before me, and I deny myself for their sakes.
- c. The highest court of the Jews, we are told in Matthew 20:18, the Sanhedrin, will condemn Jesus to death. That is new.
- d. Then we also see that that court will hand Him over to the Roman authorities. The mention of Jesus’ condemnation by the Sanhedrin indicates that there was going to be a trial, and because the Jews could not administer the death sentence, He would have to be handed over to the Roman authorities.
- e. He was going to be mocked and scourged by the Roman authorities.
- f. And more importantly, this verse says that Jesus was going to be crucified. This is the first time in Matthews gospel that Jesus speaks of the manner of His death...this too would have been

shocking to these men...given the stigma that came with crucifixion... and then there was all of that talk about taking up our cross to follow Him...now this revelation adds a whole new dimension to that command for them. Being His disciple may mean martyrdom.

- g. Jesus is making it clear to His disciples that He has resolved to die for them. And they, in seeing that, can see a glimpse of true greatness in the kingdom.
- h. They were not just going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and set up His political kingdom...didn't Jesus say something about 12 thrones... but so that Jesus could become the Passover lamb.

3. What is the "good news" that they seem to miss if the next set of verses is any indication to what they heard?

- a. That He is doing this for them...and all who are His.
- b. That He is doing this to show them the true meaning of the whole first shall be last and the last first thing...what true greatness is...servanthood.
- c. His resurrection...His deity...His righteousness...the righteousness that they need. What is it about the resurrection?
 - (1) Why do we die? Because we are sinners.
 - (2) Well then, why did Jesus die? Not because He was a sinner but because He stepped in the sinner's place...our place. In Christ resurrection God says 3 things:
 - I've accepted this sacrifice for sin.
 - He had no sin in Him. Death had no right to keep Him in its clutches.
 - The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely essential for our salvation for His resurrection from the dead to newness of life is the resurrection which we experience first in regeneration in which we will experience in the last day in glorification.

E. Matthew 20:20-28

1. Why are we having this discussion again? (see Matthew 18:1ff)

- a. Pride and position.
- b. They haven't heard...again...the meat of Jesus' teaching.
- c. They were thinking of the 12 thrones and wanting to put the word in for the 1st two.

2. How does Jesus define greatness in this text?

- a. True kingdom greatness is a gospel grace.
- b. You cannot achieve greatness apart from the grace of God, in fact you can't even see what true greatness is until the Lord has opened your eyes.
- c. He teaches us that true kingdom greatness is not in being perceived by all those around us as influential and respected and important, but instead it is seen in our willing service to one another for the sake of Christ. And so Jesus gives us a contrast between our views of worldly greatness and importance, and spiritual greatness and importance.

3. What was Jesus' response to James and John's mother's request?

- a. He came down on the "boys" and not the mother.
- b. He asked them another question which they too quickly answered in the affirmative not having a clue again what Jesus was asking them. Isaiah describes the cup that Jesus is referring too as the cup of God's complete wrath. (Is. 51:17-22)
- c. They would in fact, drink from His cup...receiving in themselves what all of us deserve... James became the first of the disciples to be martyred, we are told in the book of Acts. Herod put him to death. John was the last of the disciples, but he died as an exile on Patmos. These men would spend their lives suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ...but not to the degree that Jesus did...they may suffer death but never separation from God...Jesus drank all of that from His cup...

- d. After the other disciples come to Jesus incensed He takes this time to teach them again about "greatness/servanthood".
 - (1) Greatness in His kingdom consists of self-giving in the out-pouring of the self in service to others for the glory of God.
 - (2) Jesus' own example testifies to this: *"I have come into this world, not to be served but to serve, and to give my life for the ransom for many."* Jesus is setting before them and us the substitutionary atonement, that He died as a ransom for our sins. Christ's love is our source, our motivation, and our example of how we are to love and serve.
 - (3) J.C. Ryle says, *"True greatness consists not in receiving, but in giving, not in selfish absorption of good things, but imparting good to others. Not in being served, but in serving. Not in sitting still and being ministered to, but in going about and ministering to others."*
- e. This is a hard lesson. Jesus taught it over and over and over to His disciples, because, as one of the old Puritans said, *"Nothing cleaves closer to the heart than pride."* Our pride keeps us back from loving and serving in this way. It is only the work of the Holy Spirit that can sever the pride from our hearts. So Jesus has to teach this lesson over and over again. It is hard work, but it is gospel work.

Matthew Bible Study
March 2, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review- Re-read Matthew 20:17-28

4. What are we, today, to take away from Matthew 20:17-19? Jesus accomplished salvation for His own and we have nothing to do with it!
5. What was Jesus' response to James and John's mother's request?
 - f. They would in fact, drink from His cup...receiving in themselves what all of us deserve... James became the first of the disciples to be martyred, we are told in the book of Acts. Herod put him to death. John was the last of the disciples, but he died as an exile on Patmos. These men would spend their lives suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ...but not to the degree that Jesus did...they may suffer death but never separation from God...Jesus drank all of that from His cup...
 - g. This is a hard lesson. Jesus taught it over and over and over to His disciples, because, as one of the old Puritans said, *"Nothing cleaves closer to the heart than pride."* Our pride keeps us back from loving and serving in this way. It is only the work of the Holy Spirit that can sever the pride from our hearts. So Jesus has to teach this lesson over and over again. It is hard work, but it is gospel work.
6. What about the other disciples?
 - a. Put out that they would even bring it up...again!
 - b. Put out that they got to Jesus before they did. Typical of most humans.
 - c. Bring your mother into this so that Jesus wouldn't get too upset.
 - d. Probably not put out that they would bother Jesus with such petty stuff just after He has just told them about His death for them!

C. Matthew 20: 26-28- For doctrinal clarity...look again at vs. 28, "...even as the Son of man came not to be serve but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

1. Jesus does something here that is crucial for them and for us...he tells them why He came... Why is this revelation so important at this juncture? (See also Luke 19:10; John 18:37b)
 - a. There isn't much time left.
 - b. He wants to be very clear.
 - c. They will not be able to say He never told them. They might want to say it...but in all honesty they will not be able to...And in this we see God doing what He has done throughout the Scriptures by letting His children know...His revealed will.
2. Pick out the doctrinal truths associated with this small text.
 - a. The doctrine of service...as a vocation and a life style for all believers. Servant/leadership.
 - b. God's providence.
 - c. Jesus' divinity.
 - d. His humiliation.
 - e. Substitutionary atonement. The word "for" speaks of doing something "in place of".
 - f. He is also talking about Definite or limited atonement...for whom did He give His life a ransom for... "the many"...not "all" or "a few".

D. Matthew 20:29-34

1. What is the point of these verses, in light, of all the other teaching of the last couple of chapters?
 - a. Shows us again...just in case we have forgotten that Jesus is great and powerful and He stands alone in "that" greatness.

- b. He is showing us the greatness and the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the disciples are jostling amongst themselves to be counted great, here is Jesus ministering to outcasts. It is a picture of what true greatness is in His kingdom.
- c. Shows us His servant's heart that keeps trying to teach His disciples.
- d. Jesus is on His way to be crucified and He stops along the way to heal these blind men... *"...and immediately they received their sight and followed Him."* He didn't make them wait...there was no time left!

2. What do these blind men see that the disciples seem to have missed? See Mark 10:46 -52 for a bit more clarity on this event.)

- a. That Jesus is in fact, the Lord and Savior...the Messiah...who comes to heal the blind, the sick and the lame....of which they too are numbered.
- b. Bartimaeus= Son of Timaeus...cries out to the One- "Rabboni"= My Lord and Master...here is a true beggar- poor and blind- who "recognizes" the Messiah and address Him as Lord and Master...This blind man saw more clearly than they.
- c. They needed to treat Jesus was more respect and honor than they have...gotten comfortable with Him taking Him for granted. James and John and the other disciples failed to grasp that Jesus deserved honor and respect.
- d. There is an obvious contrast in play here between these blind men and the 2 disciples of verses 20-27. Jesus is once again taking this time to teach His disciples.
 - Jesus is teaching them to focus less on themselves and to draw closer to God.
 - The blind men "see" that they are called to worship the one true God while the disciples are scrambling over position.
 - The disciples had "seen" all things divine in Jesus and yet took Him for granted/ they were entitled ... the blind men did not take Jesus for granted for He is their LORD and KING!
 - The blind men are humble...and the disciples consider themselves somewhat on an equal plain with Jesus...how presumptuous they were!
 - The blind men weren't put off when the crowds rebuked...they endured and persevered through it...the disciples had shown a propensity to side with the crowd/Pharisees on things they didn't understand Jesus saying.
- e. Their need of healing...understanding...to be changed.

3. What do these passages reveal about our nature?

- a. We learn from these two verses that we only cry out to the Lord when we realize our need. Let me say that again. We only cry out to the Lord when we realize our need.
- b. In the description of these beggars, we have a picture of everyone who stands in need of the grace of Christ. This text is a mirror for us. For though we may not have physical infirmities, we all have moral and spiritual infirmities. And the Lord Jesus is the only one who can heal them. We must cry out to Him for grace if we are going to be helped in our need.
- c. All people need the Lord. But not all people perceive that they need the Lord. The credit to these beggars is that they knew that they needed Jesus. And the sad thing is there are many people, even in churches, that don't know that they need Jesus. They think that they're just fine.
- d. John Flavel, the old Puritan, once said, *"Christ is not sweet until sin is made bitter to us."* And the fact of the matter is there are a lot of people who don't think they need Christ's grace, because they don't see their sin and they don't see their need.
- e. A healthy prayer life flows from a sense of need and apprehension of the Savior. Look at how these men respond to Jesus Christ.
 - (1) They called out to Him, *"Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David."* Jesus is Lord. That's how you confess Jesus as Savior. Lots of people make a distinction between those things. But in the Bible, to confess Jesus as Savior is to confess Him as Lord.
 - (2) But also, notice they call Him out as the Son of David. They're acknowledging that He is the Messiah that had been promised by the prophets.
 - (3) Now however dimly they saw those truths, it's apparent that they knew more about Jesus than many of those people in the crowd that were following Him. And they continued to

cry out. They saw who He was. They confessed His Lordship and His Messiahship. And that confession is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

- f. All of us need to be humble. They cried out, *"Lord, have mercy on us."* They knew that they were in need.
 - g. Their prayer was simple and Scriptural.
- E. The Triumphal Entry- Matt. 21:1-12 (included are parts of Mark 1:1-11; Luke 19:28-40) We talked about Jesus knowing His time is short and He is seeking to teach His disciple what they will need so now more than ever every single action that He takes during this final week is chocked full of significance for the disciples and for us. Because Jesus knows that the time appointed from before the foundation of the world has now arrived. And He wants to make it very clear who He is and what He has come to do. The day is Sunday. And Jesus and His disciples are making their way into Jerusalem. Many other pilgrims are coming to Jerusalem too. It's Passover time and it will seem like half of Israel is in Jerusalem in these days. The city will swell with pilgrims coming for the Passover. And so Jesus is coming to Jerusalem in a time in which most of Israel is going to see or hear about the events of these days and it's not going to have to be sent back by word of mouth to the villages around them because so many of them will be right there in Jerusalem.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

*"Say to the daughter of Zion,
'Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they said, "The Lord has need of it." They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

1. What should the fact that Jesus knew right where to find the donkey and her colt say to us about this one standing before us...or the One we are reading about almost 2000 years later?

- a. The same one who spoke to the prophets of old is the same one speaking now to them and to us.
- b. Do we realize that His eyes are on us just like His eyes were on the disciples and even on those beasts of burden? You know, if He knows even the position of domestic animals, we can be sure that He knows our hearts.
- c. Do we see our lives in light of that kind of knowledge? Do we live our lives in light of that kind of knowledge of Christ? He knows everything.
- d. I would suggest to you that sometimes we live as if He doesn't know where we are, what we're doing, what we're saying, and what we're thinking. But this passage reminds us again that our Lord is omniscient. He knows everything. And so we must live that way.
- e. J.C. Ryle says this: *"The sense of our Lord Jesus' perfect knowledge of all our ways ought to have the same effect on our hearts. Let us do nothing we would not like Christ to see and say nothing that we would not like Christ to hear. Let us seek to live and move and have our being under a continual recollection of Christ's presence. He is present with us."*

Matthew Bible Study

March 16, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Matthew 20:29-34

- a. What is the point of these verses, in light of all the other teaching of the last couple of chapters?
 - (1) Shows us again...just in case we have forgotten that Jesus is great and powerful and He stands alone in "that" greatness.
 - (2) He is showing us the greatness and the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the disciples are jostling amongst themselves to be counted great, here is Jesus ministering to outcasts. It is a picture of what true greatness is in His kingdom.
 - (3) Shows us His servant's heart that keeps trying to teach His disciples.
 - (4) Jesus is on His way to be crucified and He stops along the way to heal these blind men... *"...and immediately they received their sight and followed Him."* He didn't make them wait...there was no time left!
- b. What do these blind men see that the disciples seem to have missed? See Mark 10:46 -52 for a bit more clarity on this event.)
 - (1) They needed to treat Jesus with more respect and honor than they have...gotten comfortable with Him taking Him for granted. James and John and the other disciples failed to grasp that Jesus deserved honor and respect.
 - (2) There is an obvious contrast in play here between these blind men and the 2 disciples of verses 20-27. Jesus is once again taking this time to teach His disciples.
 - Jesus is teaching them to focus less on themselves and to draw closer to God.
 - The blind men "see" that they are called to worship the one true God while the disciples are scrambling over position.
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 - The blind men weren't put off when the crowds rebuked...they endured and persevered through it...the disciples had shown a propensity to side with the crowd/Pharisees on things they didn't understand Jesus saying.

- C. The Triumphal Entry- Matt. 21:1-12 (included are parts of Mark 1:1-11; Luke 19:28-40) We talked about Jesus knowing His time is short and He is seeking to teach His disciple what they will need so now more than ever every single action that He takes during this final week is chocked full of significance for the disciples and for us.

1. Let's look at the passage: *"And when He drew near and saw the city, He wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"*

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

*"Say to the daughter of Zion,
'Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they said, "The Lord has need of it." They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

2. What was Jesus affirming when He enters Jerusalem on a colt on this Sunday? (See also Isaiah 62:1-11; Zechariah 9:9...for further context on what is happening here.)
 - a. His Kingship...I Kings 1:28-37
 - (1) Jesus is making a purposeful statement that He is God's king...David had made a declaration by having Solomon ride in on his own mule when Solomon was being affirmed as king over Israel by David.
 - (2) This act was necessary to communicate what the people had been looking for though they had lost the understanding also from the book of Isaiah of the Suffering Servant's purpose.
 - (3) They seemed to get the imagery...vs. 8= II Kings 9:13

- b. His Messiahship
 - c. His humility...
 - d. His submission to and the fulfilling of His Father's will.
- 3. Jesus had made a point throughout the Gospels to tell people not to tell others who He is at that time. So why now? Why is Jesus doing it this way...so publically?
 - a. He wants His claims to be widely known and He wants the events of the next few days to be widely known. Jesus wants just about everybody in Israel to have some sort of a first or a second hand account of the events that are going to go on that week.
 - b. J.C. Ryle says it this way: *"Before the great sacrifice for the sin of the world was offered up, it was right that every eye should be fixed on the victim."* Jesus is focusing our eyes on His person and His work.
- 4. What does God have these people to proclaim about Jesus, many of whom have no idea what they really are saying?
 - a. *Hosanna*= Save, now, we beseech you! These people were acknowledging what they hoped to be true that Jesus was the one to save them...even if their definition of saving was not exactly the same as Jesus'.
 - b. *Son of David*=coming from the line of David as God had covenanted with David to send. Messianic exclamation. We saw that with the blind beggars in the last chapter
 - c. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* = Jesus was coming with the authority of God. Though they did not fully comprehend what they were saying...God had His Son proclaimed to be who he said He was. This is the One whom God has sent. This is our Messiah. This is our king! See also Ps. 72:17
 - d. *Hosanna in the highest!*= Let prosperity in the highest degree attend to Him and let Him have a name above all other names, a throne above all other thrones, to the highest heaven. SEDITION if I ever heard it...interesting how this will turn around in just a few days.
 - e. They proclaim Him as the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee (a territorial prophet in some minds)...not completely wrong but shows their ultimate confusion brought on by their unbelief...by bad and false teaching concerning the Messiah. Some said Prophet other Messiah...way to much confusion.
- 5. Jesus is proclaimed by an interesting source...most of who will be calling for His crucifixion in less than a week. What does this tell us about God getting His message out? Why should that matter to us?
 - a. Just like when He spoke to the Pharisees (Luke 19:40) when they told Him to quiet the crowd's enthusiasm... God the Father has them proclaim the truth in very much the same manner that stones would...without understanding...simply would do as they were commanded to do.
 - b. God's message will get out...no one who is His will be lost...or missed...the message will get out...and interesting enough it will get out through people...some who may not even be His. Some have set out to disprove the resurrection only to be saved in the process...some hear atheists spout their teachings against God only to be drawn to this One they spend so much time speaking again.
- 6. Look at the last couple of comments above in the text...why are they significant to be added to these texts? What is He communicating with these inclusions?
 - a. Every time this passage is read, the question is put to people, "What do you think of Jesus?" "Who is this?" "Who do you say that I am?" There is only one saving response to that and that issue is pressed on all of us today. Not that much different than when Jesus asked His disciple who they thought and who the people thought he was in Matt. 16:13-17.
 - b. The odd thing is 3 fold:
 - (1) Most of the ones proclaiming Him to be the Messiah...do not know what they are saying...and so they will be calling for His crucifixion in less than a week.

- (2) The rest of the town doesn't seem to even know ABOUT Him...a prophet, but so what? A prophet from Nazareth is the best they can say about Him...He does not even affect some people in the least.
- (3) Jesus comes into Jerusalem...the ancient capital of God...openly proclaimed to be the Messiah...but with little to know understanding in those who were supposed to understand. A reason why Jesus ultimately laments over the city in chapter 23.

D. Matthew 21:12-13

1. Interesting historical side note: Many of the manuscripts/parchments of fragments of the gospel of Matthew say, *"And Jesus entered the temple of God..."* (as many as do have it... are as many as do not have it) An interesting designation that Matthew chooses to use here. The original temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon and was popularly known as "Solomon's Temple". This temple was destroyed in 586 BC. When the temple was rebuilt it was called "Zerubbabel's Temple" after the man who led its rebuilding. This temple stood for nearly 500 years until Herod the Great began to dismantle it in 21 BC in preparation for a "new and improved" temple...in other words, one that would bear his name....which is what happened...this one that Jesus is entering had become known as "Herod's Temple", though it was not finished until long after Herod the Great's death. Also, this is Monday morning.
2. So with this little information, why do you suppose that Matthew would refer to this as the temple of God?
 - a. He was writing to people that believed that God was actually present in the temple (much like Zeus on Mt. Olympus and as such they were blessed because of this presence in the temple) but also understood that there was more to all of this than simple a building.
 - b. Main purpose of the temple was for Gods' glory...for worship...for adoration...for sacrifice...and for prayer.
 - c. People delight in giving building's the name of the ones who designed or built them...whereas this one should bear the name of the One it was built for.
 - d. It would also set up the reason for the urgency for those who came after the event.
3. Jesus enters the temple area and walks into the court of the Gentiles where all of this buying and selling is going on. (See also the first time Jesus did this John 2:13-17) What was the reason for all this activity?
 - a. The many foreigners would need to exchange their currency for the authorized coin for paying the ½ shekel temple tax. But...a foreigner would have to pay for this service... as much as 6% the exchange rate. Plus, if he did not have the right change he would have to pay another 6% handling fee if you will to rectify the situation.
 - b. But even more so now...all these people were coming to the Passover and most would not have brought the necessary sacrifices if in fact they even had access to the animals where they lived...urbanites as opposed to agrarians. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote about the "millions" that would pour into Jerusalem for the Passover.
 - c. The ranchers/sheep owners/ farmers would purchase a sacrifice in Jerusalem rather than bring their firstborn/best stock.
 - d. Some were too poor for the sheep or oxen offerings and they were allowed to purchase sacrificial doves/pigeons. But the cost of the "temple qualified" dove was as much as 50 times higher than what you would pay outside the temple and wonder if it would be acceptable when you brought it in.
 - e. This practice had begun with the poor in mind to help them in their ability to sacrifice...but men being men...the priest and others saw it as a way to make money for the individual and the temple...and it had become a means of exploitation, extortion and thievery. Hence the term "den of thieves"...

4. What do we make of this violence on the part of Jesus? What does this tell us about Him?
 - a. He is capable of strong feelings even anger, which is not anger as we think of it but rather justice...lest we forget.
 - b. Capable of defending His house...God's temple...and as God's Son...His house. Metaphor for being able to care for His entire house...His people...something that was promised in the covenant with Abraham and still true today.
 - c. The priest were enabling sin rather than keeping God's house pure from such things.
 - d. The court needed to be cleansed that the peoples of the "nations" could have a place to draw near to God.

5. Why is it so important for Jesus to designate the temple as "*a house of prayer*"? What should this designation do for our understanding of the church locally?
 - a. Jesus spoke for God and turned over tables. Is. 56:7-8; Jer. 7:11
 - b. The Pharisees and Sadducees were out of sync with the end times prophesy of Isaiah and Jer. The time of His coming...they had missed it. The court of the gentiles is the place that the "nations" would come for worship and for prayer.

 - c. We think of the church as a place to fellowship for worship and meetings...for the rabble...the misfits...the socially marginalized and the outcast. Is our church welcoming to the "nations"...is it a house of prayer/worship to god in the way God intended it to be with this end time view?
 - d. We have forgotten the house of prayer aspect. We do not come here to pray during the week or any given day...because it is locked and given today's climate maybe even not safe for individuals to do so. Each and every church ought to be a house of prayer...
 - e. Used to be that anywhere in America you could walk into a church to pray...most Roman Catholic Churches are still that way today.

6. What does this say to us today about how we should act concerning God's things? How should our concern for God's things manifest itself today?

E. Matthew 21:14-17

1. Interesting, why are the Pharisees upset in these verses?
 - a. Knowing the Scriptures and knowing that what they were doing was blasphemous they chose not to dwell on His cleansing... after all He had done it once before and they hadn't changed their practices that all the people knew they were ripping them off.
 - b. But they were more upset... again... that He was healing in the temple
 - c. ...and that no one was stopping the people from proclaiming His Messiahship just like they had heard from their parents earlier the day before.

2. Turn to Psalm 8 and read it. What is Jesus saying about Himself by quoting this OT passage?
 - a. He not only doesn't silence these folks...He accepts their praise and justifies it from scripture...saying it was right for them to do this.
 - b. Ps. 8:2 speaks of God ordaining praise for Himself from children... so He is confirming that He is not just the Messiah but God incarnate.

Matthew Bible Study
March 23, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

7. Matthew 21:12-13- What do we make of this violence on the part of Jesus? What does this tell us about Him?

- e. He is capable of strong feelings even anger, which is not anger as we think of it but rather justice...lest we forget.
- f. Capable of defending His house...God's temple...and as God's Son...His house. Metaphor for being able to care for His entire house...His people...something that was promised in the covenant with Abraham and still true today.
- g. The priest were enabling sin rather than keeping God's house pure from such things.
- h. The court needed to be cleansed that the peoples of the "nations" could have a place to draw near to God.
- i. The Pharisees and Sadducees were out of sync with the end times prophesy of Isaiah and Jer. The time of His coming...they had missed it. The court of the Gentiles is the place that the "nations" would come for worship and for prayer.

8. Matthew 21:14-17- Interesting, why exactly are the Pharisees upset in these verses?

- d. Knowing the Scriptures and knowing that what they were doing was blasphemous they chose not to dwell on His cleansing... after all He had done it once before and they hadn't changed their practices that all the people knew they were ripping them off.
- e. But they were more upset... again... that He was healing in the temple
- f. ...and that no one was stopping the people from proclaiming His Messiahship just like they had heard from their parents earlier the day before.

C. Matthew 21:18-22

1. This is Monday morning before He turns over the tables and Jesus is up and on the move on His way. Verses 18-22 seems to be out of chronological order if you look at the other Gospels. Some have suggested that this is Jesus acting like a spoiled child who doesn't get His way. Obviously, this is not true of Jesus, comments like this are obviously from those who seek to deny His divinity. So, what do we make of this event?

- a. Figs were especially important to the economy of the day and the people.
- b. There was great rejoicing when it was time for the harvest among the people.
- c. There were many varieties of fig grown in Palestine at the time. Most ripened at the same time...but some produced figs outside of the normal season...this particular variety of fruit was especially succulent and sought after as a delicacy.
- d. So the best indication of ripe figs on the tree was not what season it was but the abundance of the leaves on the tree. When the people noticed a tree covered with leaves they would be certain that it was producing figs.
- e. Now, Jesus was hungry as He walked back to Jerusalem...He saw the fig tree and it was covered in leaves...the certain sign that there would be figs. But all He found were leaves. The tree was a pretender, a fraud.
- f. Since it was a misleading tree...hypocritical, if you will in its perception...He gave a prophetic object lesson...very similar to the prophets of old...they had to learn it from somewhere after all.....He gave a parable in actions...A judgment on the tree, declaring that it would never produce again and it withered and died. This is a precursor to what Jesus will do to the

Pharisees and Sadducees and all unbelieving Jews in chapter 23. Judgment starts with Israel...who is known as a fig tree in the OT (Jer. 8:13; Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7).

2. Why do people act hypocritically? What is the cure for hypocrisy? Ps. 51:17
3. What judgment is Jesus declaring to His disciples and to us?
 - a. God's judgment is reserved for any and all who produce no fruit.
 - b. These are those who give pretense of faith and have none. Remember Matt. 7:22-23.
 - c. Think of those who used to classify themselves as "Carnal Christians" either in word or lifestyle.
 - d. Jesus did not curse the fig because it did not have enough figs...He cursed it because it had NO figs...but it pretended to by being outwardly full of leaves.
 - e. Genuine faith means bearing fruit for God's kingdom...there is no set amount of fruit...See Matthew 13...the parable of the Sower....in this parable we see amount is not what is at stake but that fruit is produced...100 fold, 60 fold or 30 fold...
4. Do you think the disciples get it yet? What amazed them? Hadn't they seen even greater things than this? What's up with these guys?
 - a. They are amazed that He could do this to the tree... amazed... interesting...given all that they had seen from Him.
 - b. They weren't ready to see Him wither something...up to that point He had only healed and prospered ...but here He is condemning and that could have been shocking to them...amazing them.
 - c. Even though He had talked often about judgment...to them it was only a possibility...but here before them was Him using His power to actually condemn.
5. How does Jesus respond to their question of amazement (vs. 21-22) and what does He mean by what He says?
 - a. Always teaching, He is making a strong point about the disciples and our lack of faith. Do we really believe that God will deliver us from our largest afflictions and problems? Do we really believe that nothing is impossible with God? Really? Don't we doubt more often than we believe? "I believe, Help my unbelief!
 - b. He is talking about the power of true faith...that actually is focused on the nature of God. Faith so in tuned with Christ that it is a catalyst for unbelievable exploits. Jesus told the disciples, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."* (John 14:12-14) (Matt. 7:7)
 - c. He is not talking about some magic use of prayer to perform some capricious "mountain moving" act. Instead, He is highlighting their/our lack of faith.
 - d. These things would not seem impossible if our "asking" was motivated by faith.
 - e. These verse are not guaranteeing that we can get ANYTHING we want simply because we ask Jesus...God does not grant requests that would be harmful now or in the future...God does not answer anything that would violate His nature or His will...it is causing us to reflect on what keeps us from having this kind of faith and offering that up to God in repentance.
6. Note on the withering of the fig tree...it could have all happened on the same day at that moment...but there seems to have been a bit of time elapsed given what we have in the other Gospels it is possible that they saw the tree withered when they went back to Bethany Monday afternoon...or as Mark seems to indicate it may have been on Tuesday morning as they were making their way back into Jerusalem...Jesus being God is not bound to time...He could have had it disappear but the object lesson of seeing it withered was more important.

D. Matthew 21:23-27

1. This is Tuesday morning from all indication from the other Gospels. Lots of things happened on Tuesday...at least a lot was recorded for our benefit. What are the leaders asking for with their questions?
 - a. They are asking for His credentials. As with all Rabbis' they would have sought to know their education and who they had sat under...by whose authority were they ordained if you will.
 - b. Nothing wrong with the question...He had answered the question before...but their hypocrisy continues to be exposed.
 - c. Looked acceptable, but their motivation was anything but righteous with concern for the people for they were seeking to slow Him down or disrupt Him (Luke 20:1) from teaching in the temple...something they never did in the past.
2. What lessons are we to learn here?
 - a. All authority in the world...parents, employers, governments, police officers, even the dog catcher...is delegated. No one has authority inherently or intrinsically; it has to have been given to them by someone else.
 - b. We should be willing to vet people ourselves before we accept their leadership...seek their credentials and know their character before they are given the right to teach.
 - c. The Only one in all reality who possesses authority in and of Himself is God. Whatever authority that we have is inevitably handed down in a long line that ultimately goes back to Him. The leadership understood that by asking Him the question that they do... *"Who gave you this authority?"*
3. How does Jesus' little question back to them reveal their hypocrisy?
 - a. They believed they had ultimate authority.
 - b. Jesus knew they could not attribute John's baptism to God because if they admitted that he was a prophet sent by God then they would have to admit that John pointed to Jesus as the Messiah...John 1:29b. If they attributed John's authority to heaven they would have no basis on which to challenge Jesus' authority.
 - c. Jesus also knew they couldn't attribute John's ministry to men...John was probably more famous than Jesus as the people saw him as a prophet from God...It had been over 400 years since the last prophet...God was once again speaking to His people from their perspective through John. So the priests and elders would not speak against John or they would have the whole nation to take on.
 - d. They didn't seek to answer Jesus' question as to whether John was from God or men...instead they began to scheme and consider the right political answer to give.
 - e. They weren't concerned for the truth...they were seeking an expedient answer to this Jesus problem! The answer that wouldn't HURT their position. They weren't concerned for the truth...THEY COULDN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!!! Literally!!!
 - f. Then they said ... *"We do not know."* When they, in fact, did know the answer...a lie to protect their skin...hypocrisy at its worst.
 - g. And by showing them up, if you will, He secured the freedom to teach during this week before His crucifixion. He shut the mouths of His enemies...just that easily.

E. Matthew 21:28-32

1. Jesus immediately resumes teaching in the temple, starting on this day with a parable. Who do you suppose this parable might be aimed at? The Pharisees and elders He had just been speaking/sparring with... along with unbelieving Israel...but the people wouldn't have connected right away anyway...but as we will see the religious elite do. What is it about a parable that's not so wonderful? Judgment.
2. So re-tell the parable in your own words. What is the main topic and purpose for this parable?
 - a. The theme is hypocrisy.

- b. 2 sons respond differently to their father's request...one says he would not go but then regretting it goes anyway...the other agreeing to go, then chooses not to go.
 - c. Your word is important...one wins the father's favor the other does not.
- 3. But then we have Jesus' response in verses 31b-32. What was He saying there?
 - a. The religious leaders were like the son that said he would go and then does not go...The Father called through John the Baptist for His people to be baptized/consecrated in the river in preparation for the coming of the Messiah and the leaders did not. It was beneath their dignity. Why should they have to repent and submit themselves to such an activity? They were not willing to publically acknowledge themselves as sinners.
 - b. However, the marginalized...tax collectors (think Matthew and Zacchaeus) and prostitutes went down into the river submitting and repenting in preparation for the coming Messiah.
 - c. No one is saved by a profession of faith. No one was ever justified by saying, "I make a decision for Christ." The ones who are justified are the ones who follow Jesus and produce fruit. They do not just make a profession but it is evident that they are possessed by Jesus and live accordingly like the tax collectors and prostitutes that were changed and it was evident to all.
- 4. What does this parable teach the people then and us today?
 - a. *"It is often said that the church is full of hypocrites...and that is true to a certain degree...but what is even truer is that the church is full of sinners. The only people who claim not to be sinners are hypocrites."* – R.C. Sproul. The Church is the only organization that has its members declare their unworthiness to be a part of it as justification for them to actually join it.
 - b. How many times have you made a promise and then didn't keep it?
 - c. He calls us to work for Him every day. It is wrong to say we will and then don't. Will we serve Him or not?

F. Matthew 21:33-46

- 1. And again another parable to this same crowd. By imploring the image of a vineyard so often especially in parables...what are some of the things He is communicating?
 - a. Vineyards were common so using them as illustrations would keep the people listening.
 - b. In the OT, the vineyard was an image of the kingdom of God.
 - c. Also, in the OT it was an image of the nation of Israel...which was not always a positive thing. (Think Isaiah 5)
 - d. Jesus' use of this image is a succinct metaphor for redemptive history.
- 2. So re-tell the parable in your own words. What is the main topic and purpose for this parable?
 - a. The vineyard is God's nation of Israel. (See Isaiah 5:10-4,7)
 - b. The mistreated servants were God's prophets...beaten, mistreated and killed (1 Kings 18:4; Luke 11:47).
 - c. The son is none other than Jesus Himself...yet another illusion to His upcoming death.
 - d. To tell of the condemnation of the leaders and all those who do not follow Jesus. In their ignorance they gave a prophetic answer back to Jesus's question...God would come after the evil vineyarders/ hirelings and destroy them and give the vineyard to others. Specific reference to the Priest losing their influence and power to the NT Apostles and then elders and the Jewish people losing favor and the Church becoming more obvious as the kingdom of God..
- 3. Jesus refers to Psalm 118:22-23. Why, what point is He driving home? Does he make it?

- a. Yep...see verse 46...they understood too well what He was saying so publically that everyone in the temple would have heard.
- b. He cleaned out the Court of the Gentiles ...now He's in process of cleansing the temple of the hypocrites that have been running it.
- c. By whose authority does He teach?

Matthew Bible Study
April 13, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. We are often a lot like the lawyer in chapter 22. Why is it that we...even us believers ...do not love as He commands?

1. What would you say is the point of chapter 22 and what does it say to us today?

C. Matthew 23:13-36- Now He speaks directly to the Pharisees and scribes in the presence of the people and His disciples.

1. What does Jesus reveal in verses 13 and 15 as the ultimate reason why men should not submit to the leadership and authority of the scribes and Pharisees? Because they are headed for hell, as sons of hell...sons of the devil, and they will lead their followers after them.

2. Why is this happening?

- a. Because they are shutting people (the least of these) out of the kingdom
- b. By not going into the kingdom themselves.
- c. Those they do let in they have a zeal for...think Saul...but they are being made to reflect the religious elite who are condemned and sons of the devil.
- d. This was also a form of hyperbole on Jesus' part...for He was probably referring to what they say they do...piously they would go over land and sea to win some to the faith...while never leaving Jerusalem...it was an ironic hyperbolic statement to make the point of their hypocrisy. Remember Jesus' warning in matt. 5:20- *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*
- e. This is true for pastors today who keep people from entering the kingdom...not that the pastor can save anyone but he is responsible to lead them to cool fresh water and green pastures...if he does not purposefully he too will be condemned.

3. Let's say that there is supposed to be a vs 14...(you will find it in your notes...though it appears to have been a side note on some copyists page). What does this tell us about these religious leaders that reveals their hypocrisy and should be avoided at all costs?

- a. That this was a well-known practice by these men at the time of the copyists writing.
- b. That it obviously was a living illustration of what Jesus was talking about...supporting their desire of outward praise...and their desire to control the bank accounts and property of the widows. Their unscrupulous behavior that would lead them to hell.

4. How does Jesus reveal the hypocrisy of these men in verses 16-24?

- a. The scribes and Pharisees make false distinctions, thus providing a way of escape from what they have promised. If one swears by the temple, he is not obligated to keep that vow. But if one swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to keep his vow. Jesus shows that these distinctions are false, and that one is obliged to keep his vow, without distinction. Jesus has made this point before. We saw from Matthew 5 that vows should not be necessary at all, for we should be people of our word (see Matthew 5:33-37). They wished to be liked so they sought to give the people loopholes...a way out of their obligations.

- b. We do this today... “I swear by my mother’s grave that I will so such and such!” ...or... “I swear on my mother’s grave that what I am saying is true!” Neither of these in reality holds us accountable... but people take both of them as viable oaths because we all want loopholes. This trivializes all vows in general...and is to be avoided at all cost because by making them they enable to justify breaking our word and they teach others that it is okay to break their word. Sons of the devil!
 - c. The Law taught tithing. The scribes and Pharisees were meticulous about tithing, when it came to trivial things. They made much of tithing when it came to small things like mint, dill, and cumin. But in making much of small things, they made little of very important things like justice, mercy, and faith. In our Lord’s assessment, they “strained gnats and swallowed camels.” Their attention to little things was a pretext for ignoring the most important things of all. I wonder if this is where the phrase, “The devil is in the details” comes from?
- 5. What now does Jesus point out in verses 25-28?
 - a. He details the nature of their hypocrisy!
 - b. They call attention to an undue interest in outward appearances, rather than on what is on the inside. This should come as no great surprise to us.
 - (1) In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus warned about performing our righteous deeds (charitable giving, prayer, and fasting) before men, for their praise.
 - (2) Earlier in chapter 23, Jesus has said that *“they do all their deeds to be seen by people”* (Matthew 23:5). Since the scribes and Pharisees loved to be esteemed as more spiritual than others, we would expect them to be preoccupied with external appearances, rather than the heart.
 - c. Leviticus 11: 31-33 speaks to this whole cup and plate analogy that Jesus is making, but even in this text it was what went into the cup that defiled it. Preoccupied as they were with appearances, the scribes and Pharisees were obsessive about the outside of the cup looking clean, so obsessive that the inside could be filled with the worst of substances...equal too greed and self-indulgence..., and it would seemingly be ignored, so long as the outside looked good.
 - d. Pharisaism assumed that if the outside *looked* good, everything else must be good. Hypocrisy is a concerted effort to mask our failures (otherwise known as “sin”) by making appearances look good. Jesus tells us that true cleansing begins on the inside and expands to the outside.
 - e. In the next “woe” (27-28), Jesus changes images from cups and dishes to tombs.
 - (1) There used to be a Jewish practice of whitewashing tombs just before Passover, so that no unsuspecting person would innocently come into contact with the dead, and thus defile himself. (Numbers 19:11-16)
 - (2) But Jesus does not seem to be talking about the poorly marked grave of some pauper, a grave that would hardly be noticeable, apart from whitewashing. He seems to be speaking of a very elegant tomb, whose beauty is enhanced by whitewashing. It is so beautiful that it attracts attention and invites people to draw near to admire it. This outward adornment distracts from the corruption and defilement contained within.
 - (3) The scribes and Pharisees are hypocrites because they are like these beautified tombs. They seem so lovely and attractive, if judged solely by outward appearances. But inside there is only filth and evil. Outside the scribes and Pharisees look so holy, so pious, so zealous for the things of God, but inside they are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
- 6. How does Jesus change direction while staying on topic in verses 29-36?
 - a. Jesus had described the scribes and Pharisees as being like a beautiful tomb. Now, tombs are employed to expose yet another form of hypocrisy.
 - (1) Jesus is in Jerusalem, where the tombs of a number of prophets could be found.
 - (2) True to their hypocritical form, the scribes and Pharisees beautified the tombs of the “righteous” (verse 29) and “the prophets” (verse 30). By thus honoring the prophets of old (who were regarded as righteous), the scribes and Pharisees gave the impression that they too were righteous.

- (3) Many of these prophets had been murdered, however, so the scribes and Pharisees made it very clear that they would have had nothing to do with treating the righteous in such a manner.
- b. Jesus throws their proclamation back in their faces. He said that it was by saying that they would never have treated the prophets of old in such manner that they, in fact, indicted themselves. They actually prove themselves to be the “sons of those who murdered the prophets”... by claiming they would never have joined them in their wickedness.

7. What did Jesus mean by His statement back to them in verses 31-33?

- a. The scribes and Pharisees, like their ancestors, felt they were innocent. Did those who murdered the prophets say, “We are guilty sinners, worthy of the judgment the prophets have pronounced against us, but we don’t want to obey God, so we will murder His prophets to silence them”? No! They believed that they were right and that the prophets were wrong. They were innocent, but the prophets were guilty, and worthy of death.
- b. The scribes and Pharisees rejected the words of condemnation of John the Baptist and Jesus because they felt themselves to be righteous without sin. They found words of condemnation harsh and inappropriate, especially when addressed to them.
- c. They are snakes, the offspring of snakes, and they will not escape being condemned to hell. Snakes ...harkened back to the garden and the snake that deceived Eve...hence again calling them sons of the devil!
- d. The people of old maintained their innocence in the same way, even as they were putting the prophets to death. And thus, by insisting on their innocence, they only give more substance to the charges against them.
- e. They will also prove themselves guilty with their ancestors by repeating the sins of their forefathers. Jesus says that He will send them prophets and wise men and scribes (read apostles and evangelists...like Stephen), whom they will persecute and kill, just exactly as their forefathers had done. In so doing, they will become guilty for the murders they have committed, and for those of their forefathers. This present generation will be held accountable for the murder of every righteous saint from Abel onward (verses 35-36).
- f. Think about what the people will say a little later in this same week... In reply, all the people said, “Let His blood be on us and on our children!” (Matthew 27:25)

8. One last section, why does Jesus lament over all Jerusalem in verses 36-39?

- a. Jesus directs His words out to the general population away from the scribes and Pharisees and the people to deliver this lament.
- b. This was Jerusalem...the Holy City, the City of David, the city of the temple, a focal point of divine action in redemptive history. With all of these things “going for it”...His heart is broken because it had steadfastly rejected the prophets, thus rejecting God and His word. He loved them but they weren’t meant to be...His!
- c. Side note as I was researching this passage: there are some that use this passage to seek to argue against the doctrine of election. They say, The text says, Jesus wanted to gather His people together as a hen gathers her young, but they were unwilling to come to Him, and he did not force them...could not force them because that would mess with their “free-will”. How would you answer this dilemma?
 - (1) First, the rest of Scripture does in fact teach election clearly and succinctly...not to teach it goes against the basic doctrines taught throughout the OLD and New Testaments.
 - (2) Second, this text is NOT about election, but rather it is about the natural nature of all mankind which can be defined as unwilling to do anything that would bring God glory. We have free will to do what we want to do. Since our will cannot “will” obedience to God it

can only “will” disobedience for that is what we “want” to do. Our nature is to gravitate toward sin and to reject the things of God.

- (3) Until our nature is changed by God through Christ we cannot choose for God. (John 6:65)
No one come to the Father unless the father first makes him willing...even eager...as in God's grace being “irresistible”!

- (4) Jesus wept over those who are lost...and we should too!!

- d. Once again, He says something that would have gotten their attention.

- (1) He said, *“Your house is left to you desolate.”* The people would have immediately looked around them at all the “greatness of the temple and the city at large and they would be perplexed at best for there was no appearance of decay.

- (2) Upon this generation...soon...this decay would begin. As we go into the next chapter Jesus will expand on His prophecy.

9. What did Jesus mean when he said, “For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.””?

- a. The people had cried this out when he entered into Jerusalem only a few days before.
b. Now Jesus is foretelling that there will be a day when the true people of God will make this claim when he returns.

10. So why do people, especially Bible scholars, find these words of Jesus so repulsive?

- a. For some of the same reason they find a lot of the OLD Testament repulsive...they do not communicate God's love for all mankind. They try to answer the question, “So what do we do with a chapter where Jesus seems to violate his own command to love enemies?”
- b. They don't like it even coming from John the Baptist.
- c. They come as close to the scribes and Pharisees as anyone can today. The scribes were scholars and teachers. They are a part of an elite, academic community. They have their academic regalia (their robes, tassels, etc.), and they are often given special titles, recognition, and places of honor. They may lay heavy loads (of homework) on their students, and offer little help. They may, in the name of scholarship and precision, make fine distinctions that are not really valid. They may teach one way and live another. Most importantly, they may teach in a way that turns people from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. No wonder they are most uncomfortable hearing strong words of condemnation and the threat of hell. Unsaved Bible scholars may claim to be men of God, but when they do, they are hypocrites.
- d. Jesus' words of condemnation, like those of John the Baptist and the other prophets, were strongly stated, but always with the goal of calling men to repentance.
- e. Jesus speaks strongly here of judgment that is actually coming upon those who have rejected Him, and this judgment is coming soon. Is it harsh to tell a cancer patient that they will soon die unless they undergo major surgery? Is it harsh to strongly warn motorists that the road ahead is washed out and that unless they turn around they will plunge to their death? It would be a crime not to tell people of their impending death. The shocking bluntness of Jesus is a measure of how real and how terrible it is.
- f. Let no one leave this text feeling smug and self-righteous. When judged by Him who knows our hearts, we all fail. All of us are guilty of the sin of hypocrisy, in one way or another. Jesus' words in this chapter remind us of the words of Romans 3: *“What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin, just as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, not even one. Their throats are open graves, they deceive with their tongues, the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. ... 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:9-18, 23).

- g. Let us remember that Matthew 23 is our Lord's final public preaching. These are the last words the scribes and Pharisees and people of Jerusalem will hear from the lips of our Lord. As Matthew 5-7 introduced our Lord's public ministry to Israel, so Matthew 23 concludes it.**

Matthew Bible Study
May 4, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Sum up Chapter 24 for our own understanding today?
2. What is the overall purpose of the parable of 45-51 for the disciples and for us today?

C. Matthew 25

1. The parable of the 10 virgins...vs. 1-13. Remember Jesus is talking just to His disciples at this point. And this is still Tuesday afternoon/evening. He ends the last chapter with the parable of the faithful and foolish servants.
 - a. What have you been taught about this parable?
 - (1) Virtually same as the one at the end of Chapter 24.
 - (2) Both the faithful and wicked servants are part of one household...and the same is true of the 10 virgins...they are all part of one bride party. The virgins are not guests. They are bride attendants and it was considered a great honor to be asked to participate...to be chosen. Think Matt. 22:14.
 - (3) Each had been invited to participate...each role comes with an understanding of how to act...and they are expected to know their roles. The pattern for a wedding had been the same for millennium so each person's role had been defined and was well known...so there was no excuse.
 - (4) So they represent the people of God...or in our case...people in the church. One group that is a live and fulfilling their role...and they are blessed by the Master for they were ready...the other are the ones of Matthew 7:22-23...who believe themselves to be Christian but are only in name only...they are not ready...or they do not even seek to prepare until it is too late.
 - (5) A clue concerning the foolish virgins: "they took no oil"...in the OT "oil" is a symbol for the Holy Spirit. So it seems that they had all the outward qualifications to attend the bride ...good standing with the bride, an invitations to attend her, even the right clothes...but not the internal qualification to endure to the right time.
 - b. What is He seeking to teaching the disciples and us by extension?
 - (1) James 4:17
 - (2) To always be prepared/ready for His coming again.
2. The Parable of the Talents- vs. 14-30
 - a. What is politically incorrect about this parable?
 - (1) That he didn't give them an equal amount...making a judgment concerning the worthiness or teachableness of these men.
 - (2) Apparently determining one over another...
 - (3) That he had an expectation that these men would excel rather than be okay with them just doing their work.
 - (4) No welfare...they are expected to work.
 - (5) The owner is pushing capitalism...RC Sproul calls it "stewardship capitalism" He defines it with principles:
 - We possess nothing of our won....it is all the Masters.
 - God gives us capital not to waste...but to be productive. Capital is not just money in biblical teaching...but is all time, talent, treasure, progeny..."If you do not work, you do not eat."
 - Delayed gratification...investments require waiting for the right return or on-going returns.
 - b. Was the reward any different for the first 2? Same reward. What is the point?

- (1) Believers must produce fruit.
- (2) The amount is not important...this is not a competition.
- (3) God requires fruit from His children...no fruit is not an option for true believers.

c. What did the 3rd man “know” about the master?

- (1) He knew that the Master expected a return on his investment...wouldn't have given it to the man otherwise.
- (2) He knew that the master had a high standard for his leaders.
- (3) He, also knew, that the master was generous in giving hi the opportunity...
- (4) The master was a capitalist...he was obviously a socialist. ☺
- (5) So what was his problem...really?

d. So what is the point of this parable for the disciples?

- (1) To be good stewards of all that God has given to us from His wealth...gifts, time and treasure.
- (2) We will be judged by the wisdom and diligence with which we manage what God gives to us.
- (3) God expects for them to know this and do accordingly.

3. What do these 3 parables (Matt. 24: 45-51, 25:1-13, 14-30) have in common?

4. Given the context of this chapter how do they set up the last section of this chapter and the rest of the week for that matter? In other words, what is Jesus trying to get through the head of His disciples then and our hard heads 2000 years later?

5. Matthew 25:31-46

- a. What 3 doctrines are taught here that are perhaps the most hated of all Christian doctrines? Hell, predestination, the final judgment.
- b. What are some interesting observations that you have made concerning this section while they are still on the Mount of Olives?
 - (1) This is the first time in this gospel that the term “Son of Man” and King is used by Christ together when referring to Himself.
 - (2) This throne will be one of judgment...a judgment seat. He will gather everyone to His throne followed immediately by a separation.
 - (3) Another not so politically correct section in that He is showing exclusivity of His elect over the non-elect.
 - (4) He doesn't ask us to give an account for our actions...as so many teach...HE ALREADY KNEW. He simply says “Come” to His own. Those he had predestined to be adopted into His family. No one can point to why we are commanded to “Come”...for he says come before he highlights our works which were done because we had been chosen, called and justified.
 - (5) He talks to us first so that we are not left wondering...God's grace towards His own.
 - (6) To those not His own He says... “Depart”.
 - (7) In both cases He has made His decision before he ever goes over what they had done or hadn't done.
 - (8) Vs. 46 along with other verses like it make it clear that there is no such thing as purgatory. Heb. 9:27.No second chance...no reincarnation. The judgment awaits. See Acts 17:30-31a

D. Matthew 26- Wednesday of the Passion Week. Jesus doesn't go into the city on this day. (Vs. 1-5 could also be late Tuesday night. Since the apostles weren't very good at chronology...it wasn't important...though Mark seems to indicate that it was the next day. So the religious leaders were either staying up late plotting Jesus' death(which, of course, was not out of the realm of possibilities for these

guys or all day the next day. Given the timing of the Judas event I would fall on the side that they deliberated all day...then they saw their chance when Judas showed up.)

1. Matthew 26:1-5 (See also Mark 14:1)

- a. This is now the 7th time in this Gospel that Jesus has specifically spoken of His impending death? (Matt. 12:40, 16:21, 17:9, 12, 22, 20:17-19...only the 2nd time telling of the type of execution He will endure.)
- b. Jesus begins by saying to His disciples, "You know". What is He referring to as far as they are concerned? The Passover was that week and His crucifixion was that week, the Week of the Passover as well. Did they really know? How could He say this?
- c. What does this tell the disciples and us today?
 - (1) Jesus knew His destiny. He knew exactly what was going to happen to Himself.
 - (2) Jesus knew that all things were under the sovereign ordination of the Godhead... It had been predetermined...Acts 2:23.
 - (3) Knowing this would occur also verifies that it is He who lays His life down by His own volition...it was not something He had no control of.
 - (4) No earthly designs could thwart or add to God's design. He controlled even what His enemies did to Him.
 - (5) Jesus told His disciples He would die during Passover, in just two days. The Jewish leaders agreed that He must not be killed for nearly two weeks. Jesus said that He would die by crucifixion, and (earlier) that the Romans would be involved. In other words, Jesus indicated that His death would be brought about in a very public matter, and it would involve much suffering and persecution. The Jewish leaders purposed to wait until after the feast; Jesus said He must die during the feast, as the Passover Lamb.
 - (6) No two plans for His death could be more diametrically opposed. What Jesus told His disciples would happen was exactly what the Jewish leaders determined would not happen. Somebody is not going to get their way. Someone is going to have to give way to the other. This is the tension Matthew sets up at the beginning of the events leading to the cross. It is a tension Matthew wants us to feel. Matthew wants his readers to pay attention to whose plans are fulfilled, and whose plans are not. If Jesus is to die as He has said (and as prophecy has required), He must do so against the plans and efforts of the most powerful Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.
 - (7) We can take great comfort in the fact that He is sovereign and NOTHING happens outside of His control and decision.
- d. What is SOOO important about the fact that Jesus tied His death to the Passover?
 - (1) It was the most important festival on the Jewish calendar...the most people would come to the city. Being conjoined with the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the festival lasted 7 full days.
 - (2) It was most appropriate that the Lamb of God be sacrificed at the time of the Passover. This is when the identity of the people was established in days of old...when God delivered them from the oppression and wrath of the Egyptians. The blood of the lamb placed on the doorposts spared those who were obedient from God's wrath against their firstborn (Ex. 11:4-5; 12:1-13). When God saw the blood of the lamb He passed by...or passed over and Israel was freed. So the ultimate and long promised sacrifice was to come of the most appropriate of times...the sacrifice of the blood of the Son of God to deliver all His children from God's wrath.
 - (3) By His blood are we saved...by His blood God passes over those who are His.
 - (4) Matthew is laying out our Lord's prophecy regarding His death in a way that sets it in direct opposition to the plan of the Jewish leaders. At their meeting in the palace of Caiaphas, they agreed that they would kill Jesus, but it must be done in a way that did not incite the masses to riot. They did not have all the particulars worked out. They did not

determine how they would gain access to Jesus, nor precisely how they would kill him. They did resolve that they would kill Jesus by stealth, that is by treachery that was secretly executed. What they did to Jesus would be done in secret, as much as possible. This meant that Jesus would most certainly not be killed by crucifixion. That was far too public. Their method of choice was generally "stoning" because that was what the law prescribed in the case of blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16; Matthew 26:65-66), as well as many other offenses. It was what some of the Jews had attempted on several occasions (John 8:59; 10:31; 11:8). Crucifixion just wouldn't accomplish what they had in mind. It was God's will that the Lamb of God die during this feast...and nothing these men could do would stop it even though they wanted to wait until after the feast...after most everyone had left...that WAS NOT God's plan!!! The Godhead had decided when this would occur and occur it shall!

2. Matthew 26:6-13

a. What is the relationship between Matthew 26:1-5 and verses 6-13?

- (1) Jesus tells His disciples that He will be crucified in just two days, during Passover. No reaction from the disciples is recorded (either by Matthew, or by any other Gospel writer). The disciples seem oblivious to what lies ahead.
- (2) But then we read in the following verses about a meal which Jesus and His disciples attended. A woman takes this occasion to worship and adore her Lord by anointing Him with an expensive fragrance. The disciples are incensed, protesting that this money could have been put to better use. Better use? What better use could this fragrance have? Who is more worthy of this extravagance than Jesus? And yet the disciples are angry with her for being wasteful.
- (3) Jesus sees more than just an act of adoration in what this woman has done; He sees preparation for His burial. The connection between the 2 texts.

b. What is going on here that is extremely important to this story? And what does the disciple's reaction point to for us today?

- (1) This seems to be the same story recounted in Mark 14:3-9, but it is different from Luke 7:36-39 which is different all together from any other account.
- (2) See John 12:1-8 seems to be speaking of an anointing by Mary, Lazarus' sister 6 days before the Passover. So it is possible that the anointing's of Jesus were multiple...at least 2 separate times if not 3 as Luke seems to indicate speaking of a lady of the city, a sinner.
- (3) They all have the same purpose in mind...Jesus' anointing in preparation for His death...though the anointers mostly do not have a clue as to why they were doing it...as far as the long range ramifications.
- (4) This woman, whoever she is, brings a costly oil but she also brings it in a very precious vessel...an alabaster flask. This is most probably gypsum. It seem to have been a combined worth of 300 denarii according to Mark...the equivalent of 10 months to a year's wage. (Think for a moment about how much you make in 10 months to a year...is this what you would be willing to pay for a gypsum flask and some perfume to be poured out?)
- (5) What the disciples see as waste...Jesus sees as extravagant worship to the only One who is worthy of such extravagance. Her worship goes beyond what the world would consider rational or prudent...she may have just given all that she had to purchase such a "gift" to bring to her Master and Messiah...and Jesus receives such extravagant worship. The woman communicates that Jesus is worth all that she has...something the disciples had yet been willing to do. The reason (?) the disciples are upset perhaps...she showed them up with her devotion. While they were counting the cost of the perfume...she was counting a better and real cost.
- (6) What a contrast to what is going on behind the close doors at the palace of Caiaphas.
- (7) Jesus says she has done, "... a beautiful work for me..."...that is what she did, her motives for doing it were all beautiful.

c. There has been much speculation concerning a particular verse in this section. *"For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."*

- (1) What have you been led to believe about this text?

(2) What does it actually mean in context?

- They should have been focused on what /whom was in front of them like this woman and the task at hand...He was preparing to die in just a couple of days.
- Jesus does send us out to end poverty...spiritual or physical or mental...but to minister in the middle of it.
- Thus selling one alabaster flask of perfume would not solve the problem of poverty in the region.

3. Matthew 26:14-16- the last event of Wednesday.

a. What do we know of Judas Iscariot?

- (1) Judas was from a region called Iscariot or he had been part of a group of extreme Zealots...the Sicarii.
- (2) He was in actuality a thief...John 12:4-6
- (3) One of the 12 who had spent the last 3 years of his life with Him.
- (4) Judas had a part to play...the leaders didn't want to do anything until after the feast and Passover...but Judas working in God's time pushed these men to do as they had been predestined to do.
- (5) There is lots of speculation concerning Judas' motive for betraying Jesus...but the Bible only gives us one...MONEY!
- (6) Jesus' rebuke must have been the icing on the cake. And it is possible that this was the 2nd such rebuke.

b. What is going on here?

- (1) The worthiness of following Christ has worn out for Judas. As if the event of verses 6-13 was the nail in the coffin that sent him over the top.
- (2) A dire contrast...while someone gave everything they had to worship the Savior, he was taking whatever the leadership would give him to give Jesus up. He said basically, "What is it worth to you for me to betray Jesus of Nazareth?"
- (3) Immediately they counted out 30 pieces of silver...which was a normal price given to purchase a slave at the market.
- (4) After reading verses 3-5 of Matthew 26, we can see how Judas would appear to be the perfect solution to the Jewish leaders' dilemma. Judas was one of the intimate followers of Jesus. He could provide them with the ideal place and time to seize Jesus privately, by stealth, and kill Him.
- (5) Can you imagine the relief and the joy that the Jewish leaders felt when Judas came to them with his offer of betraying Jesus? I can almost see the smiles on their faces. Now, it would seem, they have the means to accomplish their plans and to achieve their goal of removing Jesus and thus the threat He posed.

Matthew Bible Study
May 11, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What was Jesus communicating to His disciples by the use of the 3 parables starting in Chapter 24:45-51 and including chapter 25:1-30?
2. What are the main events of Wednesday of the Passion week and why are they significant?

C. Matthew 26:17-19 deals with Thursday morning.

1. What does Jesus ask His disciples to do? Go to Jerusalem to a particular man so that they can prepare for the Passover.
2. What does Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:8 add to this event?
 - a. We know that Jesus sent 2 disciples.
 - b. We know that one of them was NOT Judas...Luke tells us they were Peter and John. So Judas would not have known necessarily where this event would have taken place.
 - c. Also it appears that Jesus had carefully prearranged for the Passover with the unnamed person, who would appear to be a follower of Jesus. From this account it seems even Peter and John did not know where they were going ahead of time. They would be met by a man carrying water. Was this by previous arrangement, or by providence? We are not told. Did this man know to meet the disciples, or did they providentially come upon him? The two disciples were told to follow the man with the water. Once inside the house they would meet the owner. Then they were to indicate to him that they were looking for the room where "the Teacher" would observe Passover. He will then show them the room he has already prepared. Presumably the disciples would make any remaining preparations (like the sacrificial lamb) and then at the last moment Jesus would arrive with the rest of His disciples.
 - d. Indeed, this meal would not be the occasion for them to get the best of Jesus; it would be the occasion that Jesus would set in motion the events which would lead to the fulfillment of His prophecies regarding His death, during Passover.
3. What are some of the things that Jesus is communicating when He says, "*My time is at hand.*"?
 - a. Vs. 12...prepared for burial...it is soon.
 - b. It is HIS time...His choosing...He is calling the shots.
 - c. This is a contradiction of a common teaching in the Church today. There are too many people who look upon the death of Jesus Christ as a tragic accident, and upon our Lord Himself as the victim. I don't know where this idea comes from, but it is not from the Gospels themselves. The Gospel writers are careful to demonstrate that the death of Jesus Christ is not only the purpose of God, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, but it was also His doing, in spite of significant opposition.

D. Matthew 26:20-35- Thursday just before sundown and on into the evening...the lamb for the meal would have been slaughtered earlier in the day.

1. Matthew 26:20-25...
 - a. What would have shocked the disciples at this point?
 - (1) Jesus had previously stated that he would be betrayed into the hands of men but He never indicated where the betrayal would come from.
 - (2) Now he tells them that one of them would betray Him...he knows...but Judas plays along.
 - (3) They all are upset thinking of themselves...talking among themselves all wondering...is it I, Lord. All of them say this even Judas...who knows what he is about to do but is still waiting for the opportune time.

- (4) Jesus says to their inquiry, *"He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."* All of them had done that through the course of the meal. Wow...now they are all indicted.
- (5) Jesus did more than reveal to Judas that his treachery was known; He issued a warning to Him regarding the eternal consequences of his actions...see vs. 24.
- (6) Interesting now how Judas addresses Him... *"Is it I, Rabbi" !*
- (7) Jesus was sharing this intimate meal with a betrayer...oh the scandal of it all! To Judas He said... *"You have said so."* This is a Greek expression that automatically put responsibility back on to the questioner.

b. What does John 13:26-30 add to this conversation?

- (1) Jesus knew exactly what Judas was about to do. Did the disciples, sitting there when the private words were exchanged between Jesus and Judas (which informed Judas that Jesus knew it was him), hear? Did they understand what Jesus had just said? If they did Judas was in grave danger. You will recall that at least Peter was armed with a sword (see Luke 22:38; John 18:10-11).
- (2) We know that our Lord gave Judas permission to leave, and, indeed, to get on with his mission: *"What you are about to do, do quickly"* (John 18:27). Judas probably could not get out of that room fast enough. He could never go back. Jesus knew him to be His betrayer, and he could not be certain that the disciples might not figure it out. Whatever he did, he must do it quickly. And so Judas left the room and went immediately to the Jewish leaders to betray the Lord Jesus.
- (3) And so we now know, thanks to John, that the last verses of our text are an account of what took place after the departure of Judas. The bread and the cup of the first Lord's Supper would be shared only among those who believed.

c. Just a side question: for extra points! Jesus doesn't waste words...or at least the words recorded in the Scriptures are never wasted. So what is the real significance of Jesus' answer to all the disciples, *"He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."*? Vs. 31

d. Extra, extra points: What is the special significance concerning the progression of events that this passage and the John passage makes clear? Our Lord's revelation (to Judas at least) of the identity of His betrayer forced him and the Jewish leaders to revise their plans. They had earlier resolved that the arrest and murder of Jesus would not be during the feast. Now, if Judas were to enable them to achieve their goal of arresting Jesus, it would have to be now, during the feast.

2. Matthew 26:26-30a...

- a. **Again, why must Jesus' death take place during the Passover?** Jesus is the Passover Lamb, the One symbolized by the lamb sacrificed at the first Passover, just before the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus 12). He is the One foretold by Isaiah (Isaiah 52:13—53:12, etc.). His death must take place during Passover, because He is the true and the last Passover Lamb.
- b. **Now, what are some of the differences between the Passover and the Lord's Supper being instituted here? Similarities?**
 - (1) The Passover was a memorial meal commemorating the work of God in delivering His people from Egypt which foreshadow this great event of Jesus delivering His people from their sins.
 - (2) The Lord's supper is a continuing meal pointing backwards to His cross work, reflecting on the continuing presence of the Lord in our day and looking forward to the Lord's return as we are commanded to do this every time we meet together until Christ returns.
 - (3) Jesus followed much of the Passover liturgy until He said... *"Take eat, this is my body."* Luke 22:19 says... *"This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

- (4) He is the only One who has ever been without sin. He is the unblemished, spotless Sacrificial Lamb. The bread is unleavened, symbolizing the sinlessness of our Lord. It is only because of His sinless perfection that He could die for the sins of others.
- (5) Note: concerning the controversy whether we should say His body was "given"...or His body was "broken" as Paul says when he repeats the words given him in his explanation of the Lord's Supper to the wasteful Corinthians in 1 Cor. 11...it is not a controversy except to those who wish it to be. His bones were not broken...but His body was- shredded by the whip, skewered by the crown of thorns pressed into His skull, his wrists were punctured through by the nails that hung Him to the cross and the spear pierced His side at His death...His body was truly broken and it was truly given completely on the cross for us.
- (6) Oh and if someone still wishes to question this...what does Jesus say next? He gives the cup to them, the third cup of the night...the cup of redemption *"Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* The cup would no longer represent the blood of the lamb that was spread on the doorposts...but now it would represent the blood that would soon be shed and spread upon a cross from their sins...for the sins of many...not all!
- (7) This changes everything. The forgiveness of sins...once sins are remitted/forgiven... they go away in God's eyes forever. What do we do with our sin? They have been remitted by Christ on the cross and forgiven. We can do nothing concerning our sin. It was true when God instituted the sacrifice...it was still true when Christ went to the cross and it is still true today...we can only be forgiven if it is granted to us by Christ as one of His elect.
- (8) They conclude with a traditional Passover ending...that of singing a hymn (probably the Hallel- Psalm 113-118) before they go out to the Mount of Olives to pray.

3. Matthew 26:30b-35...

- a. Jesus had given His disciples some bad news at the supper by telling them that one among them would betray Him...saying, *"He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."* He now gives them more "bad" news. What is the bad news that He gives them in vs 31 and how does it support what He said in vs. 23? All of them would commit treason against Jesus in His last hours on earth.
- b. Why does Jesus tell them this?
 - (1) Zechariah 13:7- This must happen because the Scriptures foretell it, and the Scriptures must be fulfilled.
 - (2) Furthermore, the desertion of the disciples will spare their lives, in fulfillment of Jesus' words from John 18:4-9.
 - (3) The disciples were to remain behind and carry on the work Jesus had begun and would continue through them. If they had remained with Jesus, they would have been executed as well.
 - (4) Finally, the disciples had to forsake Jesus because the work of Calvary was a work He must do alone. They could share in the benefits of Calvary, but they could not share in the work of Christ at Calvary. It was His work alone that provided salvation for lost sinners.
- c. Jesus goes on to predict Peter's betrayal in verses 32-35. SEE also Luke 22: 31-34. What again is Peter doing that he has done before?
 - (1) Seeking to contradict His LORD and Savior.
 - (2) All of a sudden Peter thinks that he is the one that Jesus was talking about back in the upper room since no one seems to have notice Judas' leaving or the side conversation that had been going on between Judas and Jesus.
 - (3) Why do we do that as well?
 - Like Peter we hate to get called out in a crowd...
 - Like Peter our default is to deny our weaknesses...
 - Like Peter we would promise the moon for someone to take back such an accusation...

- Look at 1 Cor. 10:12...What does this add to what Peter was doing? When we think too highly of our abilities we are destined to fall just as Peter would...when we refuse to follow the Word of God we are always destined to fall.
 - In the Luke passage Jesus speaks of Satan wanting to sift Peter like wheat. Sifting wheat is not a labor intensive exercise...it is however, time consuming and tedious. In using this metaphor, Jesus is cautioning Peter not to rely on his own strength, because it would be an easy thing for Satan to entice him to fall. Satan also thinks he has all the time in the world so if he doesn't get Peter the first time he will just keep sifting until he completes the task...not that Satan can cause someone to lose their faith but he can aid in causing them to fall into temptation. I say aid Peter into falling into temptation because Peter has to go along with the temptation in order for Satan to win that battle.
- (4) Judas and Peter both betrayed Jesus. Why was one cast out and the other restored? (The Luke passage may be helpful here as well.)
- Peter was of the elect
 - Jesus prayed to His Father for Peter that his faith would not fail because he was elect..
 - Peter will fall...Jesus knows this with certainty...and fall almost completely
 - Jesus expresses with certainty that Peter will return and he will be able to strengthen his brothers because he is elect and Jesus has already willed it.
 - Also, Peter repented and was forgiven and was restored...and he endured to the end.

E. Matthew 26:36-46...It is now probably about midnight Thursday or even maybe very early Friday morning. They are tired by the events of the day and the length of everything that had occurred at the supper and then the stress of the bad thing that Jesus revealed...all of this was too much for them...for they are only men after all!

1. All of the disciples had just assured Jesus that they would not deny or forsake Him (vs 35) and yet what do we see here in this text that indicates their inability to do this in the simplest of ways?
 - a. The fact is, they couldn't even stay awake with Jesus, even when it was His darkest hour yet. Jesus had already told them He would die at Passover.
 - b. Now, He tells Peter, James, and John that His *"soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death,"* and urges them to stay awake with Him (verse 38). But all of them are found to have forsaken Him by falling asleep (vs 40)
 - c. Not just once but 3 times. A precursor to Peter public denial and then the 3 fold restoration??? Is this what he meant by saying after the 2nd time... "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." ?
 - d. I have often wondered if the three overheard any of His groaning's.
2. Knowing what He knows of these guys, why does Jesus reveal Himself the way He does to Peter, James and John (vs. 38)? It is as if He felt more freedom to let down His guard with these 3...but He doesn't ask them to pray WITH Him. That is reserved for the Father alone.
3. What was it that provoked such distress in Jesus? The suffering He would have to endure WITHOUT the Father's presence with Him. It was one thing to be forsaken by men but he knew He must be forsaken from His father...and that was almost too much to bear.
4. This is the only time in all of Scripture where we read of Jesus falling on His face, prostrating Himself before the Father. So Jesus falls before His Father knowing what lies before Him soon enough and He prays, *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Break down this prayer...makes sense of it for those who are often confused by Jesus praying such a prayer.

- a. *"My Father"...*customary way to begin His prayers.
- b. *"If it be possible"...*this plea comes from His human nature...Jesus' human nature was weakening in the face of what was ahead of Him...and... as all men...wondered *"could this cup pass from me..."*
- c. This cup was the cup of God's wrath as expressed many times in the OT especially in Isaiah. He didn't have a problem with the wrath of the Romans, the Israelites or even going to the cross...it was the wrath of God that unnerved Him most.
- d. *"...nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."* Jesus is saying...I do not want to drink of this cup, but there is something even worse and that would be to fail to do your Will...for that is the purpose of my coming...so give me the cup and I will drink it dry!

5. How does Jesus deal with this abandonment in His final hours by his disciples?

- a. Keeps praying to the only one that can be depended upon...
- b. He doesn't give up on God simply because men have let Him down...
- c. He knew they would do this ...because He knew their frailty...
- d. He comes to them over and over again , the last time simply letting them sleep and then gets them up to prepare for the inevitable.
- e. While Jesus wanted His friends there He didn't really need them...and He doesn't need us either...yet He loved us enough to drink the cup of God's wrath that led to our salvation.
- f. He knew His mission and would not be deterred by the failures of other men.

F. Matthew 26:47-56...This is the very early morning hours of Friday, while Jesus is still speaking to His disciples getting them up for the betrayal...even as Jesus spoke these words Judas appeared. Timing is everything.

1. **Note:** just so we are clear concerning these events...
 - a. Jesus was not "captured"...Judas and the army that he brought with him did not "overtake" Jesus and the disciples...
 - b. Jesus went into the garden knowing this is where He would meet the betrayer...Jesus went to him.
 - c. Our Lord came from the garden to meet Judas and the multitude who accompanied him.
 - d. Taking all the Gospels into account, we see that a very large group – a multitude – had come out to arrest Him. This group included Judas, the high priest and his servants, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders of the Jews, the temple police, and a cohort of Roman soldiers.
 - e. These folks came prepared for the worst. Not only were they armed with swords and clubs (verse 47), they also had lanterns and torches. They seemed to expect Jesus to resist arrest, and they were ready for it, or so they thought.
2. **What is the main point of this text?** Jesus must be arrested, tried, and executed in this manner because the Scriptures must be fulfilled (verse 54). Jesus had indicated earlier that He must be arrested, persecuted, and crucified. He was to be opposed by unbelieving Jews, and also by Gentiles. Peter and the disciples saw what was coming and reached for their swords. Jesus knew everything that was about to happen to Him (John 18:4), but since this is what God had purposed to take place, Jesus would not allow any of the disciples to defend Him by force. It must happen this way.
3. **A side question: Knowing the nature of man and Peter, why do you suppose that Peter took it upon himself to swing his sword at Malcus the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear?**
 - (1) Didn't he have something to prove to His Lord?
 - (2) Didn't he have something to prove to the other guys...after all he did say that he was willing to die with Christ...

Matthew Bible Study
May 18, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. After looking at most of chapter 26 now, what would you say are some of the under lying themes for us to take away from it?
2. Thinking about all that has transpired and all that will transpire as we look back from our perspective, what ultimately causes/motivates Jesus to drink from the cup of His Father's wrath?
 - a. His love for His Father...
 - b. His desire to fulfill His mission...
 - c. His recognition that His life is only a part of the story...and is a small price to pay in the grand scheme of what he has come to accomplish...
 - d. Doing His Father's will and bringing glory to the Godhead is the most important motivator to do what He came to do.
 - e. If only that would motivate us as well...death would not be a fearful thing.

C. Matthew 26:47-56...

4. This is the very early morning hours of Friday, while Jesus is still speaking to His disciples getting them up for the betrayal...even as Jesus spoke these words Judas appeared. Timing is everything.
5. What is the main point of this text? Jesus must be arrested, tried, and executed in this manner because the Scriptures must be fulfilled (verse 54). Jesus had indicated earlier that He must be arrested, persecuted, and crucified. He was to be opposed by unbelieving Jews, and also by Gentiles. Peter and the disciples saw what was coming and reached for their swords. Jesus knew everything that was about to happen to Him (John 18:4), but since this is what God had purposed to take place, Jesus would not allow any of the disciples to defend Him by force. It must happen this way.

D. Matthew 26:57-68...

1. From your knowledge of Jewish law...what are some of the laws that the Sanhedrin...the law of the land... were breaking that night?
 - a. It was against Jewish law to hold a court case in the middle of the night.
 - b. It was against Jewish law to reach a guilty verdict the same day as the trial.
 - c. It was against Jewish law to not give notice of such proceedings.
 - d. It was against Jewish law to treat prisoners ...even the condemned... poorly and here the irony is that they are spitting in the face of their God...slapping and mocking Him as well...further solidifying the judgment against them.
2. What does Jesus' confession in vs. 64 reveal about Jesus?
 - a. Jesus affirms His identity. He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God.
 - b. He is also the Son of Man, which means that He will return to the earth in power, to deal with His enemies and to establish justice.

E. Matthew 26:69-75...

1. What would you say is the point of Matthew putting this section in here?
 - a. This stands as a severe contrast with Jesus' confession.

- b. This completely reveals to Peter and to us what we are really made of when all is said and done...
 - c. Fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus...which continues to substantiate His authority to Matthews audience.
 - 2. See Luke 22:61a...How does this add to what we have just been talking about concerning Peter and ourselves? Can you image what peter was thinking at that moment? From Jesus it was probably a look of sadness that Peter had to be sifted and from Peter it was obviously shame for he recognized his betrayal at that moment. Jesus had done nothing to deserve this betrayal. Peter was only concerned with his own skin...and a place near the fire is an interesting irony to be sure. Thankfully he did not stay there...by the fire that is!
- F. Matthew 27:1-10- probably around 6-8 in the morning as the city streets began to fill for the daily commerce. It was about a mile walk from Caiaphas' home to Pilate's and they wanted to parade Jesus through the streets unworried at this point of any uprising among the people because of Jesus.**
- 1. Matthew has deliberately placed the denials of Peter side by side with the remorse of Judas. He wants to compare and to contrast Peter's reaction and Judas' reaction to his condemnation, and he wants to do this as a warning to professing believers. In the story of Peter's denial one of the things that Matthew is particularly concerned to warn us about is prayerlessness in the face of temptation. Jesus had explicitly called upon His disciples to pray in preparation for the trial that they were going through. And in the Garden of Gethsemane they failed that particular challenge on several occasions, and they found themselves wanting when the hour of trial and temptation came. And Matthew is highlighting for us the importance of prayerfulness in the Christian life, especially in the face of trial.
 - 2. How would you define betrayal and why is it so devastating?
 - a. It is not just turning in the innocent to the authorities, though it can be that...
 - b. It is not just denying Him to others, but...
 - c. It is also giving false testimony against someone for your own personal gain...
 - d. It is seeking the approval of others by denying and demeaning someone else's character and/or work...especially one that you have spent a lot of time with...developing and discipleing...growing trust. *"Someone that you take your meals with who stabs you in the back at the opportune moment"*...is how the OT defines a betrayer...
 - e. There is an interesting play on words in verse 2... *"They bound Him and led Him away and delivered Him over to Pilate the governor."* The Greek word that is translated "delivered" here can often mean "betrayed". Now how would that fit? They betrayed God by delivering Him to a Gentile...for His death.
 - 3. What is Judas' motivation for returning to the priests? (See also Acts 1:16-20)
 - a. He is seeking forgiveness as the law demanded when a "good" Jew was supposed to do when they discovered they had "inadvertently sinned."-vs. 4.
 - b. But the priest, betrayers themselves would not and could not grant him absolution for his sin...which was inadvertent at all.
 - c. Knowing that he could not be forgiven he was left with the only recourse that a good Jew would have...take his own life so that he was in control all the way to the end of his miserable life.
 - 4. Why is Matthew telling us that all of this accomplished Scripture? He does not want us to approach the cross thinking that somehow this was an accident, that somehow this was

all a big mistake, that somehow this was all something that God didn't realize was going to happen and could have been avoided. On the contrary, this was something that God Himself had planned from the foundations of the world for the forgiveness of all those who had rebelled against Him, and who would trust in Christ. See Jer. 19:1-13; Zech. 11:12-13

G. Matthew 27:11-31 (See also Isaiah 53:3-12)

1. Listen closely as we read this section... (This week seek to be able to re-read this section without any distractions. Then make notes as to what God reveals to you in your reading...notes that can be shared.)
2. Given what we know from the other gospels, why would Jesus' silence at the charges thrown at Him unnerve Pilate?
 - a. Pilate is used to men standing before him begging for their lives...begging for mercy...blaming someone else...remember there are No guilty men in prison".
 - b. Jesus does not do any of these...not even seeking to defend Himself with the truth.
 - c. This unnerves Pilate simply because he cannot control this man...he cannot cause fear in him...he literally has nothing on this man.
 - d. He is unnerved as well because he knows that this man is innocent...and for once that matters to him.
 - e. And it matters because he can't figure a way to get out of this one...it is a lose-lose situation for him...If he gives up Barabbas he lets out a murderer to wreak havoc on his troops...if he lets Jesus go he will have to put down a rebellion...both of which will go on his record ...eventually leading to his dismissal...especially since the emperor was not to overly pleased with him in the first place.
3. In verse 25 the people respond to Pilate's pronouncement. What is wrong with their statement...especially concerning a curse falling upon their children?
 - a. See Ezekiel 18:20
 - b. Once again the people speak in an over reach because they were so prideful and so denying their God. If they will be cursed for their actions...everyone will go down with them...arrogance reigns supreme in the hearts of sinful men!
 - c. Matthew is showing us here that any Jew who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ is calling down on his own head the curses of God.
 - d. Some have said that Matthew is making an anti-Semitic statement here. Matthew is not making an anti-Semitic statement. So often the New Testament is accused to being anti-Semitic. I had a professor in seminary... Dr. Vasholz...who was a converted Jew. He was brought up as an Orthodox Jew. He had gone to Hebrew school as a boy. He was a wonderful Old Testament professor, as you might imagine, and a great Hebrew teacher; one of the best language teachers that I ever had. But, in the town where I went to seminary, we had a very large university that had a very large Jewish student body. He was asked by the Rabbi and the student leaders of the Jewish fellowship on campus to come and give an address to their Jewish fellowship on the subject "Is the New Testament anti-Semitic?" And passages just like this are what they wanted him to address. And he said, "I'll do it on one condition. That I can speak to you two times, not just once, and that the first time I get to speak on any subject that I want." And so they said, "Okay, well, that's a little strange, but that's fine." So, when he showed up for his first talk he said, "My topic for today is, Is the Old Testament anti-Semitic?" And his point was this: If you look at the Old Testament, the condemnation of the Jewish people is put in much stronger terms in the Old Testament than it ever is in the New Testament. So if you want to accuse the New Testament of being anti-Semitic, you've got to accuse the Old Testament of being anti-Semitic. And the second thing he wanted to point out was both the Old and the New Testaments were written by Jews. And so if you want to accuse them of being anti-Semitic, you have to say it was Jewish anti-Semitism against Jews.

H. Matthew 27:32-44 (See also Ps. 22:7-8, 17-18) All of this took place between 9-12:00 or so...for they had to have time to nail Jesus and the criminals with Him to the cross.

- 1. Listen as I read this section again. What are somethings that stand out to you? Questions that this section arises?**
- 2. Have you ever stopped to consider what would have happened if He in fact listened to the people in verse 42 and came down from the cross?**
- 3. What actually are they saying by repeating the psalms this way? That what God has done is NOT enough. He needs to do even more than what He has done. A very familiar refrain today with people wanting more than his Word...**

I. Matthew 27:45-56 (See Ps. 38:11, Isaiah 69:21)- Friday noon to 3:00 pm

- 1. God requires Jesus to hang on that cross from noon until 3:00 pm. He leaves Him there in total darkness when God placed upon Him our sin...our sins past present and future were all imputed to Him on the cross...darkness seems to prevail...but it was God's work. This is sudden and sustained darkness. The best example of this kind of darkness is found in the Book of Exodus, when God brought darkness over the land of Egypt: *"The Lord said to Moses, 'Extend your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness that can be felt.' So Moses extended his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. No one could see another person, and no one could rise from his place for three days. But the Israelites had light in the places where they lived..."* (Exodus 10:21-23).**
- 2. Why does God forsake Christ on the cross?**
 - a. The biggest reason for this action is not us or our salvation...the biggest reason for this action is His own glory!**
 - b. Because it was prophesied...and was a fulfillment of the Scriptures...**
 - c. God forsook His Son, because He must forsake His Son for the work to be complete. God must forsake the sin that Jesus bore upon Himself.**
 - d. Jesus, at this time, is sin, condemned by God the Father because of the curse.**
 - e. Jesus must bear ALL the sins of His children and God will not or cannot spare Him till the ransom is paid in full...He must die!**
 - f. Forsaken is an interesting term...bound by the limitedness of the English language because to say the Jesus was forsaken brings with it the question of what that entirely means...God cannot forsake Himself... and Jesus is God. So what we are talking about is God the Father forsaking Jesus as He bore the sin of all His elect ...past, present and future...until the price was paid fully. God never turns His back on Jesus in that He looks upon all things at all time...but as Jesus hang on the cross covered with our sin God forsook Him at that moment in the same way the Scage Goat was forsaken when it was sent out into the wilderness away from God's people...and then the people come back to celebrate for that moment their deliverance.**
 - g. Since Jesus knew this had to happen, why did He make this cry? Reminding the people of the absolute need for His death...and their need to understand the cost and the promise of Psalm 22.**
- 3. Once again, how important are the psalms? With His dying breath, at His lowest moment, Jesus' mind instinctively breaths out the psalms.**

Matthew Bible Study
May 25, 2016

A. Prayer

B. Matthew 27:51-56-

1. What are some of the local consequences that occurred after Jesus' death and what is their significance?
 - a. "Tearing in 2 of the veil"- signified the end of the Old Covenant, under which people had to keep their distance from God, and the commencement of the New Covenant, under which men and women may draw near, through the shed blood of Jesus (note Hebrews 9; 10:19-24).
 - b. the great earthquake, in which rocks were split, tombs were opened, and dead saints were raised to life... a punctuation mark God placed at the death of His Son!
 - (1) Jesus cries out triumphantly, proclaiming that His work is finished, and committing His spirit to the Father.
 - (2) Jesus then breathes His last and gives up His spirit.
 - (3) At the very moment of His death, the temple veil was rent, and a great earthquake shook the place so hard that the rocks split and graves were broken open.
 - c. We know that the dead were not raised until after the resurrection (Matthew 27:53), so why are we told here that the tombs were opened?
 - (1) Matthew wants us to see the hand of God plainly in the events surrounding the death of our Lord.
 - (2) Matthew also wants us to see, that the graves were opened in preparation for the resurrection of these Jerusalem saints coinciding with our Lord's resurrection. The earthquake sets the stage for the resurrection of the dead Jerusalem saints.
 - (3) Matthew again wants us to see the connection between the death of our Lord and His resurrection. The death of our Lord was a supernatural event, and the spectacular phenomena that accompany it underscore this fact. To Matthew (and the other apostles – see Acts 2:22-36), the resurrection of our Lord is a necessary corollary to the cross, and he wants us to recognize this.

C. Matthew 27:57-66 (see also Is. 53:9)

1. What would you say is the point of vs. 57-61? What are we to take away from this for today?
 - a. Jesus really and certainly did die...much to the chagrin of the skeptics of even today.
 - b. This action fulfilled Scripture.
 - c. While Jesus' enemies are still triumphing over His crucifixion. God is in His providence is laying the groundwork for His Son's vindication.
 - d. He is setting up a scenario whereby there are numerous witnesses to the fact that He was indeed dead, and He was indeed buried, and that He was not in that tomb when they came back to check.
 - e. Joseph, in this passage, is the model disciple. Given that he was probably destined to give up a lot in the near future for doing this, this then shows us one aspect of discipleship doesn't it? Sacrifice and Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ no matter what you could lose.
 - f. This is almost too good to be true...but given what we know of Pharisees and what Matthew thinks of Pharisees...a Pharisee is the last person one would think Matthew would cast in a positive light. And in this case it was a Pharisee who cares enough to bury Jesus...not the disciples...to their own shame.
 - g. You gotta love God's providence: When His closest friends had abandoned Him, before the foundation of the world God had ordained that His Son's body would be cared for by a disciple who was until that time utterly unheard of and perhaps even unknown to the circle of disciples of the Lord Jesus.

2. Looming at verses 62-66, why were the religious leaders so afraid of the resurrection, then? Why do people fear it today?
3. Where are the disciples in this account?
 - a. Matthew is showing you a picture of the disciples who are so demoralized, they are nowhere around the Lord Jesus Christ. The women have to go show Jesus' circle of disciples where the tomb is. They know, Joseph knows, Nicodemus knows. But Jesus' eleven disciples don't know where He is. Peter and John have to be led by the women. They couldn't even effect a rescue of the body of Jesus. They didn't know where He was. And so Matthew has shown you what is happening to the disciples so that you'll know that this idea of their stealing Jesus' body never entered into their minds. Matthew alone tells us of this encounter after the fact.
 - b. This same account has been told for years by secular sources as well...like Josephus the Jewish historian...it was a well-established fact that some knew...that the Leaders knew Jesus resurrected from the dead.
4. Some interesting fun facts:
 - a. It's interesting that Matthew shows the religious leaders on the Jewish Sabbath, going into a Gentile's palace and scheming with him to make sure that Jesus stayed buried.
 - b. By the way, Matthew can't even bring himself to call it the Sabbath day. He knew that the next day was about to be the first day, the resurrection day, the Christian Sabbath, he knew that they were desecrating the old covenant Sabbath, and he couldn't even bring himself to call it the Sabbath. He called it the day after the preparation.
 - c. In fact, throughout this passage, you will notice that Matthew begins to number time based upon the day of Christ's crucifixion leading up to the first day which will become the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath.
 - (1) These men come into Pilate's presence, and they say, we heard this man saying in teaching that in three days He was going to raise Himself from the dead. Now this is a switch, isn't it? In His trial, they used that phraseology to accuse Him of doing what? Of attacking the temple, of claiming that He was going to tear the temple down. Suddenly now they admit that they knew themselves that He was not talking about tearing the temple down. He was talking about dying and being raised again in three days. So the story has changed.
 - (2) These men, Matthew is showing us, are already deceitful. And so they asked Pilate to secure the tomb, to protect it from theft, lest an even greater deception be accomplished.
 - (3) And so they have a Roman guard stationed at the tomb, a string is spread across the stone and it's sealed with the official Roman seal. And you know what that did?
 - (4) It made absolutely certain that the first people to witness the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ would be non-disciples. It wouldn't be Jesus' inner circle that would spread a claim that couldn't be corroborated. It would be non-disciples, Roman guards stationed at the tomb who would be forced to testify that He was not there.
 - (5) All the extra measures that they took to secure Jesus' burial ended up drawing attention to His resurrection.

D. Matthew 28:1-20

1. The Resurrection- 28:1-15

- a. Introduction...(I do not know who first said this, but it has been repeated many times through the years.) *"I am offended when people mention the name of Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha or any other founder of the world's religions in the same breath as the name of Jesus. This I know: Mohammed died and stayed dead. So did Confucius. Buddha, as enlightened as he may have been, died and stayed dead. None of these other leaders provided atonement for the sins of the people who put their trust in them. All of them are dead, save for One, the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone made atonement for our sins and was raised for our justification."*
- b. Notice Matthew doesn't give a detailed account of what happened in the resurrection, but what happens around the resurrection, just like with the cross. There was no long, detailed discussion

of what it actually meant for Jesus to be crucified on the tree. Matthew almost turns his eyes away from that and points us to things going on around Jesus' crucifixion. By the time we get to the resurrection, it's already occurred. It's an after-the-fact account. Then He goes on to focus on the message brought by this angel. A message for these loyal and loving female disciples who have come to the tomb for the purpose of continuing to dress Jesus' body, to treat it with oil, and to anoint it with spices. Though they showed far more courage and bravery and frankly, commitment than Jesus' inner-circle of disciples, yet these women did not believe. They had heard from Jesus' lips just like the disciples had that He was going to be raised again from the dead on the third day, and they didn't expect that to happen.

c. What 5 signs are the women given in verses 1-4 that will encourage and strengthen their faith?

- (1) There's the earthquake. In the Old Testament earthquakes were connected with manifestations of the presence of God.
- (2) The appearance of this angel. This angel is God's special messenger, and his presence, his mere presence, absolutely terrifies the guards and leads to one of the other events which greets the women.
- (3) The stone was completely removed from its groove, and it was laid over on its side and the angel was sitting upon it. And the reason that that stone was removed was not to let Jesus out. Oh no, Matthew makes it clear and all the other gospel writers do as well. The reason that stone was removed was so the disciples could look in and see that Jesus was not there. You see what God is doing here? He is laying the groundwork for a sure confidence in the resurrection of His Son. And His concern is not to let His Son free, who cannot be held by the power of the grave, but instead to allow disciples to look in and have their faith strengthened as they view the empty tomb.
- (4) It's the dazzling appearance of this angel whose description is striking. His appearance was like lightening and his clothing white as snow. For those who have read Revelation any time in the recent future this should remind you of the description of the angel in Revelation, chapter 10: 1, where John says, *"I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow was upon his head and his face was like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire."*
- (5) These stunned guards lying all over the place, immobilized, petrified, terrified, stunned. The seal, the stone and now the guards – all the devices that humans had aligned to secure the end of the Jesus people, the end of the Jesus movement, the end of Jesus' claims, the end of Jesus' message. All those pitiful attempts to secure their victory are now left in rubble.

d. What emotions did the women exhibit and why?

- (1) Fear and joy!
- (2) They had wondered how they would remove the stone to finish applying the spices that they believed need to be finished...
- (3) And then the earthquake happened and moved the stone. Even today everyone is afraid of earthquakes.
- (4) They didn't fully understand who the person was that they met....who was sitting on the rolled away stone.
- (5) They saw the soldiers were afraid (Matthew 28:3)...never a good thing with Roman soldiers or temple guards...very unpredictable.
- (6) How is that possible to exhibit fear and joy at the same time?
 - It was frightening to see an angel...but the angel and then Jesus says..."Do not be afraid!"
 - It was thrilling to hear such an announcement...nothing could bring more joy than to be told that their Savior was alive.
 - The women, we are told by Matthew, didn't walk, they ran to tell the disciples this good news. Their hearts were filled with fear and joy.

- Have you noticed how often in the Scripture those two counter-balancing emotions are present when the people of God are in the very presence of God? There's no flippancy when you're in the presence of God. He's the awesome God of heaven and earth and so the heart trembles with awe, and at the same there is no place in the world that God's people would rather be than in the presence of Almighty God. So there is fear and joy mingled in the hearts of these women.

e. Why is He going to meet them in Galilee?

- (1) Where His ministry began...Matthew has told us that over and over again...that is Galilee of the Gentiles. See Isaiah 9:1-2... Jesus' ministry in Galilee is a fulfillment of all that prophecy that Isaiah gave to us in that great passage.
- (2) The fact that Jesus is not only going to be the Savior of the ancient people of God, the Jewish people, He's going to be a Savior for the world, the Gentiles, too, will come to God in Christ. And here Matthew is pointing us right back to Galilee, right where that ministry began. And there, not from Jerusalem, but from Galilee a worldwide proclamation of the resurrection will begin.

f. In a related question, why does Jesus say, "Rejoice!", when He encounters the women? (The English translation in the ESV is "Greetings", which is more easily translated "rejoice" in the Greek.)

- (1) He had conquered death...He had conquered the one thing that unsettles and causes fear to all mankind...death.
- (2) Because he lives we can endure all pain, all affliction...for life eternal awaits all who are His.

g. Why do you suppose Matthew includes this story in verses 11-15?

- (1) God in securing a testimony to Jesus' resurrection in spite of the schemes of the Sanhedrin, the chief priest, the scribes and Pharisees.
- (2) It means that non-disciples will be among the first witnesses to the resurrection. What would have been your first objection if you were a skeptic? Had there only been disciples present at the time of the resurrection, the first thing you would have said is, Well, sure, I mean, you're His disciples. What else would we expect you to say? So, non-disciples were there and they confirm it.
- (3) It shows us that the empty tomb is an absolute reality.
- (4) These troops and the Sanhedrin were forced to acknowledge the empty tomb. They didn't want to acknowledge the empty tomb. And the fact that they admitted the empty tomb speaks volumes.
- (5) Matthew makes it clear. It's a lot easier for the believer to believe the truth than it is for the unbeliever to deny the truth. The unbeliever has to work really hard to come up with some sort of explanation of how this thing is working out. The believer doesn't really have to work very hard at all.

h. What are some of the obvious problems with the story?

- (1) How likely is it really, that Jesus' disciples who had abandoned Him upon His arrest would come back and risk their lives in order to steal His dead body?
- (2) Assuming that the guards actually did fall asleep, could they have really accomplished that kind of a task without disturbing the Guard's sleep?
- (3) Is it really likely that all of the guards would have fallen asleep? Usually 12 guards in a detail such as this.
- (4) If the guards were asleep, how could they have confirmed that it was the disciples who came by night to take away Jesus' body?

- (5) Why wouldn't the Sanhedrin sought to prosecute the disciples for stealing a body and breaking an Imperial seal...all capital offenses?

2. The Great Commission- Matt. 28:16-20

a. How do verses 16-17 reflect the church as a whole?

- (1) They worshiped Him with all their being. Now Matthew is telling you something there. These are good, intelligent, well-versed in the scripture, orthodox Jews. And they know above all else this one principle of religion: You don't worship anything that's not God. You worship only the one true God. You worship nothing else. It's their first commandment, it's their last commandment.
- (2) *"...but some doubted."* You can't make this stuff up...and you wouldn't want to. Matthew is telling us this in order to indicate the weakness of the disciples. They continue to struggle in their quest to believe and understand. He doesn't hold anything back to try and make the disciples look "good".
- (3) We have the church strong and weak...believing and non-believing...the same picture that Matthew has shown throughout this gospel.
- (4) None of us are worthy of His choice...not even those who will be called to leadership.
- (5) We are chosen by His good pleasure. For none of us are ready...even in our worship we doubt. Thank God He didn't wait for us to get it right.

b. R.C. Sproul likes to ask his New Testament students this simple question, *"Who was the greatest Apostle in the New Testament?"* How would you answer?

- (1) Most of his students would argue for either Peter, Paul or John...sounds sort of like the discussion in Corinth....none of whom are worthy to bear the title.
- (2) The Greek term "apostolos" means "the one who was sent" by the king given the king's authority to speak on behalf of the king.
- (3) So, the greatest NT apostle was Jesus, of course...to whom the Father gave all authority (vs. 18) in heaven and on earth. There is no limit to Jesus' authority as LORD.
- (4) He, in turn commissioned his disciples... "As the Father has sent me, I also send you (John 20:21).

c. What 4 commands does Christ give His followers (us, today, as well) in this commission?

- (1) *"Go"...* "as you go"= "wherever you go"- going and spreading the gospel in word and deed.
- (2) *"Make disciples of all the nations"...*It is interesting that it doesn't say, "Go and evangelize..." It doesn't say that because that was a given...proclaiming the good news is a mandate that is given to every Christian. Sharing the good news is evangelizing whether in word and/or in deed. But the emphasis here is on the next step...disciplining those who will come from every nation, tongue and tribe...The task has just begun when someone responds to the call of God on their life...it is the churches main job to disciple them bringing them into conformity to Christ.
- (3) *"Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit..."* – Baptism is not a sign of one's faith, as many have told us that it is...rather it is assign and seal of God faithfulness towards His own. So elders are to baptize those who respond to the gospel placing upon them the sign and seal of God's covenant. But, how is this command to be understood more generally since this is given to all of us? We are to bathe everyone we come in contact with in the truth of God's Word.
- (4) *"Teaching them to observe/obey all that I have commanded you."* – We are to make the whole counsel of God known for the good of their hearts and soul.

d. What do you make of this ending by Christ? What is He communicating to them and to us today?

- (1) He ends the commission with a great promise. We will never be alone.

- (2) He is with us through His Spirit always...we are never left to complete our mission by our self.
 - (3) This is to be the purpose of every Bible believing church! They need to evaluate regularly to see if they/we are keeping it the way God has commanded.
- e. In some manuscripts this Gospel of Matthew ends with a very simple word... "Amen!" Saying in essence.. "It is so!" I believe everything written in here...and I will do my best to uphold it all as well. This is Matthew's closing declaration that everything he has written is faithful and we would do well to receive it as such.

Much of what I have come up with here has been from my on-going study and journing through the years, but I have also used

- 1. R.C. Sproul's Expository Commentary on Matthew**
- 2. New Testament Commentary on Matthew by William Hendricksen**
- 3. Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible**
- 4. Various other sources along the way**