



MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 7:13-14

Plug In...

Twice, Jesus describes the entryway to life as *narrow*. These narrow dimensions make it difficult to see and find. Then, there is the difficulty of the road that proceeds from it. Jesus sets before his audience life and death – a choice. The Beatitudes established that this Sermon is about entering the Kingdom. The Lord's Prayer in the middle is asking for the Kingdom. This final section is deciding to choose the only path to the Kingdom. Verse 21, shows that proclaiming Jesus as 'Lord' and following the will of the Father are so interwoven that it indicates which path you are on.

Chew It Over...

Jesus can't be saying pull your socks up and you'll enter. Yet, neither is Jesus saying leave your socks down it doesn't matter. Such is the grace of God's influence on a person's life that integral to an authentic claim that "Jesus is Lord" is a life full of actions that show his lordship – i.e., we obey the Lord.

Do you hear your inner-teenager cry out: "but Mum, everybody is doing it!"? What might this indicate about your current road map?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for the GPS system He gives us with the Holy Spirit. Ask for help in trusting that this difficult road does end in eternal life inside the Kingdom.



TUESDAY 01 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 7:15-20

Plug In...

The claim that a good tree must produce good fruit echoes John the Baptist and what he said to the leaders of the day (Matthew 3:7-10). Telling such people to repent seemed outrageous; they're the leaders, the prophets. John knocks out their reliance on Abraham, and reliance on possessing the Law. Many Jews relied on Abraham for their standing with God, or considered repentance as turning towards God's Law as the place to find God's will. John says your standing is based on ethical fruit before God. This struck horror into the listener that many repented seeking the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus makes this a warning to his disciples. Watch for the fruit. Jesus says, ask is it a fruit that is consistent with the narrow way?

Chew It Over...

False prophets can look the real deal. Before John the Baptist and Jesus, there were leaders that looked serious, for they could claim to be Jewish (children of Abraham). Or, they could say, we have the Law and we obey it. The problem with both of these understandings is: both claim a self-righteousness; either because of ethnicity or legalism (I'm of Abraham; I follow the right Law).

When John the Baptist gets Jews undergoing water rituals that only pagans did upon conversion to Judaism, he is pointedly saying: unless you see yourself like an unrighteous pagan needing the forgiveness of sins, you cannot enter the Kingdom. We can see how this becomes the narrow gate and path. It is very difficult to admit you are spiritually bankrupt (especially if high in society). The consequence of admitting this is to turn around in every area. It is difficult because it could malign you; admitting publicly you're sinful makes others feel awkward, judged (for they do the same things), so they persecute. The danger? False prophets lure us to take the easy road, to find justification in something that'll be easier on us.

Evaluate the fruit of leaders and teachers. Don't merely ask are their actions good? Weigh up: does their life flow from poverty of spirit; it is evident they understand their own spiritual bankruptcy, they speak of their sole reliance on God's forgiveness of sins; that they commit into a life of discipleship out of gratitude and having being transformed by Holy Spirit answers to their asking, seeking, and knocking on their Heavenly Father's ear.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask for this disposition and discernment too.



WEDNESDAY 02 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 7:21-23

Plug In...

The proclaiming that Jesus is Lord, even having ministry success, is not the criteria that grants entry to heaven. Only obedience to the Father's will.

Chew It Over...

These are very sobering words. It is possible to present to Jesus, Christ-centred doctrine and charismatic workings, yet, have Jesus say "I never knew you". Some claim there has never been a more nominal generation of Christians. What have we been doing that has made the road of Christianity seem wide and easy?

Consider all this teaching in the Sermon on how to live as a child of God – a citizen of the Kingdom – is not about the flashy (like driving out a demon, or prophesying). The fruit of the true disciple in the Sermon on the Mount looks like: more prayer, less anxiety; loving enemies from a place of being forgiven yourself; enduring persecution for the name of Christ; a life unhinged from earthly treasures and focussed on the kingdom; humility and care for brothers and sisters that does not superiorly judge; a wonderful

experience of being in relationship with the Heavenly Father, where day-by-day you trust He cares for you, and you talk to Him about everything.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray again from a hungry and thirsty place: for righteousness, for mercy, purity of heart, making peace, suffering through persecution.

Ask that Jesus will make you perfect like the Heavenly Father, one who does the will of the Father.



THURSDAY 03 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 7:24-27

Plug In...

After the warning that mere profession, or the spectacular, is not what is recognised by God, Jesus gives the warning to his audience to make sure they hear in such a way that they put what they hear into practice.

Chew It Over...

What do you need to put into practice from the Sermon on the Mount? Read Ezekiel 33:31 and assess where your heart is at. You can repent and renew allegiance to Jesus as lord. Pray that his lordship falls across every area of your life.

Many say of The Lakes "here's a church with good Bible teaching". That's a wonderful encouragement. Yet, that is not enough. We must hear the Bible, hear the words of Jesus and put them into vigorous practice. We do and practice whatever deep down we believe to be true and stable (Matthew 6:21). It needs to be said of The Lakes "here's a church that does the will of the Father".

Prayer Suggestion

May it be said that we follow Jesus in our words and our actions. Lord! As we proclaim that name, bow our knee in obedience to your will.



FRIDAY 04 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 7:28-29

Plug In...

After the Sermon's conclusion, Matthew takes us to the response of the crowd. They are astonished, amazed, and in awe.

Chew It Over...

Jesus' final words have been don't just hear but *do*. We, as readers, step into the shoes of the crowd as ones who have just heard this amazing sermon. What are *we* going to do next?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord, may we not reduce this Sermon to just dissecting your words and discovering good doctrine. May we know you in personal relationship. May you impress on our lives the relationship we have with the Father through you; the resources of yourself gained by simply asking in prayer. May we not just hear, but go on to live like Jesus has said.



WEEKEND 05-06 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 7:21 & Ephesians 2:8-9

Plug In...

A word over salvation-by-grace-alone throughout the Sermon. The Sermon ended with the threat of judgement for the person who does not obey Jesus' words. It sounds like a works-based proposition. At this point people throughout church history have been good at explaining away the Sermon's impetus. For example, 'it's just for priests' (an old Catholic view); 'it's about attitude, not about literally doing it'; 'it only concerns a future millennial dispensation'.

However, it is clear that Jesus is addressing current disciples. Those he's called to be a light now in the present, a light that is not hidden (5:13-16). The Sermon is relevant right now for those following Jesus and waiting for the Kingdom to come.

The stress on obedience is couched in God's grace all through the Sermon. Entrance into the Kingdom is based on obedience (7:21) but not obedience that merits entrance. It is an obedience that flows from being poor in spirit – meek and hungry for righteousness (5:1-10). In the middle of the Sermon is a prayer that drinks from the grace of God. It is a prayer that as He brings His Kingdom in, He will bring His will on earth too. Such a request is praying for God to generate obedience and worship in us while we wait. It is a prayer that also draws on God's forgiveness in the face of failure.

There has always been only two ways to live (*cf.* Deuteronomy 30:19) – and Jesus places those two options before us. The warnings exist so that we might flee from our self-righteousness to all the resources Jesus has promised to give us (7:7-11).

Chew It Over...

Remember the wide context of this Gospel: Matthew is announcing a saviour to sinners (1:21); the powerful Lord's Prayer – a request for mercy and grace; the end of the Gospel showing Jesus' death and resurrection.

Given that context, what do you make of the following statement? "In trying to live Christianly we find we are Christian."

Prayer Suggestion

Lord continue to help us work out our salvation, knowing that it is you that causes us to be obedient.