



## MONDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 9:1-8 & Psalm 32

### **Plug In...**

"Your sins are forgiven". This is said to a paralytic whose friends bravely took him to Jesus for healing. At the shock of this statement Jesus then heals the man. The man picks up his mat and walks. We see not only a man healed, but a man now completely right with God.

### **Chew It Over...**

Over the last few healing episodes in Matthew we keep being taught the connection between sin and sickness. Jesus makes this explicit here. The man wants healing and Jesus goes to a deeper problem. We need to read this with other passages like Luke 13 and John 9 (even the Book of Job) to stop short of statically saying a specific sin (a cause) leads to a specific sickness (an effect). Nevertheless, this again teaches sin lies behind all sickness. The whole Bible connects sin to sickness and to the most devastating sickness of all – death. Sickness is always an opportunity to reflect on our sin and prompt us again to repent and turn to Jesus.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Psalm 32 may provide some helpful guidance for prayer today.



# TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

## Read: Matthew 9:9-13

### **Plug In...**

In the next few verses, Jesus declares he's after those that need a doctor. Jesus demonstrates that first by seeking and inviting Matthew the tax-collector. The next picture is Jesus *reclining* with the so-called 'scum of the earth'. The Pharisees are aghast. They think, if Jesus was the Messiah, then he would come and recline with them and dispose of the filth.

### **Chew It Over...**

Jesus demonstrates that the way he disposes of the filth is to transform the sinners. Matthew gives the detail: Jesus 'reclined' at the table. This is significant. Jews only arranged the table for 'reclining' if it was a special occasion (e.g., party, wedding, royal banquet). Reclining occurred only amongst the most intimate forms of relationship. No wonder those watching were horrified. Jesus was enacting the big end-time feast that was promised to those who repented and obeyed God.

[NB: The Book of Isaiah keeps priming the picture of this end time feast hosted by God's king. Isaiah 25:6-8 is an example.]

How does our church life and activities need to demonstrate this reality of the kingdom? What could we change up, include, to make this truth of how Jesus does things more explicit?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask God to help us not aim at being a middle-class church, nor a 'clean' church. May God bring to us all the so-called "deplorables"; may we eagerly seek them out. May The Lakes aim to be a pulsating example of those that will be at the end-time banquet hosted by Jesus.



## WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Read: Matthew 9:12

### **Plug In...**

Jesus highlights some common sense to make his point: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick".

### **Chew It Over...**

Don Carson says:

*There is immense hope in this passage for the person who would like to follow Christ, but who does not feel good enough. The simple truth is that if you feel good enough for Jesus then he does not want you. He came for the sick and the sinful, the broken and the needy.*

Further, how can you risk associating with the 'sick' in order to administer the medicine they need? There may be some comfort-zones to jump over. How do we make sure The Lakes is a 'hospital'?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Cultivate in us this heart for the lost. Impress upon us Lord that those around us are deeply sick. May we pursue them like Jesus did.



## THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

### Read: Matthew 9:13 & Hosea 6

#### **Plug In...**

With this statement of v.13, Jesus acknowledges the Pharisees conceive themselves as 'righteous'. Jesus is not confirming their view, but tells them the one whom the Messiah has come to help are those in the category of 'sinners'.

#### **Chew It Over...**

The implication is those that view themselves as 'righteous' *miss out* on Jesus' help.

Jesus said go back and study your Bible to learn what Hosea 6:6 means. Let's do that. Reflect on the whole chapter of Hosea 6 to see what 6:6 means within that context. Now, what does Jesus mean by using the verse?

#### **Prayer Suggestion**

Thank God for forgiving all our disgusting sin. May He protect us from looking down our nose at others, thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought.



## FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

### Read: Matthew 9:14-15

#### **Plug In...**

Jesus continues the big end-time feast imagery by taking on the Old Testament description of that feast as a wedding (*cf.* Isaiah 61:10 – 62:5). The wedding banquet is centred around him as the bridegroom. Those at the table are preoccupied with celebrating the wedding, not engaging in mourning. Yet, there is a curve-ball to Jesus' statement. There will be a time of mourning in the future.

#### **Chew It Over...**

In the context of Matthew's gospel, the bridegroom is taken away: Jesus' death at the cross. But the bridegroom returns (Jesus' resurrection) and promises to be present with his disciples always (Matthew 28:20). Given these extend truths, what disposition should Christians have when we engage in our current religious practices and rituals? When do we mourn? When do we celebrate? Do we do both? Do we do both with nuances?

Fasting (in many regards) had a healthy place in Israelite/Jewish worship. Whatever helpful rituals we might engage in, what truths do we want the ritual to display and explicate?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Lord help us mourn over our sin appropriately given where we stand in your timetable. Thank you that you are present with us now, and that such presence means we have complete forgiveness of sins. Help us to engage in activities together that vividly demonstrate this to one another and the world.





## WEEKEND 26-27 NOVEMBER 2016

SERIES: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

### Read: Matthew 9:16-17

#### **Plug In...**

Jesus moves from the question about fasting to stating it is time to celebrate. Then he gives two parables that demonstrate something new cannot be held in the old.

#### **Chew It Over...**

The way each parable works is plain enough. What the elements reference is a bit tougher. Jesus doesn't condemn fasting as illegitimate. Rather, he questions if the current context for fasting is legitimate? There is something about the coming of the bridegroom that transposes everything. The current context – i.e., the bridegroom with them – removes the need for fasting. The Old Testament forecast of a coming Messiah, one who brings about comprehensive forgiveness of sins to definitively restore people to God, entails a logical removal for a concurrent need to keep mourning over sin. The logic stretches to the discontinuance of regular atonement. The dropping of barriers which separate one from God. Through the portal of fasting, the statement of the bridegroom and the messianic feast having arrived, cancels all the former temple/sacrifice structures.

[NB: The writer to the Hebrews observes the Old Testament practice and sees embedded in them a due-date – their nature of pointing forward makes them redundant and obsolete now the reality comes – Hebrews 8.]

How does this truth need to shape any continuance of fasting for the Christian? Would you advocate fasting? Why/why not? What things need to be understood for a right view of fasting if engaged in?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Thank God for the clarity we receive about what Jesus did for us through the Old Testament temple and sacrifice structures. Praise God for the un-fettered freedom to worship Him through the temple/sacrifice of Jesus. Ask for wisdom to keep shaping ritual practices in ways that keep alive the truth of what Jesus has done and focus on him and display the freedom won for Christians.