



MONDAY 5 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:27-30 & Psalm 73

Plug In...

The parable Jesus gives about workers in the vineyard in chapter 20 is part of the response to Peter's question. Peter is worried about what will be the result of leaving all to follow Jesus – the disciples have lowered themselves. Jesus explains their destiny is awesome. Why? Because in God's economy the first will be last and the last first. We'll see that at the end of the parable Jesus says again, in order to make the point clear, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" ([20:16](#)).

Chew It Over...

Jesus wants us to look out at the world and realise not all who are rich and famous really are. The structure of our society asks us the question: *What are you worth?* You have to prove it with a bank balance, a title, a list of assets and accumulations. If you are not worth anything, then you will be dismissed and counted irrelevant – maybe even persecuted so that others can take your stuff. This can make us worried like Peter: *Will I survive?*

Making the decision to follow Jesus is risky. Psalm 73 shows us there is a risk, it is high risk, but the gamble on God always pays off!

Prayer Suggestion

Help me Jesus to trust your guarantee that you'll look after all my needs – and forever – in your Kingdom.



TUESDAY 6 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 20:1-16

Plug In...

The punchline of this parable is when the owner says to the workers who had worked the entire day, "Are you envious because I am generous?" (v.15).

Chew It Over...

If we saw the last worker hired get a denarius (what you had been expecting to get from the beginning), we too would be thinking: "Woo-who! Imagine what we're going to get now!"

Fair enough thought, it is how things work in this world. Look again at how God deals with people. Verse 15, on what basis does God deal with people?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for taking the initiative to find us and get us involved. Thank God for His generosity; giving us grace despite whatever we think we've put in.



WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 20:16 & Romans 8:3-8

Plug In...

The economy of God: those that get into the Kingdom, get in because of God's generosity.

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Chew It Over...

We are so ingrained in thinking that our efforts must be paid. Hence, "we don't do something for nothing".

Reward thinking enslaves. It enslaves us, it enslaves others.

Given God's underserved generosity to you, how can you treat someone extravagantly, exceeding what they deserve? Think with regard to those who have hurt you, been mean to you, not care much about you, etc.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that God generously gives you these gifts to pass on ([Romans 12:3-8](#)).



THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 20:17-19 & Philippians 2:5-11

Plug In...

Jesus tells His disciples: next stop, Jerusalem. And what impending destiny awaits.

The Son of Man – the first; The Messiah – will be last in the world.

And Jesus chooses that destiny.

Chew It Over...

The God of the universe, in Christ, descends to the lowest of lows. He serves to give His life as a ransom for many (20:28). He does this so we can be elevated high. James and John in the next story will be elevated high because of Jesus' lowly service.

The famous Apostle's Creed captures this stepping down of God in Jesus, the descent to the bottom to collect us, then ascend with us in His care (see [Philippians 2:5-11](#)).

Prayer Suggestion

Let the words of the Apostle's Creed weave into you and inspire your response to God in prayer.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven,

he is seated at the right hand of the Father,

and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,*

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

* The word 'catholic' historically just meant 'universal'. In this creed it is not referring to Roman Catholic Church.



FRIDAY 9 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 20:20-28

Plug In...

Jesus has said repeatedly to His disciples the first will be last (v.16). He's said to humble yourself like children ([chapter 18](#)). So, it is surprising that Zebedee's sons, through their mother, ask Jesus for a first place position.

Jesus asks these two disciples if they can handle what's ahead. The 'cup' refers to His death He's been talking about (vv.17-19).

Chew It Over...

Maybe not so surprising. This is the natural human approach to life. Who can I stand on to raise myself up. Jesus observes this is the normal pattern of life: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."

There are two things the disciples can't do, and two things they will do.

They *can't* drink the cup of Jesus (for it entails giving your life as a ransom for many – [Isaiah 53](#)), yet they will. Think over how does that work?

The disciples have shown they *can't* escape self-promotion, the recent stories expose the disciples and humanity as being resolutely *unable* to please God, but God will do the impossible ([19:26](#)).

Matthew's Gospel emphasises the characteristics of those that will enter the Kingdom. These are not characteristics naturally possessed, so the Kingdom is not awarded to

the person based on effort. Rather, these are characteristics that are given by God's Spirit to people *after* Jesus has atoned for them.

Prayer Suggestion

Jesus has said culture, society, our nature is such that we will go in the other direction (self-promoting, lording, domineering). We must pray for the ability to shun ambition and creatively serve.



WEEKEND 10-11 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 20:28

Plug In...

The Son of Man did not come to be served. Jesus spent His entire life looking for and helping others. The greatest help was to offer His life as a sin-offering to remove God's rightful anger against us.

Chew It Over...

People are always trying to figure out the right thing to do. This is called *ethics*. Ethics answers the question: *What should I do?* That question is posed because the future matters. "I" matter, others matter, the planet matters. What you do next affects the future.

For Christians, not every decision becomes easy and clear, but in the mess we do have clear starting points and it starts with the heart. We watch how Jesus carried His cross and lived to serve others, and ask:

In this messy situation, what would serving for the benefit of another look like? What actions would need to be undertaken or avoided? What words said?

How do I carry my cross? To advantage another person, what disadvantage to myself must I carry?

It has been said, we might not know the clinically right thing to do, but shaped by Jesus we will always know the loving thing to do.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that we live a cross-shaped life; that our decisions reflect the heart of Jesus.