



MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 17:1-2

Plug In...

This description of Jesus echoes other mountain top experiences that involve the voice of God. Read Moses and the elders ascending Mount Sinai and what happened on the 7th day ([Exodus 24](#)). Read the descriptions of the LORD dwelling on a mountain ([Psalm 24](#); cf. [Psalm 68](#)). God's promise of salvation flows from His mountain dwelling ([Isaiah 40:9-10](#)). There's even more descriptions of creational elements that are enhanced when God's presence comes close ([Daniel 7:9-10](#); [10:4-6](#)).

Chew It Over...

With Scripture in the background, and all the little details Matthew includes (the time, the location, the look), what do you start to think about Jesus? [NB: This is the only time we *see* Jesus like this, even His post-resurrection appearances are not described like this.]

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to help you see Jesus in His ultimate glory and position. Ask that you will grasp this more and more – responding in light of that.



TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 17:1-9

Plug In...

The Pharisees had asked for a sign from heaven. Peter would have been knocked for six with Jesus' rebuke (Peter would be in a daze hearing God's Messiah-Conqueror is going to be killed). Next, Peter sees Jesus transformed into the promised Son of Man from Daniel he knew of ([Daniel 7](#)), views the presence of God surrounded by cloud. Peter hears God's voice *from heaven* endorse this person, who simultaneously claimed the Messiahship and forecasted an impending death.

Chew It Over...

Think over how the Gospel writers bring us to seeing Jesus as *Christ-Crucified* (i.e. *Messiah-Crucified*). Take note that Jesus sees glory and majesty on the other side of suffering (even suffering to the point of death). Notice Jesus teaches us that following Him means life will be modelled on His journey (glory on the other side of suffering – [Matthew 16:24-27](#)).

A phrase that we are not as familiar with now is, "the cruciform life". It means life is lived patterned after Jesus' life (suffering, then death, then resurrection). We are called to follow Jesus. The proclaiming of the Kingdom, the work of bringing of the Kingdom to others, the living of the ethics of the Kingdom now which brings a cost and suffering to our lives.

Our lack of readiness to even think of actively embracing this *form* of life, reveals how much of a cost it actually is.

Prayer Suggestion

Begin to pray more regularly that God will form this readiness within. Pray that God will cultivate within your suffering and costs an active desire to seek how Jesus can be glorified and the Kingdom advanced. May God form us into followers that live knowing it is all on the other side of death – that reward, blessing, comfortability, health, wealth, eternal joy all come with the resurrection.



WEDNESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 17:9-13 & Malachi 4:5-6

Plug In...

The question about Elijah draws from the final word from God in the Old Testament. After this there is no prophetic voice until John the Baptist. Malachi, the last prophet, gives a simple timetable: before the Kingdom comes, a person with the same force, passion, spirit, and message that Elijah had would come. This Elijah-type prophet will announce essentially, "Repent, for up next – God appears!" (see also [Malachi 3:1](#)).

John the Baptist called Israel to repent and turn back to God. They didn't. Instead, they conspired to kill him ([Matthew 14:1-12](#)). This is just like Elijah's experience. They hunted him down ([1 Kings 18:1 – 19:3](#)).

Chew It Over...

Think about what Peter, John, and James had experienced on the mountain with Jesus. Why would that then prompt the question about Elijah? What should they then understand when Jesus says this Elijah-figure had come and been?

How do you construct time? Is it as simple as 5 days of work/school, then weekend? On again, off again? Consider what a big thing it is for these disciples to see clearly God's timetable and survive. Think how we too through God's Word have gone up the mountain, witnessed this, and come down the mountain living with a different perspective.

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for a taste of the future Kingdom experienced in Jesus. Thank God that He's created within your normal 7 day week the dynamic where you've been stretched to see beyond just a simple cycle, but have been stretched to lean forward to God's future.



THURSDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 17:14-21

Plug In...

A dad is desperate for his son to be rid of a demon. The disciples, still down the mountain, couldn't get rid of the demon. The dad asks Jesus for help. Jesus first replies with the problem of all of Israel "unbelieving and rebellious". Then He removes the demon from the boy. The disciples ask why they couldn't help the man and his boy. Jesus says because of their "little faith".

Chew It Over...

Why is there someone in Israel with a demon? This should not be! Jesus makes the connection that the problems of mass sickness and many demons within God's people are a result of their overall unbelief.

In answer to the disciples' question, Jesus first says their problem is 'little belief'. Then says the solution is 'belief that is little'. Jesus exposes humanity's problem. We don't believe! Even believers spend a lot of time in unbelief, or half-belief. Some Bible versions will include a line that is also in Mark's account – "this kind can only come out by prayer" ([Mark 9:14-29](#)).

This story reveals that the disciples didn't have faith small enough to move them to prayer. Instead they trusted in something they thought they had, or a power they thought they had been given.

Linger over these statements:

"Prayer is faith-breathing."

“Prayerlessness is powerlessness.”

“Do you believe God enough – what He says about saving people, building His Kingdom, having compassion – to say your prayers?”

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for faith. Pray for a faith united in prayer. Pray for power to follow Jesus in all things and in all situations.



FRIDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 17:19-23

Plug In...

It is worth continuing to reflect the audacious response to faith-prayer that God gives. Those familiar with the health-and-wealth-gospel have been put off by its simple 'name it, claim it' (and by implication God is obliged to give).

Chew It Over...

Let this not deter us from Jesus' promises to His church. His followers can pray to God. God listens. He gives good gifts ([Matthew 7:7-12](#)). His equations are gracious (only a little faith and God still pours it on for us – v.20). For sure, the picture of, "Say to this mountain move from here to there" is picture language, but still has a literal point. It is not a symbolic point, or merely a spiritual point. No, the picture is designed to get us excited about the powerful response our loving Father enacts when we talk to Him.

Note the final breath-taking line from Jesus, "Nothing will be impossible for you". Sadly, we often approach such language in ways that flatten it all out and drain it of its surface level meaning. These verses have been treated by Bible teachers as though their job is to explain away what has been said. As though the job is to show what Jesus said is actually not what He really meant. How sad. Why would you bother praying at all. No way! Jesus said what He meant. Meant what He said. That is, you and I with little, hopeless, wavering faith, if we admit our inadequacy and turn up towards Him with our small faith, will be staggered by what God does!

This is not a genie-in-a-bottle theology (name it; claim it). This is a people who *listen* to Jesus (17:5), are ready to follow Him, even in the path of suffering ([16:24-28](#)), know that there is glory on the other side (they've seen a sneak-peak: 17:1-2; *cf.* v.23), and in

this context pray for God's glory and Kingdom to come ([6:9-13](#)). Within this context they know that their God is all powerful and will fulfil His plan, so nothing is impossible.

Have we been too awkward about Jesus' words? Have we reduced what we pray about to a handful of so-called 'spiritual' requests? Are we actually failing to believe in who Jesus is, what He wants to do for us? Have we begun to pray in a way where we do not really expect Jesus to respond?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray [Mark 9:24](#): "Lord, I believe; Help my unbelief!"



WEEKEND 17-18 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 6 (Jesus' model of prayer)

Plug In...

Matthew has shown us in the last two chapters that Jesus is God's one and only Christ/Messiah ([Matthew 16:13-20](#); [17:1-7](#)) and also a Servant that will suffer ([Matthew 16:21-28](#); [17:9-13](#) & [22-23](#)).

This is something that the disciples find hard to grasp. Particularly the reality that the Messiah might suffer and the demand that following Jesus involves the same road ([Matthew 16:24-28](#)).

In a world that is out to get Jesus, who already have got John the Baptist ([Matthew 17:10-13](#)); in a world that is under siege by Satan who drives even the religious to unbelief in Jesus and God's ways ([Matthew 16:21-23](#) & [17:14-17](#)), we are told that faith in God expressed in prayer is the response. How else will we survive?

Chew It Over...

How visible is your prayer? This is not do you pray in a showy way. But can you look back across the week, the month, and see yourself in prayer? Not necessarily long prayers, but regularly? Not only 'spiritual' matters, but all matters?

Jesus has shown us the true realities of the world, what is really going on. What we really battle against, our greatest danger. Jesus has shown us it is possible to live for ourselves, try to gain the whole world in this life, place trust in other things. Reliance on God is expressed in talking to Him, otherwise we will find that despite our spirit's willingness, our flesh has no power to change ourselves or impact our world for God's

Kingdom. Jesus prayed knowing His flesh was prone to temptation ([Matthew 26:36-45](#)). How much more should we be praying?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to make prayer visible in and throughout your days ahead, weeks, and months.