



MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 17:24-27

Plug In...

After the experience on top of the mountain, the disciples seeing Jesus in bright glory, a reality check occurs down below. Demon possession. Sickness. The opposition of the religious and gentile leaders that Jesus claims will peak in them killing Him ([17:22-23](#)). We are told the disciples are distressed at this forecast (17:23b). So, a natural question would be who is in control? Where does power lie? If Jesus is Messiah – yet to be killed – what does that say about God's Kingdom?

With this all beginning to bubble in the hearts and minds of the disciples, the tension becomes really concrete when Peter gets pressed on whether Jesus pays any earthly tax or not.

Chew It Over...

How does Jesus providing a coin for His disciples answer His own question? *"What do you think Simon? Who do earthly kings collect tariffs or taxes from? From their sons or from strangers?"*

How might the extraordinary way in which the coin is provided answer some of the disciples' possible internal questions?

Prayer Suggestion

Jesus we see that you provide for us. We owe everything to God, but you provide the payment. Thank you that we are your sons and daughters. Despite the pressures of

this world, we thank you that God owns all creation and marshals all elements to His purpose and Kingdom. Thank you that the pressures and pain of this world are temporary, and that as sons and daughters you will bring us to a world where no more effort or suffering will be required of us.



TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 18:1-9

Plug In...

There is a word that appears over and over in this passage (even in the previous passage – [17:24-27](#)). That word is *scandalise*. Bible translations will put this in English as ‘offence’, or ‘stumbling block’. *Scandalise* means: *actions that drive someone away from faith*. When Jesus says to His disciples that they will pay the tax in order not to “offend”, He is saying let’s do actions that help others come to the faith not push them away. Jesus is free (He’s the son of the Kingdom). Those with Jesus are free too. Nevertheless, in their freedom they will self-limit in order to win, enhance, promote, and warm people to the faith. Even if it means forgoing their rights as ‘free’ people.

Chew It Over...

The words on everyone’s lips today is “rights”. More strongly, “My rights!”. Everyone claims a bunch of ‘rights’. Everyone walks around demanding others to honour those rights. Given this mood, we need to be careful we are not drawn into this. For, here, Jesus says Christians (as free children) need to be ready to forgo our rights. The call is to weigh up the situation, not in terms of our ‘rights’, but in terms of *will this promote or obstruct a ‘little one’ coming to faith*.

How do we do this as parents with children? How do we do this in our friendships? Will this effect what we eat and drink in some situations? Will this shape our ‘free-time’? What things would you do to someone that is antagonistic to Christianity, in order to draw them closer, not push them away. What if the government becomes very anti-Christian, what creative things could you do to not offend (of course without going silent on the lordship and teachings of Jesus). The application of this is endless. It calls

us to be creative in what we do. Watch how Paul follows through on Jesus' teaching ([1 Corinthians 8-9](#)).

And the payload of what Jesus says here is, such willingness, or lack of, is a life and death matter. Both for others and for ourselves (vv. 6-9).

Prayer Suggestion

Help me be willing in this life to carry my cross, forgo my rights. Give me wisdom on when I should self-limit in order to bring someone closer to Jesus. Help me in my freedom to discipline my body; run in such a way as to exercise self-control to promote and preach Christ to others.



WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 18:10-14

Plug In...

Jesus says don't look down at these 'little ones'. He's no longer just talking about children. He's talking about anyone that forgoes greatness and looks small and insignificant because of following Jesus.

The background. Pick up on Jesus' strong words: "Unless you turn around and become like children". Forget greatness or position *within* the Kingdom. The matter concerns even getting *in*!

The humble one is the one the Father goes after, the one the Father appoint angels to look after.

Chew It Over...

The word 'rabbi' means, literally, 'my great one'. Jesus calls all people in the Kingdom to not fuss about position or hierarchy (cf. [Matthew 23:8-10](#)). The order is Jesus, then everyone else ([Philippians 2:10](#)).

John's Gospel makes clear that 'turning around to become like a child' is so difficult, it actually takes the Holy Spirit to re-birth us ([John 3:1-8](#)). Here, Matthew stresses that the born-again person becoming child-like is a lifelong Kingdom ethic.

We are not called to be infantile or naive, so what things can you think of that give expression to a child's humility as they do life?

Prayer Suggestion

Who would live this way without the power of Jesus by His Spirit. Pray to be turned around.



THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 18:15-20

Plug In...

Jesus declares that the Father loves 'little ones'. Like a sheep gone astray, the Father through Jesus – the Good Shepherd – will pursue that lost sheep.

Jesus now gives practical steps in pursuing the stray sheep.

Chew It Over...

When stuff happens, relationships go south, the first step is to begin with Jesus' posture. Do you have compassion (instead of rage)? Are you looking forward to rejoicing in their return (instead of glee in seeing revenge)? Will you go and look for them, seek them (rather than bunkering down and waiting for them to make the first move)?

Jesus gives a series of steps to restore a relationship. These steps escalate should the person not respond. Often we can escalate the situation, moving from zero to 100 without the intermediate steps. It is important that Christians, together with their church, take these steps in order. For doing so wields the keys of the Kingdom. Each step seeks to turn the person around. Each step approaches from the position of being a humble child ourselves, relying on the Gospel of grace too. Each step protects us from putting a stumbling block in front of one of the 'little ones', the 'lost sheep' whom the Father loves and wants to see return.

Prayer Suggestion

Notice the interplay with these concrete, down-down-here-on-earth, steps and ratification in heaven. We must pray for ourselves, for the other.



FRIDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 18:21-35

Plug In...

The point of this story should be as clear as day.

Chew It Over...

The doing it, not so easy.

This story grabs us, it will evoke a relationship you have that needs mercy given and forgiveness provided.

Who comes to mind? What must you do? How will you start the process?

Prayer Suggestion

Jesus I forgive, help me with my unforgiveness.



WEEKEND 24-25 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 18:35 (Further Reflection)

Plug In...

When Jesus used the phrase, “The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men” it recalls scenarios in the Old Testament where those whom were handed over received no mercy from the punisher (e.g. [Isaiah 19:4](#)).

This parable we’ve just read ([Matthew 18:21-35](#)) explains that mercy is a rare find.

Chew It Over...

Mercy is so often lacking with humans. Not so with God, He gives it in abundance. Jesus calls people who follow Him to likewise have much mercy and forgiveness. The final words in this passage are heavy and need to be taken to heart.

What does it suggest about one’s understanding of the Gospel that Jesus makes it so categorical that the Father will not forgive the person who does not forgive their neighbour?

Where does one find the resources to offer such forgiveness, to extend great mercy?

Prayer Suggestion

Regarding that person you thought of yesterday, what was your first step towards forgiveness and reconciliation? If none, fall to your knees and pray for the ability that does not lie within.