



MONDAY 19 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:23-27

Plug In...

Again the action is located at the temple. Jesus cleared the temple and it didn't go unnoticed. The temple big-wigs demand, "By what authority are you doing these things?"

Chew It Over...

Notice the chief priests and elders don't make a statement about Jesus, they question Him. What would their purpose be in asking a question publicly? What result do they hope for?

Jesus asks them a question. Shouldn't leaders have clear convictions either way? What does their ambivalence show about their motives?

So much of what we humans do is based on being accepted by a group. C.S. Lewis called this an 'inner ring'. The desire to be accepted by a group is so strong we will end up doing and saying things that normally go against our ethics. Notice that the only audience that matters for Jesus is God – this is most clear when it brings exclusion and rejection to Jesus from others.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask to so deeply know Jesus that all our actions and words stem from bringing glory to God and pleasing Him. Ask that God drives out our innate fear of what others might think and do.



TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:28-32

Plug In...

The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus in His words and turn the crowd against Him; locking in their influential positions and securing their power. Jesus won't answer their question directly unless they speak directly with pure motives. But Jesus does go on to tell three parables (21:28 – 22:14). They each paint a picture of Israel, particularly their leaders, being given opportunity by God to love Him, to turn back to Him. In each scenario they don't. Upon their refusal, they in turn are rejected by God.

Chew It Over...

In this first parable, what is the defining characteristic of those who enter the Kingdom of God?

The parable demands that God's people express the way of righteousness (i.e. they actually work in the vineyard). Jesus says, John the Baptist showed people this way. What is the way? (cf. [Matthew 3:1-17](#)).

Prayer Suggestion

Praise God that He has given us the way of righteousness, both the demand to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect ([5:48](#)) and the gift of Jesus to be able to do the will of God.



WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:33 & Isaiah 5

Plug In...

Jesus is about to tell another parable about a vineyard. Those listening, who knew a bit of their Bible, would immediately think of Isaiah 5. Before diving into the parable tomorrow, let's get into the shoes of those listening. Read what Isaiah said about a vineyard.

Chew It Over...

In the context of Isaiah, it is after repeated rejection of the offer of salvation (shown in the vineyard metaphoric song – Isaiah 5) that parables are introduced ([Isaiah 6](#) – cf. [Matthew 13:11-17](#)). The parables confirm the judgement that the people themselves have made.

If we read passages like Isaiah 5 and are convicted of sin, prompted to confess to Jesus, and turn away from the sin and towards Jesus' way of righteousness (repentance), then we should rejoice. Such a move in our life is a gift from God. As Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear".

Prayer Suggestion

Confess, repent, rejoice in praise.



THURSDAY 22 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:33-46

Plug In...

The leaders of Israel must have been stunned by Jesus' use of the Isaiah 5 vineyard picture. Isaiah 5-6 shows that because of Israel's sin they will go into exile ("they won't hear, they won't see...there will be nothing left in the land"). The rest of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 40, spoke of God restoring the people from exile. They did come back from Babylon to Palestine. So while they still waited for more of God's promises (like a Davidic king; no more enemies) to eventuate, they did conceive of themselves as on the other side of exile – progressively heading towards a greater fulfilment.

Chew It Over...

Can you see how using the vineyard song from Isaiah would have stunned the leaders? What has Jesus effectively said about their destiny?

The most stinging line comes at verse 43, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce fruit".

What is the major characteristic of this new people that Jesus speaks of?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank Jesus for all His work in creating a forgiven people. Ask that He will generate abundant fruit in our lives, in our church family.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 23 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 22:1-14

Plug In...

The drama of this story: the great invitation to join the King is spurned.

Chew It Over...

Throughout Matthew, the parables about the Kingdom of Heaven show that the Kingdom is expected to arrive in one cataclysmic day, yet comes in two parts. The activity of God is such that He is bringing the Kingdom into the world now. It is inviting, collecting people together, but there is a mixed nature to that collection. The parable of the weeds ([13:24-30](#)) and drag net vividly shows this ([13:47-50](#)). Something that God sits with – and tells His followers to sit with – until the final moment when God sorts things out. This parable expresses the same thing. The invitation goes out, there is a gathering at the table, but then one final sorting.

The Kingdom of God will be a perfect community, in the meantime the Kingdom of God creates the church which is a mixed-bag. That is why to Christians we never stop preaching the gospel. That is why we call one another to a continuous life of repentance and faith. That is why Christians chase after “little ones” in the church who stray, or sin (cf. [Matthew 18:10-20](#)). This doesn't mean we doubt people's profession of faith, but it means we never assume that everyone at church, everyone taking the label of 'Christian' is.

The 'good news' is not *old* news for the Christian – it has to be the daily news!

Prayer Suggestion

Ask for wisdom to keep evangelising your Christian brothers and sisters, your family, your ministry team.



WEEKEND 24-25 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 22:14

Plug In...

Right now is the time of invitation – “Come to the Wedding Banquet!”

Chew It Over...

When Jesus said these words, it was in His final week before being crucified. This weekend we enter one week before Easter. Who can you invite? Who must you be praying for?

At this point we leave the Gospel of Matthew, returning to it later in the year. But as we approach Easter, think over how Jesus lowered Himself completely, even to death on a cross, in order to raise others up – He served. Think how He chases and cares for the little ones; how He invites and calls people to life. Reflect on how we have grasped the call to give up our lives, carry our cross, in order to take the message of Jesus to others. How will this week carry actions that reflect this is the story you believe and live out of?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that Jesus will be at our forefront this week. Ask for courage, opportunity, and passion to invite others to Christ.