

EXPERIENCING THE KING LIVING OUT THE KINGDOM

The Gospel of Matthew

Devotional Journal on the Gospel of Matthew (2nd Quarter of 2025)





PREFACE

SENIOR PASTOR BEH SOO YEONG

As a disciple of Jesus, one of the most important habits to cultivate is to have a daily devotional time with the Lord, to spend time in prayer and in God's Word. To this end, there are numerous devotional materials available. In fact, one is spoilt for choice when it comes to the selection of devotional material and hence it has not been my intention to write yet another devotional guide.

However, in the course of preparing for 2025 pulpit and Bible Studies on the Gospel of Matthew, it dawned on us that in order to maximise this opportunity to know the Gospel of Matthew in greater depth, a daily devotional guide may be useful. This is because the text prescribed for each sermon and study will be fairly extensive and one would not be able to get into the "trees" otherwise.

So as the church journeys through the Gospel of Matthew together in 2025, this is a humble attempt to guide our meditations on a daily portion of Scripture for the entire year. I trust that you would find this guide helpful in your personal study and application of its teachings, and most importantly to learn what it means to experience the King and live out the Kingdom as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

As you can see, this is your private journal. I hope you will be encouraged to study the text for yourself and then respond to whatever the Lord may be teaching and prompting you to do.

Content in the devotional guide

Each day, you are encouraged to first take some time to journal some devotional thoughts on the passage prescribed. Before you read through the brief notes and reflections, you should:

Read: Read the prescribed text

Record: Note down any particular verse(s) or words that strikes you

Reflect: Write your thoughts on what God is impressing upon you. This could be thanksgivings or areas of obedience needed.

Respond: Journal what you will do in response to God's Word. This may include your own prayer and resolutions.

SAMPLE

THIS IS A SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRY.



READ

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[e]?”

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Interestingly in this text, we see Jesus teach on one of the most contemporary problems of today – worry. Perhaps it is due to the pace of life, or the pressures of the workplaces, but we hear more and more cases of people having anxiety attacks. Jesus tells us, “Do not worry.” After all worry will get us nowhere and gain us no good. Instead, He assures us that God will provide and look after all our needs, if only our priorities are right.

Do you worry constantly? What are the assurances that Jesus gives us so that we can “afford” not to worry? How do these assurances help or not help you? What can you do in order to stop worrying?



RECORD



REFLECT



RESPOND

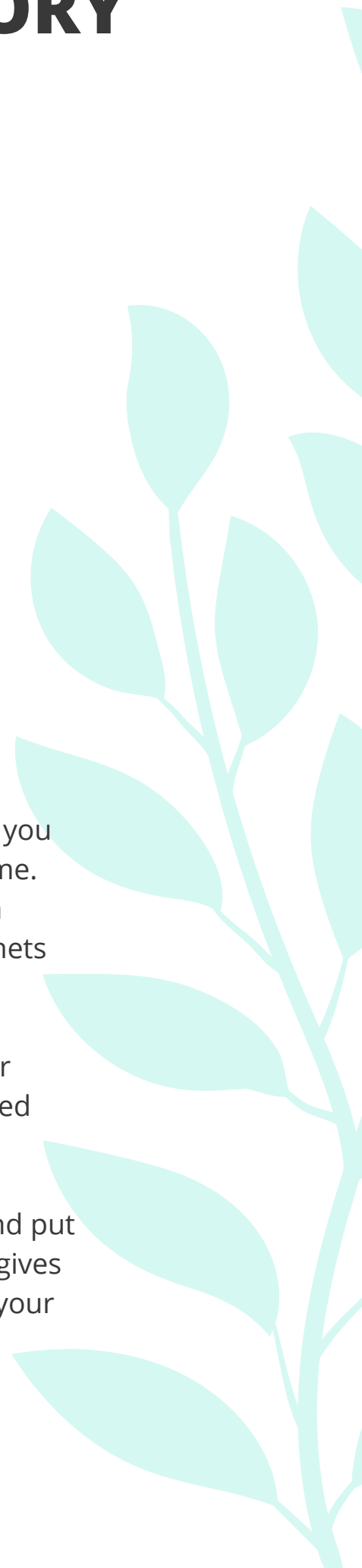
Perhaps one reason why I am so stressed is because I am not seeking his righteousness first. I have not learnt to trust God fully.

Is it because I don't believe God the Father will look after me – that all that I need will be added to me as well?

Dear Lord, teach me to trust in you and in every word you said here. I want to cast my worry about the present project and deadline into your hands. You know I am still fearful, but I will seek not to miss church or FG meetings because of the deadline. Help me, Lord!

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

MATTHEW 5.3-16 (NIV 2011)

- 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
for they will be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
- 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in
heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets
who were before you.
- 13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its
saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer
good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled
underfoot.
- 14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill
cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put
it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives
light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your
light shine before others, that they may see your good
deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”
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MATTHEW 8.1-4

WEEK 13 (BEGINNING 24 MAR) DAY 1



READ

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. 2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

We begin the next major section of the Gospel of Matthew from 8.1-11.1. This major section includes a narrative as well as a discourse, possibly structure around the following:

- 8.1-9.34 The Authority of the King (seen through his mighty deeds)
The Summon by the King (heard from the call of disciples)
- 9.35-11.1 The Mission from the King (received through his sending)

After the long discourse (Sermon on the Mount) on the description and expectation of the people of the kingdom, Jesus now stamps his authority as the King of the new kingdom through these 10 (some say 9) mighty deeds. Mt 8.1-4 records for us the first mighty deed of Jesus – the healing of a leper – unusual in that day's norms, since nobody would even go close to a leper for fear of contamination!

Despite the social taboo, Jesus was willing to touch and heal the leper. What then would Jesus not be willing to do for you? What would you ask of him today?

MATTHEW 8.5-13

WEEK 13 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6 “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

7 Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

8 The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. 11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

A Roman centurion – we wouldn’t expect faith to come from any non-Jew, would we? Yet Jesus was full of praise for him. And in response to his request, Jesus healed his servant, even from a distance! Here was the faith of a gentile, seeking healing for a servant who might not even be aware of Jesus was about to do.

How may this story encourage you in your prayers for others? Take a moment to pray for those around you who are in need of grace and mercy from the King who has the ultimate authority.

MATTHEW 8.14-17

WEEK 13 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

14 When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. 15 He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

16 When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"He took up our infirmities
and bore our diseases."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

In this third mighty deed, Jesus touched and healed Peter's mother-in-law of her fever. While we should be encouraged by the power of Jesus to heal, let's not forget that the greater intention of Matthew was to show us the very power and authority of the King of the new kingdom. At the same time, he is indeed the Suffering Servant as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 53.4.

What does this healing incident, and the previous two tell you about Jesus?

MATTHEW 8.18-22

WEEK 13 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Here are two different persons coming to Jesus. One wanted to follow him yet was told that the Messiah has no place to call home. The other wanted to delay his following and was told to follow without delay. Jesus was impressing upon them and us that following him is demanding and costly.

What are you prepared to give up in order to follow Jesus? What is preventing you from following him wholeheartedly?

MATTHEW 8.23-27

WEEK 13 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus is able! Not just to heal physical ailments, but also to command the forces of nature. He is the King of the kingdom, and He has been given all authority.

Do you truly believe that he can deal with your problems? Or do you, like the disciples, assume that Jesus is "sleeping" when you face seemingly insurmountable problems in your life? Would you keep faith and trust that God will make a way?

MATTHEW 8.28-34

WEEK 14 (BEGINNING 31 MARCH) DAY 1



READ

28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. 29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. 31 The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." 32 He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. 33 Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus is able! He is able to cast out demons. However, instead of celebrating the deliverance, the people were more concerned with the damage, especially the financial repercussions of Jesus' ministry! Instead of recognising his awesome power, he chased Him away. The change upset them, even though the two men were healed.

Are you attentive enough to God such that we would recognise the work of Christ when He does it? Would you celebrate it and worship Jesus or would you be more upset that your status quo has been destabilised?

MATTHEW 9.1-8

WEEK 14 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. 2 Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 Then the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Of all the mighty deeds so far, the purpose of this particular one is the most obvious—that Jesus performed them in order to show His authority as the Son of Man. Certainly we marvel at Jesus ability and power to heal and command forces of nature. Who else but Jesus can perform the mighty deed of forgiving sins? Only Him!

How wonderful it is then for us to witness and experience this particular mighty deed – the forgiveness of our sins! Remember and celebrate again the grace that has been extended to you through the blood of Christ!

MATTHEW 9.9-13

WEEK 14 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Once again, as in Matthew 8.18-22, the mighty deeds of Jesus are "interrupted" here by a call by Jesus to follow Him. This time Jesus summons Matthew, a tax collector to follow him. In a sense, Matthew represents the social and religious outcast of society. Nonetheless, it is for these ones that Jesus came.

Who are the 'Matthews' around you? What is your attitude towards them? How can you follow Jesus and follow his example here in the story to reach out to them?

MATTHEW 9.14-17

WEEK 14 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

14 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

16 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. 17 Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Un-shrunk cloth i.e. not cleaned and combed to remove natural oil and gum would tend to shrink when washed, and hence would rip apart any old garment when sewn together. Likewise, old leather wineskins, which had become hard and brittle with age, would burst if new wine were to be put into them, due to the pressure of fermentation.

When Jesus came, he brings with him a new order of things – one characterised by joy. Hence there needs to be a new way of understanding religion and a new structure that facilitates this new order. When you examine your own journey of faith, how prepared are you to explore and accept new expressions of the faith? How prepared are you to do that in our church?

MATTHEW 9.18-26

WEEK 14 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

18 While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." 19 Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. 21 She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

22 Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed at that moment.

23 When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, 24 he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. 25 After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. 26 News of this spread through all that region.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This story has two mighty acts of healing. One tells of the power of Jesus to heal merely by touching his garment, while the other tells of the power of Jesus to raise even the dead. The former was apparently an "accidental" healing, born out of faith by someone who was desperate, while the latter was an intentional work accompanied by unbelief from the people around. Regardless of the circumstances, Jesus is able!

What challenges and impossibilities are you faced with today? How are you inspired to trust Jesus to overcome the impossible for you?

MATTHEW 9.27-34

WEEK 15 (BEGINNING 7 APRIL) DAY 1



READ

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." 31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

34 But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

In the first instance, the two blind men followed and called out to Jesus and expressed their belief in him, Jesus touched and healed them. In the second instance, the demon-possessed man who was also mute was brought to Jesus, and he was healed. In this series of mighty deeds of Jesus (Matthew 9), regardless of the different types of problems, everyone who encountered Jesus were healed.

What is telling though, is to compare the responses of the crowd vis-à-vis that of the Pharisees. The former was amazed, while the latter were blasphemous. What caused the different response? Pre-conceived notions? Self-preservation? How would you respond when you witness some mighty or unusual acts today, especially if they do not conform to what you are used to?

MATTHEW 8.1-9.34 (REVIEW 1)

WEEK 15 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

1 When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. 2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

The Faith of the Centurion

5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6 "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

7 Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?"

8 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. 11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

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"He took up our infirmities
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18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

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21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

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12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' 18 While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." 19 Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

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For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

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15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

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23 When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, 24 he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. 25 After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. 26 News of this spread through all that region.

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28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." 31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

MATTHEW 8.1-9.34 (REVIEW 1)

WEEK 15 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."
34 But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It is interesting that Matthew recorded for us in a systematic way all the mighty deeds within this short section. Miracles of healing of the sick, commanding of forces of nature, raising the dead, and casting out of demons – these acts assure us that Jesus is all-powerful. At the same time, it is also to show that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

What lessons do you personally draw from these mighty deeds? As a disciple of Jesus, what assurances can you derive from these miraculous deeds?

MATTHEW 9.35-38

WEEK 15 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As Jesus was healing and performing His mighty deeds, His utmost concern seemed to be the people – that they were harassed and helpless, "like sheep without shepherd." His power was demonstrated to fulfil His mission, i.e. to save the lost. Hence he teaches the disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.

As Christ's followers, is this also our concern – the people who are lost without Christ? Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out the workers! Ask the Lord to open our eyes to the lost and send you!

MATTHEW 10.1-8

WEEK 15 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

While the methods with which we go and reach the lost may be different from that of the first disciples, the message is the same: the kingdom of heaven is near. Just like the first disciples, all mighty deeds or healings must be based on the authority given by Jesus Himself. And just like the disciples, the sole purpose is to reach the lost, and never for personal glory and fame.

Do you make it our priority to share your faith with others? Who are you witnessing to? How would you make this a passionate desire?

PASSION WEEK DAY 1

WEEK 16 (BEGINNING 13 APRIL, SUNDAY)

24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

For Passion Week, we recommend you take extended time each day to pray, using the guide below. The Bible passages are taken from the Revised Common Lectionary and the prayers come from various sources (e.g. Book of Common Prayer). May your vision of the crucified and risen Christ be renewed.

Preparation

Be still before God. Meditate on John 12:12-16. Just as the crowd received Jesus, open your heart anew to him.

Adoration

Meditate on Isaiah 50:4-9, a prophecy that finds its fulfilment in Christ. Worship and praise Jesus who set his face like flint (v.7) and went towards Jerusalem to suffer and do God's will.

Confession

Ask the Holy Spirit to search you and reveal where you may not have followed Christ's example, and avoided doing God's will because you did not want to suffer. Confess these to the Lord.

Petition

Meditate on Psalm 31: 9-16. Where in your life are you experiencing distress, anguish and affliction? Commit these to God and ask Him to deliver you. Ask Him for a deeper sense of his unfailing love (v.16).

Intercession

As the Lord leads, pray for any individuals you know who are presently suffering distress, anguish and affliction.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on Philippians 2:5-11. Thank our Lord for humbling Himself and becoming the lowest of us in order to identify with us, redeem us, and bring us salvation.

Almighty and ever-living God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PASSION WEEK DAY 2

WEEK 16 (14 APRIL, MONDAY)

24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

Be still and ask the Holy Spirit to awaken your heart toward His presence and love.

Adoration

Meditate on Isaiah 42:1-9. Praise Jesus, the Servant of the Lord, for his gentleness (v.2-3) and the freedom he brings to all (v.7).

Confession

Meditate on John 12:1-11. Reflect on whether you have given your best to Jesus, as Mary did. Confess how you withhold your best from Jesus. Seek His forgiveness and ask for power to surrender completely to Him.

Petition

Meditate on Psalm 36:5-11. Ask God to continue to pour out his unfailing love upon your life (v.7), and to be satisfied by what he offers (v.8). Ask Him to protect you from pride within, and evil without (v.11).

Intercession

Think or look through recent news headlines. As events, people, places, and situations come to mind, pray for God's mercy on them. Pray that He would bring freedom to those in bondage.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on Hebrews 9: 11-15. Thank God for sending Jesus, our perfect sacrifice. Thank Jesus for the complete salvation that he brings, and the promised eternal inheritance that is to come.

Almighty God, whose dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PASSION WEEK DAY 3

WEEK 16 (15 APRIL, TUESDAY)

24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

Be still before God. Ask Him to surround you with the safety and assurance that comes from His love.

Adoration

Meditate on Isaiah 49:1-7. Praise God for calling His Servant, Jesus Christ, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth (v.6). Thank Him for saving you personally.

Confession

Meditate on John 12:20-36. Ask God to reveal to you where you might have a sinful love for your life in this world (v.25). Confess this misplaced love and ask Jesus to teach you to love him above all else (v.26).

Petition

Meditate on Psalm 71:1-14. Ask for God's deliverance in the difficult situations you find yourself in. Pray that you will experience Him as your rock of refuge (v.3), hope and confidence (v.5), and help (v.12).

Intercession

As the Lord leads, pray for those you know who are making sacrifices and expending themselves for others. Pray that God will sustain and bless them.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. Thank God for His wisdom that turns "foolish self-sacrifice" into salvation. Thank God that we too can selflessly give of ourselves to others, knowing it is never in vain.

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PASSION WEEK DAY 4

WEEK 16 (16 APRIL, WEDNESDAY)

24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

Be still before God. Ask the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor and Comforter, to still your heart and open your mind to God.

Adoration

Meditate on John 13:31-35. Give the glory due to Jesus for His finished work (on the Cross). Praise Him for His love for us (v.34), that we now are to have for others.

Confession

Meditate on John 13:21-30. Where, like Judas, have you also faltered in your allegiance Jesus when it has cost you something dear? Confess these areas and ask for His forgiveness.

Petition

Meditate on Psalm 70. Think about a situation in your life that you are struggling with or are confused by. Pray this psalm as a personal prayer for yourself, pleading with God to come quickly to save" you (v.1).

Intercession

Meditate on Hebrews 12:1-3. Pray for those you know who may be weighed down with worry or sin (v.1), that God will give them endurance to run the race and look to Jesus (v.2-3).

Thanksgiving

Thank God for the trials in life which He is using to grow your faith. Thank Jesus for going before you and encouraging you with His example and presence, as He faced His own trials.

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

WEEK 16 (17 APRIL)
24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

Be still before God. Ask the Holy Spirit to awaken in you a desire to serve and emulate Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Adoration

Meditate on John 13:1-11. Praise Jesus for showing us the greatest example of humble, loving servanthood, first through the washing of His disciples' feet, and ultimately, through the laying down of His life.

Confession

Meditate on John 13:12-17. Confess the situations where you have not heeded Jesus' words, and have either chosen not to serve others or have done so without humility and willingness.

Petition

Meditate on Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19. Ask God to grant you the attitude of the Psalmist—deep gratitude to God for his mercy (v.1), and a willingness to serve God and others sacrificially.

Intercession

Think of the people who God has placed around you (family, friends, neighbours, colleagues etc.). Pray for them as the Lord leads, and for opportunities to serve them, in emulation of Christ our Master.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Thank the Lord Jesus for giving His body and blood for you. Thank Him for giving us the Lord's Supper, a visible and tangible sign of His great love for us.

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

WEEK 16 (18 APRIL)
24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

Be still before God. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you meditate on Jesus' Passion and death. As you do, open your heart to Jesus' great love for you that brought Him to the cross.

Contemplation

Meditate on John 18:1 – 19:42. Pause after each section and think about how Jesus must have felt as He went through the final hours of His life. Meditate on the extent of Jesus' love for you and for the world.

Confession

Meditate on Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. Ask the Spirit to convict you of your sins for which Christ had to suffer. Confess these sins to God and receive the peace of God that Christ's punishment has brought us.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on Hebrews 10:16-25. Thank God for the covenant you now have with Him through Jesus' work on the cross.

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY

WEEK 16 (19 APRIL)
24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

On this, Holy Saturday, be still and silent before God.

Contemplation

Imagine yourself outside the tomb of Jesus Christ on Holy Saturday. What would you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Meditate on Job 14:1-14 and reflect on the reality of death for a moment.

Lament

Meditate on Lamentations 3:1-9. Where in your life might you be feeling this way now? Lift up these feelings and situations to God. Be still in His presence and wait on Him.

Petition

Meditate on Psalm 31:1-16 and allow it to be your prayer. Ask God to be merciful to you, deliver you, to make His face shine on you.

Intercession

Do you know of others who are going through a hard time as they wait or hope on God? Pray Psalm 31:1-16 for them as well. Pray that God will grant them peace.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on Lamentations 3:19-24. Thank God that even in the bitterness and affliction of life, God's love is great and His compassions never fail. They are new every morning.

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

WEEK 16 (20 APRIL)
24/7 PRAYER JOURNAL

Preparation

As you come before God, ask Him to awaken joy in your heart on this day of victory and triumph.

Adoration

Meditate on John 20:1-18. Imagine yourself as Mary Magdalene. How do you feel when Jesus reveals Himself to you (v.16)? Express these thoughts and feelings as a prayer of praise and joy to the Risen Lord.

Petition

Meditate on Philippians 4:4. Pray for a new and deep joy to well up in you, in light of your resurrection hope in Christ!

Intercession

Meditate on Isaiah 25: 6-9. Pray that God will deliver the many in the world who are hungry, needy, and enveloped by darkness, oppression, fear or sadness through the power and hope of the resurrection.

Thanksgiving

Meditate on Psalm 118:1, 13-24. Pray this psalm as a personal prayer of thanksgiving to God. Thank Him for the times he has delivered (v.14), sustained (v.18), and heard you (v.21). Then go, rejoicing in the Lord!

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

MATTHEW 10.9-15

WEEK 17 (BEGINNING 21 APRIL) DAY 1



READ

9 “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts — 10 no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. 11 Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus sends the disciples on a mission trip, but without any valuables on them. Likely, the intention is to foster a deeper sense of dependence on God through the hospitality of the people they are ministering to. While Jesus may not be against material possessions per se, in seeking to fulfil their mission, the disciples need to learn to find their security in God rather than in any material wealth.

What about us, modern urban dwellers? In a sense, we too have been chosen by Jesus and sent into the world to reach the lost. Isn't this an extended “mission trip?” If so, then should we not also heed Jesus' teaching—to find our security in God rather than in the material possessions that we seek to own?

MATTHEW 10.16-23

WEEK 17 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus warns us to be on guard against men—to expect persecution from them, even from our loved ones. When they indeed do so, we ought to trust that the Spirit will teach us how to respond. While we ought to keep to the task of sharing the faith even though we are vulnerable to the hostile world ("as innocent as doves"), we are also called to practice self-preservation ("as shrewd as snakes"), such as fleeing from one place to another when we are persecuted.

This is such a challenging tension to keep, isn't it? We could either be too trusting and naïve on the one hand; or be too careful so as not to be taken for a ride on the other, so much so that our mission is compromised. How would you apply this teaching into your life at this time so as to reach the lost for Christ?

MATTHEW 10.24-33

WEEK 17 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

24 "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

26 "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. [b] 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As part of the mission Jesus assigns to us, we need to expect no better treatment than what Jesus received (just like the student and the servant), including being falsely accused and maliciously branded (cf. 9.34; 12.24). Yet the question for us is "whom should we truly fear?"

We are exhorted to be afraid, not of men who can only harm the body, but of God who can destroy both body and soul. Besides, God cares for us and promises to acknowledge us in eternity. Are you already openly acknowledging him now? Are you mentally and spiritually prepared to acknowledge Jesus even in the face of future adversities and persecutions?

MATTHEW 10.34-11.1

WEEK 17 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn
"a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—
36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'
37 "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.
40 "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."
21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

11 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Continuing with the caution on persecution from men, Jesus makes reference to Mic 7.6 and issues the final challenge: the kingdom of heaven demands an allegiance only to God and we who profess to follow Christ must be prepared to lose our lives for the sake of this kingdom. Bear in mind that Jesus does not excuse us from

MATTHEW 9.35-11.1 (REVIEW)

WEEK 17 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

Chapter 9 verse 35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”


Chapter 10 verse 1 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

9 “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— 10 no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. 11 Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

16 “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues.



18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say,²⁰ for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

24 "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

26 "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

Chapter 11 verse 1 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

In this passage, Jesus calls us to proclaim the kingdom and the gospel, though not obnoxiously or insensitively. On many occasions, this comes with a high price to pay, be it rejection, or persecution or mockery from others. Are you prepared to bear this high costs? Take heart, for whenever He calls, He also gives strength and encouragement for the task ahead. Strengthen your resolve for the mission because God will never forsake you!

MATTHEW 11.2-6

WEEK 18 (BEGINNING 28 APRIL) DAY 1



READ

2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy[b] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Verse 11.1 signals the move into another major section of the Gospel of Matthew, where we deal with the demands of the new kingdom. In this passage, one may find comfort knowing that even John the Baptist, the forerunner for Jesus was unsure if He was indeed the Messiah. In response, Jesus explained what he was doing.

If one were to examine Isa 35.4-6 and Isa 61.1, one would realise that Jesus was assuring John that he is indeed the One, as prophesied – where the blind sees; the deaf hears; the lame walks; the mute shouts; the prisoners go free; and good news is preached. All these mighty deeds authenticate Jesus as the Messiah!

As we follow Jesus, there may be times when we begin to doubt, as John did. When that happens, take heart, for Jesus is still present. Watch! Watch patiently for what he is doing in, through and around you.

MATTHEW 11.7-15

WEEK 18 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'[c]

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence,[d] and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 Whoever has ears, let them hear.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus commends John as the last and greatest of all prophets – one who would prepare the way and usher in the Messiah himself. Yet, because he (and the great prophets before him) was from the old era, he is still considered less than anyone who is of the new kingdom. Anyone after John belongs to the new kingdom because the Messiah has already come. The kingdom of heaven has broken in and is still advancing, albeit in the midst of violence and upheaval!

Do you realise that the kingdom of God is advancing? From the time of Jesus' first coming, it is advancing towards his second coming. No matter how chaotic the world is becoming, or how discouraged you are, the kingdom is still on the way to consummation! Take heart and press on. "Oh Lord, thy Kingdom come!"

MATTHEW 11.16-19

WEEK 18 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

17 "We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Despite having witnessed the advent of Jesus the Messiah, the people refused to acknowledge him, nor John the Baptist. Jesus indicts them as being unresponsive to the gospel (Jesus played the flute, they did not dance; John sang the dirge, and they did not mourn). How tragic and sad! Yet the kingdom is advancing despite the people's resistance – such is the nature of the kingdom.

Perhaps it is important for us to examine ourselves – whether we too have been unresponsive to the whole gospel – lest we face similar indictment from our coming King. Are you completely heeding the gospel of Jesus?

MATTHEW 11.20-24

WEEK 18 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

20 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.^[e] For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It is clear from verse 20 why Jesus denounced these cities. Despite the miracles performed there, the people remained unconvinced about who Jesus was.

Have you been examining your own soul lately? Has God been showing you areas in your life that needs to be dealt with? What has been your response? Is there sincere repentance so as to avoid similar indictments as these cities?

MATTHEW 11.25-30

WEEK 18 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

While Jesus denounced the various cities mention in 11.20-24, he however thanked God that there are those who behave like little children – trusting in Jesus. As a result of their childlike (not childish) faith, they who obeyed Jesus became weary and burdened. As such Jesus invites such ones – those who are dependant on Him – to come to Him to find rest.

Instead of the yoke that is usually associated with that being used to harness two animals together to pull a cart, Jesus is likely referring to the human yoke, worn to distribute the weight of a load across one's shoulders. So, we are counselled to take the yoke of discipleship to learn from Jesus – one that fits and is light – one that will make the journey and burden easier. (There seems to be an echo of Ex 33.14, when God assured Moses that He would give him rest.)

Jesus reserves the harshest words for those who are unrepentant; but the most comforting words for those who have chosen to obey and trust Him. Which group would you rather be? What posture would you take to be like the little children and find rest in Jesus?

MATTHEW 12.1-8

WEEK 19 (BEGINNING 5 MAY) DAY 1



READ

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. 2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” 3 He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. 5 Or haven’t you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? 6 I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. 7 If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

When God gave the Sabbath Law as part of the 10 commandments (Ex 20.10; 23.12; Dt 5.14), He never intended it to be adhered to legalistically. The religious leaders, however, were so obsessed in obeying the letter of the law that they “put up a fence around the law” through an elaborate system of rules to make sure the Sabbath law would not be broken. Yet they forgot the spirit behind the law. They have sought to sacrifice but failed to dispense mercy.

These two stories (cf. 1 Sa 21.6; Nu 28.9) are Jesus’ way of telling the Pharisees that even King David and the priests were spared despite breaking the Sabbath Law, because they were anointed for service. Now Jesus, who is greater than the temple, is here. As the Son of Man, Jesus has the authority to interpret the Sabbath (not the Pharisees who think they could determine what constituted breaking the Law).

Besides, the law was never meant to place ritual above compassion. In God’s eyes, mercy shown to others always trumps sacrifices of burnt offerings (cf. Hos 6.6). In keeping the Sabbath, do we first acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, and that the spirit of the Sabbath is more important than the rigid adherence of it?

MATTHEW 12.9-13

WEEK 19 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

9 Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

11 He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?¹² How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

13 Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It is noteworthy that Jesus did not actually break the Sabbath law. But he had broken the Pharisaic code (i.e. codes to provide “buffer” from breaking the law itself), which allows healing only when a man’s life is in danger. Jesus is challenging their understanding of religion. Certainly, one is permitted, if not encouraged to do good on a Sabbath.

Even more generally, Jesus teaches that compassion is far more important than ritualistic adherence to rules. How can we avoid a Pharisaic spirit? Do you seek to do good even if it may contravene some customs and rules?

MATTHEW 12.14-21

WEEK 19 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

15 Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. 16 He warned them not to tell others about him. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

19 He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.

20 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.

21 In his name the nations will put their hope."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It seems clear that Jesus is withdrawing because he knows of the impending plot and takes the necessary precaution to avoid premature confrontation. He demands silence from those he healed to prevent unwanted publicity and undesired public pressure to be political deliverer.[1] His work is not done, and he focuses on it, fulfilling Isa 42.1-4: as God's chosen Servant to proclaim justice to the nations in meekness and gentleness, through the Spirit's empowerment.

Perhaps we can learn much from Jesus' sense of mission and timing. Being flexible is essential to help us focus on fulfilling God's mission for us. What is your posture when you face opposition or objection? Do you exercise self-control and versatility so as to keep the main thing the main thing?

[1] France, 468.

MATTHEW 12.22-24

WEEK 19 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

One act of power, two different reactions! Similar to 9.32-34, the crowd were astonished, but the Pharisees were cynical, if not threatened. By using the phrase "Son of David" the crowd is beginning to draw conclusion about Jesus' identity as Messiah. How sad and tragic, when those who were led could grasp it, while their leaders would miss it – all because of their heard-heartedness and religiosity.

Are you attentive to what God is doing in your life or the lives of those around you? What is your usual response? Are you marked by amazement and astonishment or cynicism and doubt? How can you heed the warning from this passage?

MATTHEW 12.25-29

WEEK 19 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus openly refutes the Pharisees' allegation and brings home the truth that He is exorcising by demons the Spirit of God. This means that the kingdom of God has come. Jesus elaborates further with verse 29, that He has come to tie up the strong man – referring to Satan – and to stamp His irrefutable authority as the Son of God.

In the face of opposition, especially spiritual oppositions, do you tend to resign yourself to "forces of nature or circumstances?" Or do you instead recognise and acknowledge the authority of Jesus in your life? Even though we are awaiting the second coming, do we live like the kingdom of God has already come, that "the strong man has been tied up" and by the authority of Christ, we no longer need to live in fear and spiritual oppression?

MATTHEW 12.30-32

WEEK 20 (BEGINNING 12 MAY) DAY 1



READ

30 “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

One faces a crisis of choice here. Clearly, there is a decision needed. No one can sit on the fence, for the kingdom of God has already come and it will be fulfilled when Christ comes back. We are either with Jesus or we are not. Which side are you on?

One common dilemma we face often is when we witness supernatural work of miracles. While we want to be discerning, we need to also be careful not to be too quick and arrogant to attribute any such supernatural work to the devil. A humble and teachable spirit is needed.

MATTHEW 12.33-37

WEEK 20 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. 35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Following the teaching in Matthew 12.25-32, Jesus teaches that one knows the tree by its fruit. So clearly, not every miraculous deed can be deemed as from God, after all we are instructed to test the spirit (1 Jn 4.1). But how do we discern? By the fruit of the tree – the deeds and words that comes out from the person.

What do others say about the kinds of deeds and words you display? How does that indicate what is stored in your heart?

MATTHEW 12.38-42

WEEK 20 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."

39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign!

But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now

something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came

from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus refuses to perform a miraculous sign except the enigmatic "sign of Jonah" – the death and resurrection that was to come. Instead, he calls them a wicked and adulterous generation because the request reflected their rebelliousness–unrepentance and hard-heartedness. Unlike Nineveh which repented at Jonah's preaching, or the Queen of the South who listen to Solomon's wisdom, these religious leaders remain unchanged and unconvinced by Jesus' deeds of power that authenticated His identity and authority.

While we may not be like the Pharisees who persistently refused to believe Jesus, it does not mean that we will not be unrepentant or hard-hearted from time to time. Are you responsive to Jesus and His teachings that will make you different from the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

MATTHEW 12.43-50

WEEK 20 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

43 “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

48 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus seems to be closing his teaching in this section by recalling the exorcism of the demon-possessed man. Just like the man who was exorcised needed to be careful not allow possession to happen again, the people who have heard and seen Jesus, must take care not to go back to their old ways, but be immersed in committed discipleship. To bring this home in a real way, Matthew illustrates this by what Jesus considers as his “true family” in vv.46-50. Fully devoted discipleship is about doing the will of the Father in heaven – such that family ties are radically re-interpreted.

Hence half-hearted repentance without a new devotion will not persist and will result in a worse situation. How would you classify your own commitment to Jesus—half-hearted or fully devoted? How does this passage warn and challenge you in following Christ?

MATTHEW 11.2-12.50 (REVIEW)

WEEK 20 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

Chapter 11 verse 2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, [d] and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 Whoever has ears, let them hear.

16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

"We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

20 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Chapter 12 vers 1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. 2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."


3 He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. 5 Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? 6 I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. 7 If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

9 Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, 10 and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

11 He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.





15 Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. 16 He warned them not to tell others about him. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

19 He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.

20 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.

21 In his name the nations will put their hope."

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

30 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. 35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

39 He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

43 “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

48 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Many have suggested that Mt 11.2-12.50 deals with the very polemic nature of the kingdom of heaven. “The kingdom has broken in and is advancing (11.12)...woe to those who are unrepentant (11.20)...Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (12.8)...he who is not with me is against me (12.30)...whoever does the will of the Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother (12.50).”

How has this passage as a whole, brought you closer to understanding the kingdom of heaven? How has it challenge or reinforce your self-understanding and your journey as a disciple?

MATTHEW 13.1-9; 18-23

WEEK 21 (BEGINNING 19 MAY) DAY 1



READ

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear."

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The kingdom of heaven will always solicit a mixture of reception. Besides helping us understand the way people receive the Word of God; it also helps our self-awareness – which type of seed are we most alike and how do we actually begin to bear fruit. In fact, this passage should help us examine whether we are indeed bearing fruit.

Are we like the good seed that bears much fruit or like the seed that falls among thorns – choked by the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth? What can you do about it?

MATTHEW 13.10-17

WEEK 21 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11 He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

15 For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts

and turn, and I would heal them.’

16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

“A parable is a story or epigram which does not carry its meaning on the surface. It challenges the hearer to engage with it in an educational process which, if the hearer brings to it the right attitude and openness, will result in their perceiving and responding to the truth.”[1]

Set within the context of the Parable of the Soil, Jesus not only explained why he used parables, but also illustrated what he was

[1] France, 509.

MATTHEW 13.24-30

WEEK 21 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

28 "'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

29 "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

If the Parable of the Soil points to the mixture of reception to the kingdom, this Parable of the Weeds points us to the mixture of results in the kingdom, due to the devil's sabotage. Our response is to wait till the harvest – the return of the King – for final judgement. Meanwhile we live with the weeds in our midst and pray that Christ will return soon.

Let's also be encouraged that Christ has already foreseen the angst and frustration we have because of the "weeds that grows in our midst." It is a reality that we have to accept, but we can trust God to give strength and help in our trouble.

MATTHEW 13.36-43

WEEK 21 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The weeds are clearly that which causes sin and all who do evil. These may be circumstances or objects; but often they are people, even people in the church today! While it is natural to point the finger at others who are "weeds," perhaps it will be to our eternal advantage to be first self-examining, in order not to be "weeds" ourselves! If need be, sincerely repent and confess, for the Lord is a forgiving God.

For those who are sincerely "wheat" and dealing with "weeds," Take courage and comfort that God knows and sustains and will come back for you, for you are precious to Him! And when that happens, you will be shine like the sun – redeemed and glorious!

MATTHEW 13.31-32

WEEK 21 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

31 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Some may argue whether the mustard seed can really grow into a tree or would it just remain a huge plant. Often, parables exaggerate for effect. Let's not miss the key teaching here: that small and beginnings of the kingdom can and will eventually result in spectacular transformation! It may be unnoticed or even frowned upon, but God works through small and humble beginnings and His purpose will come to pass!

What vision is God placing on your heart that would involve “small beginnings?” Are you discouraged by “slow progress” in outreach and ministry? Never let the smallness or slowness discourage you. If it is from God, it will grow even beyond your own wildest imagination!

MATTHEW 13.33-35

WEEK 22 (BEGINNING 26 MAY) DAY 1



READ

33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[b] of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Never despise the apparent meagre efforts we can put into the work of God, for the nature of the kingdom tells us that a huge impact can come forth from just a meagre effort. God will bring it growth! Much of the major work of God that we see today is a result of a little “yeast.”

What is the “little gift” that you can offer to God today, where previously you felt inadequate to offer? Is it your prayer, time, service, finance, or skill? Let the Lord use it, no matter how little or insignificant it may seem. Let Him use it like the yeast and see the kingdom principle play out again.

MATTHEW 13.44-46

WEEK 22 DAY 2 (TUESDAY)



READ

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The kingdom of heaven: there is joy in finding and being totally obsessed with it, even to the exclusion of all else. That is what we see in the parables. But is that what you see in your own life? Do you appreciate the preciousness of the kingdom of heaven that the kingdom of the world we live in pales in comparison?

Or is there instead a desire to want it all – "I reserve my spot in the kingdom of heaven, while I maximise what I get from this kingdom of the world." If so, then you haven't really found or experience the kingdom of heaven, because if you do, you will know how valuable and precious it is, and you wouldn't want anything else anymore!

MATTHEW 13.47-50

WEEK 22 DAY 3 (WEDNESDAY)



READ

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This parable is similar to that in Mt 13.40-42 – about the impending judgement. The net is cast wide, and it catches everyone. When it is full it will be pulled up and the good and the bad fishes are mixed together, only to be separated at judgement time.

Have you truly believed in the Lord Jesus? For there will be a time of reckoning – a time where those who believe and those who do not will be separated. For those who have believed, are you actively obeying the Lord to share your faith in a winsome way to those who have not? (Remember that the parable is used so that those whose hearts are tender will understand.)

MATTHEW 13.51-53

WEEK 22 DAY 4 (THURSDAY)



READ

51 "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.

"Yes," they replied.

52 He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

53 When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Before Jesus moves on (Mt 13.53), he addresses the disciples and closes his teachings through the parables with one final parable. Just like the house owner brings out the treasures – both new and old, the disciples are exhorted to teach what Jesus has taught, without negating the old teachings. What Jesus has taught reinterprets the Law and the disciples are to help their hearers understand this.

Do you value both the Old and New Testaments? Do you understand that they fit as one? Similarly in life, in our excitement of embracing the new, be careful not to jettison the old too quickly. There is much wisdom in learning how to integrate the new into the old.

MATTHEW 13.1-53 (REVIEW)

WEEK 22 DAY 5 (FRIDAY)



READ

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11 He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

15 For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’

16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

28 "'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

29 "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."


34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,

I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."





37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This section is unique in that Matthew has included an extensive record of Jesus' teachings in parables. Keeping in mind the context in which the religious establishment was trying to "get him," it is not surprising that Jesus uses parables. (See Week 21 for comment on purpose of parables.)

What lessons do you draw from the parables themselves? From Jesus' use of parables, what other lessons about the way you teach or communicate truths can you glean?



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