

Week 2, Day 6

Matthew 19:23-30

After you read today's Scripture passage, read the following verse and rewrite it in your own words:

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Just as a reminder of the context of today's verses, look back up at the preceding verses in Matthew 19. With whom was Jesus having a conversation and what is a quick summary of that conversation?

The disciples saw the example of the rich, young ruler. However, they couldn't relate to that. While some of them may have come from families that had means, they were not in a position unwilling to give up material wealth. I might paraphrase Peter's response in verse 27 like this, "We've given up everything to follow You. What's in it for us?"

Just for a reminder about the disciples' situation, look at Luke 5:11, 28. What information do these verses give about the disciples?

I was just having a conversation with my younger son just recently about people who have a lot of wealth. Sometimes it seems to be true that people who have a lot of material possessions or wealth are really unhappy. In particular, we see people who are in the glaring spotlight who seem to have the world at their fingertips but end up dying tragically and alone. The truth of the matter is you cannot buy your way into heaven, you cannot do enough good deeds to make yourself worthy to enter God's kingdom.

It's not about you, it's about God.

The chapter of 2 Samuel 7 is a wonderful example of someone who did have wealth and prestige but also had the right attitude. Read the entire chapter and answer the following questions:

What did David desire to do?

What was God's answer to him through Nathan the prophet?

What was David's response beginning in verse 18?

Now it's your turn. Following David's example, begin your own prayer of thanksgiving and recognition of your status in God's view. Write your prayer out below:

The answer Jesus gave the disciples in Matthew 19:28-30 did not include earthly fame and fortune. The reward is eternal and it is in heaven. The final statement of Matthew 19 will be illustrated as we study the beginning of Matthew 20.

**Prayer Primer:** Use the prayer you wrote out above as the beginning of your prayer time today.

Week 2, Day 7

Matthew 20:1-16

“That’s not fair” If you have children, you have heard that phrase. No single phrase sums up today’s passage. That’s not fair. The workers who worked a short time received the same wage as the workers who worked all day in the vineyard.

Before we dive into this passage I want to get some Old Testament perspective. Turn to Ezekiel 18: 21-29 and write a brief account of God’s statement to the people in the space provided.

Matthew 20:1-16 actual begins in verse 30 of chapter 19, a proverb is stated by Jesus: “many who are first will be last and the last first”. Then Jesus gives the parable of the landowner and ends the parable by restating the proverb in verse 16; “So the last will be first, and the first last”. In between the stating of the proverb those two times Jesus tells the parable of the landowner. Jesus begins the parable by introducing us to a man who is what the Greek text labels an “oikodespotes”—“oikos” means “house” and “despotes” means “ruler.” This tells us that the landowner has a vast estate and a great fortune. As a part of the man’s estate there was a vineyard. Verse 1 says he went out early in the morning. That means he went out prior to six o’clock in the morning. The Jewish day began at six in the morning and ended at six at night. They worked a twelve-hour day. So he went into town to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. The wage the day-laborer received was usually very low. But they had to work for it because they were desperate just to have work. A Roman soldier was paid a denarius a day, and that was a respectable wage. Servants who were well- respected by their employers were often paid a denarius a day. But a day-laborer was usually hired for much less because he wasn’t in any position to negotiate. If he didn’t work, he didn’t eat that day. He was barely able to provide for himself, his wife, and his family. The wage the landowner offered was generous for those type of workers and for that type of work. The landowner hired the first workers and then went back to the marketplace at 9, noon, and at 3 in the afternoon. What is a key distinction given in the amount of money agreed upon by the landowner and the workers in the second, third, and fourth groups as opposed to the first group? (verse 2 & verse 4) After hiring the first group to work from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening, the landowner hires a fourth group at 5 in the afternoon. Do not miss this point they came at 5 in the afternoon and the Jewish workday ended at 6 in the evening.

When it comes time to settle the debts the ones who worked all day saw those who came in at 5 get a denarius and they must have thought....”Alright we will get 12 denarius since they worked one hour and got one denarius and we worked 12 hours”. But they also received one denarius for

their wage. They are obviously upset with the perceived discrepancy. Would you feel slighted if you received what you had agreed to and thought was generous and then others received the same for less effort?

So what is the meaning of this parable? The householder represents God. The vineyard is the Kingdom-- the sphere of God's rule. The laborers are those who come into the service of the King. The day of work is their lifetime. The evening is eternity. The denarius is eternal life. You could say the steward represents Jesus Christ, to whom has been committed all judgment. So what does it all mean? No matter how long you worked in God's Kingdom and no matter how hard or easy your circumstances were, when you get to the end of your life, you will receive the same eternal life as everyone else in God's Kingdom. Isn't that a great truth?

The basic truth of the parable is that salvation is not earned it is a gift. However, we often judge what we receive based on what others around us receive. Jesus is establishing the individual nature of salvation. It is a gift whether someone serves God all their life or turns to Christ on their deathbed.

Have you ever accused God of being unequal in His treatment of people? Give some examples.

From this study we have learned that God treats everyone equally. But what about your treatment of others? Do you treat everyone equally? Read James 2:1-13. Analyze your treatment of others in light of this passage. What changes can you put into practice today?

The first laborers were envious of the last group because they received the same pay. The Bible has a lot to say about envy. Look up the following verses: Proverbs 14:30; Romans 13 13-14; James 3:14-16; and James 4:1-4. Based on those verses, what have you learned about envy? According to James 3:17-18 and 4: 7-10, how can you overcome the sin of envy?

**Prayer Primer:** Pray that you can deal with any envious attitudes you have.

Week 2, Day 8

Matthew 20:17-28

This passage begins with by stating that Jesus and His disciples were “going up to Jerusalem.” The text records that they were going up because Jerusalem was located in the mountains of Judea. Thinking back to your Old Testament knowledge about Jerusalem, why did the Jewish people make treks up to Jerusalem? What was generally the significance of their trips to Jerusalem?

We have already read in Matthew’s gospel the words of Jesus as He began to prepare His disciples for what was ahead. Today’s text is the first time the Bible records Jesus giving more detail about what kind of death He would endure. Jesus and His disciples were already on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus Christ had His eyes set on the cross from eternity but it was necessary for the disciples’ sake to make them ready for what was ahead.

The mother of James and John reminds me of some “helicopter parents” in our own culture. Have you heard that term? We live in a society where parents shadow their kids, always thinking they are the best and they always deserve the best. These kids are not always taught consequences for their actions or the necessity of obeying rules and respecting authority. These kids are always winners; there aren’t any losers. In asking for her sons to sit on the right and the left of Jesus, the mother was asking for them to have a place of prestige and authority. As we have seen and will continue to see in the gospel of Matthew, those that were following Jesus continued to look for an earthly kingdom and for a worldly reign.

The reply Jesus gave this mother was that she really had no idea what she was asking. How about you? Have you ever been intent on praying your own will or for your own heart’s desire instead of the will of the Father? (Your own answer is likely yes.) Just like the mother did not know the future neither do we. There have been times when I have been disappointed when things did not go the way I wanted. God is able to see the big picture and He knows what is best for me and my life. I can think of times when I later realized how God’s plan worked out for my good and I am glad it turned out the way it did.

Can you think of a time when you didn’t get what you prayed for but later realized God’s plan was better than yours?

The One who hold eternity in His hands know what is best.

Jesus spoke about the cup in His reply to the disciples and their mother. The cup, in the Old Testament, was generally a sign of judgment. Look up the following verses and make a few notes about the cup in each context. If necessary and if time allows, see the verses in their context. Also,

if you have other resources available to you check them out to help you understand what the cup stands for in each passage.

Psalm 75:8

Isaiah 51:17-18

Jeremiah 25:15-16

Over and over again we have been reminded that the disciples were Jewish and that they would have been familiar with Old Testament teaching. When Jesus asked if they would be able to drink the cup, they answered in the affirmative. Although they could not fully understand the extent to which they would *drink His cup* within a few days' time they would come to find out.

Jesus then gave another piece of His mission on earth. It was the mission that the disciples would carry on once Jesus ascended into heaven. What did Jesus say He came to do?

When I was in seminary there was a student in one of my classes that wore a homemade shirt that read, "On my best day I am a servant." I know you don't know that student, but what do you think he meant by that slogan on his shirt?

How can we apply the teaching of Jesus to the disciples in today's passage to our own lives? Please don't write generalities but some specific things you can do to be more like Jesus in this way.

**Prayer Primer:** Ask God to show you how to be a servant.

Week 2, Day 9

Matthew 20:29-34

As we studied yesterday Jesus told the disciples that He was going to be physically tortured and put to death in Jerusalem. The minds of all the disciples would have been on that conversation as they passed through the streets of Jericho headed to Jerusalem. In Jericho there was a balsam tree that grew and the sap from that tree was used for medicinal purposes to treat eye conditions. In his book *Guide To The New Testament*, Dr John Walvoord tells why blindness was so common in the New Testament era; "Physical blindness occurred quite frequently in the ancient world. Poverty, lack of medical care, unsanitary conditions, brilliant sunlight, blowing sand, certain kinds of accidents, war, fighting, all of these things could cause blindness. But most commonly, blindness was caused basically because of gonorrheal diplococcus that would find their way from a woman's body into the conjunctiva of the eye of a child at birth and there they would form their disease and permanent blindness could occur. Sometimes blindness came by the infecting virus trichoma."

I cannot imagine the isolation of being blind and the loneliness that would accompany blindness. These men were completely desperate and their lives were about to be completely changed.

As the disciples passed through the streets of Jericho there was this very common condition around them and it would be easy to pass by and never notice the common place blind man in the midst of their own confusion and apprehension. Is that not easy for us today? We get so focused on our situation and our needs that we can miss those in commonplace need all around us. Can you think of someone who might need an encouraging call today or a note or encouragement?

Not only were the disciples preoccupied with what Jesus has told them. Not only was Jesus thinking about what lie ahead of Him in Jerusalem. Verse 29 tells us there was this vast throng of people following them. Jesus would have to hear the cries of these two blind men over the shouts and noise of the crowd.

The thing that leads us past the weight of our need and past the noise of life and allows us to focus on people in need around us is one simple phrase found in verse 34. What does verse 34 tell us is the reason that Jesus touched these men?

Not just moved by the busyness of life and not just compassionate without action. Jesus was "moved with compassion". He acted on the need He saw in the midst of an incredibly difficult time

for Him. The word translated compassion in the New Testament is only used in connection with Jesus. The word is basically a turning of all you are feeling toward that person. It is a complete refocusing. This text says that Jesus was moved by the complete refocusing. We must understand that this word is only used in connection with Jesus for a reason. We, on our own, are not capable of this type of complete refocusing. Our lives are so busy that we need the power of Christ at work in us to allow us to refocus.

Verse 32 tells us that Jesus asked the men what they wanted from Him. Doesn't it seem obvious what the men want? Ordinarily we refrain from asking you in this study what you think a verse means. That is because it is not our understanding of what a verse means that we have to focus on in study. We always want to know what God meant by a verse. However, in this case there is no widely accepted theological position so I think we are safe to ask: Why do you think Jesus asked the men what they wanted?

Turn to and read Luke 2: 41-49. In this passage you have the first recorded words that Jesus spoke. Write Jesus' first spoken words here:

A question. That will be a common thing for Jesus throughout His ministry. Using your concordance or an online resource, list two other examples of Jesus asking questions to teach people truth.

Questions are great teaching tools because they force the learner to work through why something is said or needed. In the examples you found what are the truths being taught.

In today's passage I believe Jesus wanted to draw the focus of everyone around onto what was about to happen. By emphasizing the need He would emphasize the miracle.

In the midst of a noisy crowd while His mind was focused on what was ahead Jesus was moved with compassion. Will you be moved with compassion today? Will you have compassion and then be moved to act upon that compassion?

**Prayer Primer:** Pray that when you see a need today you will be moved by it and not just be aware of that need.

Today we focus on what is commonly called the Triumphal Entry. As we start the last week of Christ life we have to examine the details that we are given about how He began this last chapter of His earthly ministry.

The triumphal entry itself was predicted hundreds of years before by the prophet Zechariah. Turn to Zachariah 9:9. In about the middle of the verse we are told “your King is coming to you.” After that pronouncement there are three specific things said about Jesus. List all three and give your understanding of what each word means.

1.

2.

3.

A donkey was a symbol for a royal emissary or a king bringing peace, whereas a horse was a sign of action and war. Jesus used this image to point to His Kingdom of Peace.

As Jesus gets ready to ride the donkey the followers who are near by take off their robes and place them on the donkey as a blanket for Jesus. Understand garments were very valuable in Jesus’ time. Most people only had one or two garments, not closets full. To give up your garment as a blanket on a donkey was a great sacrifice, a sacrifice that was made to prepare the way for the triumphal entry. The symbolism is rich at this point. What are willing to lay down so that Christ may assume triumphal entry into your life. I do not mean salvation. Most of the participants in this study are already believers. I mean triumphal entry to make you a more passionate follower of Christ. Are there attitudes or thoughts or actions that limit your passion? List a couple of things you might “lay down” in your life to prepare a way for the Lord.

As Jesus enters the city the people cut palm branches and lay them on the road for the donkey to step upon. The palm branches have at least two meanings for the Jew.

Read Leviticus 23:40. This is a description of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles or Feasts of Booths. The Jews were to use the palm branches to make temporary housing to remember the wilderness wandering. The point of remembrance was freedom from bondage. What types of bondage are believers in today? List some people you know who are in some type of bondage:

So the palm branch symbolized the freedom from bondage. The people celebrated that as they lined the road and celebrated Jesus' entrance into the city. There is also a second meaning. Read Deuteronomy 34:3 and 2 Chronicles 28:15. What is the city of Jericho also known as according to the text?

The palm branch represented the first city that the Israelites conquered as they entered the promised land. Palm branches became a symbol for entering into the blessing of God. Is there a specific blessing that you are praying for in your life? List that here:

Is there a specific blessing you are praying for someone else? List that here:

As Christ comes into the city we see lessons in laying things down, freedom from bondage, and entering into God's blessing. What an exciting week we will have next week!

**Prayer Primer:** Pray that you are ready will be ready to lay down, be set free, and receive the blessings in your life.