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Come Follow Me



2011-2012 Series thru the Gospel of Matthew
Weekly Bible Study and Gospel Read thru Guide

Book 3 of 3

January–February 2012

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MISSION AND VALUES

THE MISSION: *To lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.*

SEVEN CORE VALUES

Intimacy with God

We believe that God desires an intimate relationship with each of us. We seek to help people establish intimacy with God by learning to self-feed themselves from God's Word, learning to pray about everything, and placing a priority on corporate and personal worship.

Relational Evangelism

We believe that everyone in this world matters immensely to God and should matter to us as well. God's message of love and forgiveness in Christ is best conveyed through personal relationships.

Intentional Mentoring

We believe we all have a responsibility to pass along to others the knowledge, skills and experiences God has entrusted to us. We encourage and train mature believers to mentor younger believers, adults to get involved in the lives of young people, and parents to disciple their children. We place a high priority on reaching children and youth and their families.

Biblical Authority

We believe Holy Spirit-anointed teaching is the catalyst for life transformation. The Bible is the final authority and source for all of our teaching in worship services, small groups or other gatherings.

Grace-filled Loving Relationships

We believe that grace-filled loving relationships should permeate every aspect of the church. Since all people are created in God's image, all people should be treated with love and grace. We place a high priority on showing grace and love to all staff, members and attenders. We seek to provide pastoral care to all who attend Portland Community Church.

Strategic Service

We believe that all God's people are called and have been gifted to serve in the world. Service has the greatest impact when people are serving in areas of their spiritual giftedness and in alignment with the mission of the church. God's people are called to steward their spiritual gifts, their time and their resources. We practice biblical principles of stewardship.

Authentic Community

We believe that life-change happens best in community. We encourage everyone to become involved in a small group, accountability group or ministry team

Notes:

Week 18: Dec 26-Dec 31

Instructions for Weekly Study

Follow the daily reading plan for five days each week. The reading plan will take you thru the four gospels chronologically over 28 weeks. At anytime during the week, take some time to complete the weekly bible study designed for you and the rest of the church. We challenge you each week to share what you have learned with another person and to come on a Sunday morning to Portland Community Church to hear a sermon on the same passage.

Day 1 Matthew 21:23-22:14

Day 2 Mark 11:27-12:12 Luke 20:1-19

Day 3 Matthew 22:15-22 Mark 12:13-17 Luke 20:20-26

Day 4 Matthew 22:23-33 Mark 12:18-27 Luke 20:27-40

Day 5 Matthew 22:34-46 Mark 12:38-37 Luke 20:41-44

The book of Matthew: "Seeing People as God's sees them"

Lesson 18: Matthew 18:1-20

Introduction:

It was a simple question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The disciples must have assumed the kingdom Jesus described to them was similar to the world they knew – a world where people naturally looked to be the greatest, the best, the richest, the first. Jesus' answer turned this idea on its head; a follower of Christ, he taught them, was not to be motivated by a desire for greatness but is one who will, in humility, follow his lead. He tells his disciples to watch out for each other and to help keep each other from the sin that interferes with their relationship with God. Helping those that are lost, those falling prey to sin, is what it means to be great in the kingdom of heaven. If we are to be disciples of Christ, this is what we must learn as well.

Pray and read Matthew 18:1-20

What questions or comments do you have about this passage?

What do you think are the main ideas in these verses?

Observation:

1. What does Jesus say one must do to enter the kingdom of heaven?
2. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
3. What are the results for the one who
 - a. welcomes another like a little child?
 - b. causes another believer to sin?
4. On whom does Jesus declare woe? Why?
5. Why does the man who owns a hundred sheep leave the ninety-nine?
6. How is he described upon finding the lost sheep?
7. Describe the steps you are to take if a brother sins against you.

Interpretation:

1. Jesus had very strong words for those who caused his children to sin. Not only were they hurting his people, they were also sinning against God. He acknowledges that this is inevitable (18:7) but casts dread on those responsible. What are some of the ways you think people of the world can cause Christians to stumble into sin?
(See also Proverbs 5:3-6 Galatians 2:4; 1 Timothy 6:9-10; and James 1:14-15.)

Notes:

Notes:

Because Jesus was talking to his disciples, it is fair to assume that he is also telling them (and other believers) not to cause others to stumble. Read Romans 14 and describe what scripture teaches about believers causing other believers to sin?

2. The disciples listening to Jesus were very familiar with the concept of wandering sheep and the importance of rescuing them. Jesus offered a similar illustration in John 10:1-18. What do you learn from this and the Matthew passage (18:10-14) about God's love and concern for his children, including how he views their sin?

We know that God loves and values his children equally. When Jesus says in his parable that the man "is happier about that one sheep [being found] than about the ninety nine that did not wander off," what does he want us to understand?

Note: In Matthew 18:14, Jesus states that God does not want any of his children to be lost. He is referring to their spiritual condition and the word used for lost tells us that he doesn't want believers to be spiritually floundering or not maturing in their faith.

3. Because all people have a sin nature, Christ's body of believers – the church – is not without sin. A church without sinners is an empty church. There is, however, a difference between those who persist in their sin and those seek righteousness, repent when wrong and ask forgiveness. In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus addresses the former. Why do you think Jesus directs the church to face these situations as directly as he has prescribed here? (See also 1 Corinthians 5:1-6, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15.)

Note: Since a pagan did not believe in God and a tax collector was considered a traitor to his own people, both groups were considered outcasts in Jewish society. Jesus came to save all men, including these. His point here (18:17) was to tell the church to treat unrepentant sinners as outcasts.

Application:

1. When we confront our own sin, we look at how it affects our lives, others, and our relationship with God. From this passage, we learn that it is also important to examine how it may be luring other believers to sin. When I gossip, for instance, I may not only be spreading hurtful words, I may also be dragging others into my conversation and encouraging them to gossip. Look at one or two issues (sins) you struggle with; how might you be tempting another believer to sin as a result of your actions?

2. The parable of the lost sheep offers a heartfelt picture of the precious lost lamb being found by its loving, relieved owner. God is grieved when one of his children wanders from him and looks forward to the day they return to his fold. We know God can rescue anyone without our help, but we also know he involves us in his work. Is there someone you know that is floundering in his/her faith? How might God use you to encourage and restore this person to a right relationship with him?

3. What is one thing you can do this week to put apply what you have learned from this passage?

Application:

1. Jesus says “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” When your glory shines instead of God’s, that’s hypocrisy cutting in line. Hypocrisy does not reflect God; in fact, it blocks others from seeing God.
 - a. Where have you recently stolen God’s thunder?

 - b. How could you return God’s glory to him today?

2. What is one thing you could do this week to apply what you have learned in this lesson.

Week 19: January 2-7

4. According to 13 and 15, what can hypocrisy do to others?
5. What do verses 23, 25 and 27 say hypocrites are really like?
6. What prevents Jesus from gathering the “children” in verse 37?

Interpretation:

1. From what you observed in questions 1-3 and read in verses 1-12, what should your true intent be in how people see you? (See also Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and the context of Deuteronomy of 6:4-5.)

Note: Rabbi – noun Greek: *rabbei* (Aramaic transliterated into Greek) my master, my great one; a title used by Jews to address and honor their teachers
teacher – noun Greek: *kathegetes* denotes a master; a guide

2. What is the caution in calling oneself Rabbi (master), or father, or teacher?
3. When Jesus walked the earth, religious leaders fell victim to hypocrisy (as they still do today!), as he accuses them in verse 33. How can they “escape being condemned to hell?” (See also Psalm 51:1-7; Proverbs 11:19-20; and Hebrews 9:14.)
4. Why does Jesus grieve over “your children” as stated in verse 37? (See also Matthew 18:6-7; and Luke 19:10.)

Day 1: Matthew 23:1-39 Mark 12:38-44 Luke 20:45-21:4
Day 2 Matthew 24:1-9 Mark 13:1-10 Luke 21:5-13
Day 3 Matthew 24:10-22 Mark 13:11-20 Luke 21:14-24
Day 4 Matthew 24:23-42 Mark 13:21-37 Luke 21:25-36
Day 5 Matthew 24:43-25:46

Lesson 19: “Our Gracious God”

Matthew 20:1-16

Introduction:

Children seem to have an intuitive sense of fairness. Spend any time around them and things like “no cutting”, “it’s not your turn”, or “don’t take that; it’s not yours” are likely to be heard. “It’s not fair” is a sentiment we – children and adults alike – all understand.

Fairness is a good thing; God wants his people to treat each other in a fair and just manner. But fairness does not mean that everyone is treated the same way. Nor does God confine his treatment of us to our sense of fairness. Thank goodness He doesn’t; if treated as our sins deserved, we would have no hope for salvation. He sent his Son, not out of fairness because we deserved him, but because he loves us and wants us to have what we cannot earn on our own: eternal life. Treating each other fairly is what we should do, but we can be thankful God is more gracious with us.

Pray and read Matthew 20:1-16

What questions/comments do you have about this passage?

What do you think is the main idea of this passage?

Observation:

1. What statement had Jesus made in the verse just prior to the beginning of this passage?
2. The story of the landowner who went out to hire workers is being used to describe what?
3. Who are the characters in this parable?
4. When did the landowner go into the marketplace to hire workers?
5. How much did the landowner agree to pay all of his laborers when he hired them?
6. In what order did the foreman pay out the wages earned?
7. Why did the first hired workers grumble?
8. How did the landowner justify his claim that he was not being unfair?

Bonus Lesson

Matthew Chapter 23– Part I: “Practice What You Preach”

Introduction:

Only in the Sermon on the Mount does Jesus speak longer than this red letter teaching found in Matthew 23. And because these are the words of Jesus, consider seriously what is so important to him.

Jesus condemns hypocrisy 6 times in this chapter of Matthew. Why is the evil of hypocrisy such a significant issue to Jesus?

Note: hypocrite – noun (Merriam-Webster)

1. A person who puts on a false appearance;
2. A person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings
3. Involves the deception of others

Greek: *hypokrites* – an actor, pretender

Pray and Read Matthew 23.

What comments/questions do you have about this passage?

What do you think is the main idea of this chapter?

Observation:

1. How does Jesus say you are to respond to your religious leaders?
2. What do the religious leaders love in verses 6 and 7?
3. As leaders, what titles are you not to use?

Chuck Smith, Study Guide for Matthew

6. What is the significance of the alabaster jar of perfume being poured over Jesus head and body? (verse 12)
7. In Verse 13, Jesus mentions that this woman will be honored for her deeds around the world. Is this true? Why does she need to be recognized?
8. What's the main idea of this passage? Sum it up in a sentence?

Application:

1. What is the most expensive thing that you own? Would you be willing to give it up for Jesus'? Why or why not?
2. Do you ever pass judgment on someone else's deeds for the Lord? If yes, what deeds are more valuable to God? Or are they all equal?
3. Who do you relate to most, the woman or the disciples? And why?
4. How can we recognize this woman(v 13) as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What can you do this week to apply what you have learned in this lesson?

Interpretation:

1. This parable is being used to describe the kingdom of heaven, and specifically what it looks like when the "first will be last and many who are last will be first." Who or what does each of the following in the parable represent in the kingdom of heaven?

the landowner	_____
vineyard	_____
laborers	_____
foreman	_____
denarius	_____
workday	_____
evening	_____

(Choices: believers, believers' lifetime, eternal life, eternity/judgment day, God, Jesus, the kingdom of heaven)

Note: A denarius was the daily wage for a Roman soldier. This would have been considered a great wage for a day laborer.

2. When the landowner went to the marketplace, he approached the workers and offered to hire them. They were there out of need, believing he could help them, but they did not do anything to entice the landowner to take them on. How does this illustrate our need for God and how we come to a saving relationship with him? (See also John 6:40 & 44; Acts 4:12; and 1 John 4:10.)
3. The laborers who had been hired first grumbled when they realized the last hired were getting paid the same amount of money even though they worked fewer hours. They were, in effect, whining 'that's not fair!' The landowner is not treating the laborers the same, but is he being unfair? Explain.

What do you learn from this passage about how God treats his children in relation to what they are owed? (See also Joshua 23:14; Psalms 103:8-10 & 145:13; Romans 6:23; and Hebrews 10:23.)

4. Although the workers went to the vineyard at different times, they were all eventually hired. The landowner did not base his decision to hire them on their past employment or when they got to the marketplace – he took all who had need and paid them the same wage. What was Jesus teaching his disciples about the kingdom of heaven (and eternal life) through this analogy?

In Luke 23:32-33, 40-43 we read of the two criminals who were crucified alongside Jesus. One acknowledged Jesus as they hung there. What are the similarities between this and the parable of the landlord?

Note: The Bible teaches that there will be rewards for those in heaven, earned by what a believer did while on earth. Rewards will not be the same for all believers. This parable is teaching on attaining salvation, not on heavenly rewards.

3. What's wrong with the disciples desire to sell the perfume and give it to the poor?
4. Why do you think that Jesus rebuked the disciples?
5. Does Jesus' statement in verse 11, demonstrate that he doesn't care about the poor? What do you think?

Now in John's gospel he tells us that the disciple that declared this was Judas Iscariot.

When this woman came and poured this expensive perfume on Jesus, perfume that was worth several thousands of dollars, Judas became indignant, and he said, "what purpose is this waste?" Now John tells us that Judas said, "that could have been sold for several thousand dollars, and we could have given the money to the poor."

But John tells us that he said it not because he was really interested in the poor, and this is of course were Jesus Christ Superstar really stumbled and fell on his nose, and really revealed the true character of the whole portrayal. Because in this portion, they seem to make Judas appear to be the hero of the whole issue. Here Judas is a very benevolent man. He has a great concern for the poor. And this waste, this extravagant waste upon Jesus, when the money could have been given to the poor, and Judas comes out as the shining hero. And Jesus becomes in that portion of the play, an extravagant careless person, who is disregarding the needs of others.

But had they only read on, John said that Judas said this not because he cared for the poor, but because he was holding the money and had been feeding out of it. So Judas wasn't really a very magnanimous kind of an individual concerned with the poor. He is holding the bag of money and had been feeding out of the money. And he figured, wow, if we had that in the treasury there would be more to pilfer.

Observation:

1. Who was at this home in Bethany at this time?
2. How much was this alabaster jar of perfume worth?
3. What was the response of the disciples when they witnessed the act of pouring perfume on Jesus' head?
4. What was Jesus' response to the disciples' concerns?
5. Why was the perfume poured on Jesus?
6. What story should be honored when the gospel is preached around the world?

Interpretation:

1. Who is this woman, who was she and why is she important?
2. What did the disciples think as important vs. what Jesus thinks is important?

Application:

1. A person is not a Christian because he grows up in a Christian home, goes to church or is born in a particular country. These may be influential, but each person must recognize his own sinfulness and see his need for Christ – in effect, each person makes the decision of whether or not to go to the marketplace. What caused you to realize you needed Christ? How did you know His way was as opposed to some other religion or belief system?

If you are not a Christian, where do you look to find fulfillment for your soul? What do you think of Jesus' offer of salvation?

2. When we know we have been treated unfairly, we are usually upset. This is not necessarily wrong for we know fairness is God's ideal for his people. But what about when we think God is being unfair? Like the laborers, we may perceive an injustice and need perspective and instruction to understand. Is there a situation in your life you do not think is fair and wonder why God has allowed it? What does this passage offer you in the way of perspective and understanding?

3. What is one thing you can do this week to put what you have learned from this passage into practice?

Week 26: February 19-25

Day 1 Matthew 26:1-13

Day 2 Mark 14:1-11

Day 3 John 12:1-11

Day 4 Matthew 26:14-56

Day 5 Matthew 26:57-68

Lesson 26: "Extravagant Generosity or Foolish Waste?"

Matthew 26:6-13

Introduction:

As Jesus gets ready for the ultimate sacrifice(His death on the cross), the disciples are indignant of this women's waste of this expensive perfume incident on Jesus' head. Was this an incredible act of worship or was this a waste of God's resources to help the needy? Does Jesus not care about the poor? As you study this passage this week, you be the judge.

Pray and read Matthew 26: 6-13, Mark 14:1--11, and John 12:1-11

What questions/comments do you have about these verses?

What are the differences between the three passages?

What do you think is the main idea of this passage of scripture?

When you have been confronted with situations of need what has been your response? What do you wish, if anything, that you had done differently? Will your response be different as result of studying this passage? Why or why not?

Week 20: January 9-14

Day 1 Matthew 26:1-13 Mark 14:1-9 Luke 22:1-2 John 12:2-8

Day 2 Matthew 26:14-20 Mark 14:10-17 Luke 22:3-16,24-30

Day 3 Matthew 26:21-25 Mark 14:18-21 Luke 22:21-23 John 13:1-30

Day 4 Matthew 26:31-35 Mark 14:27-31 Luke 22:31-38 John 13:31-38

Day 5 Matthew 26:26-29 Mark 14:22-25 Luke 22:17-20 1Co 11:23-26

Matthew Lesson 20: "Call to Servant Hood"

Matthew 20:17-34

"The first-century world was amazed by Christ because of what he *did*: Jesus healed the sick, loved the poor, touched the leper, stood up for the down and out, forgave the sinner, condemned the religious hypocrites, dined with prostitutes and corrupt tax collectors, challenged the wealthy and powerful, fought for justice for the oppressed, defied his culture, renounced materialism, demonstrated that greatness is found in serving---then died that others might live. These actions--performed by one man--changed the world. These same actions, when carried out by his followers, still change the world today."

Richard Stearns, president of World Vision U.S., page 230, [The Hole in Our Gospel](#)

2. Has there been a time when you have been in need? How was that need met? What was your response? How did the response to your need affect the way that you viewed God or Christians?

3. What can you do this week to apply what you have learned in this lesson?

Introduction:

"Give them an inch and they'll take a mile." This common phrase describes people who, despite whatever they have or are given, want more. One would think Jesus' disciples did not want for more – they were living with and being taught by the Son of Man. Apparently, however, they thought there was more to gain and were not shy about asking him for it.

Unfortunately, the scene we will study here accurately reflects what is in the hearts of men. Pride prompts us to pursue selfish gain and distracts us from God's calling on our lives. Seeing how the disciples acted here helps us see how we can be distracted too. Thankfully, Jesus doesn't just scold them (or us) and move on. He continues to teach so that the hearts of all his followers are changed. He recognizes the sin of pride and lovingly restores those who are willing to change. We know from scripture that the disciples changed – radically. It is his desire that our hearts change too.

Pray and read Matthew 20:17-34

What questions/comments do you have about this passage?

What do you think is the main idea of this passage?

Observation:

1. Where was Jesus going as this passage began and who was with him?
 2. What did Jesus tell his disciples as he took them aside?
 3. What favor did the mother of Zebedee's sons ask of Jesus?
 4. Describe Jesus' response to her question.
 5. How did the other disciples react?
 6. Contrast how the ruler and high officials act toward their people [the Gentiles] with what Jesus commands of his disciples.
 7. What two reasons does Jesus offer (verse 28) for why he came to earth?
3. Serving the "least of these" can sometimes be a messy, uncomfortable experience. The needs we see can seem so overwhelming that we can let ourselves become paralyzed to the point of inaction. Yet from this passage it is clear that we will each be judged by our compassion and help (or lack thereof) for the poor and needy. Look back at your answers to Observation # 5 and 6 and read the following passages: Luke 6:27-38; Luke 10:25-37; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 4: 32-35. What are the actions described? Are they performed by groups or by individuals?
 4. Ministering to those around us on a personal level can be a more effective way of preaching the Gospel than condemning people for their sin. Read the following passages and note what was done and what the response was: Matthew 5: 13-16; Matthew 15:30-31; Luke 13: 10-17.

Note: *Matthew wrote in 12:2 that James and John were the sons of Zebedee. In the gospel of Mark, it is they who lobby Jesus for the preferred seating. From this account in Matthew, we know that they and their mother were involved.*

Interpretation:

1. No sooner had Jesus finished telling the disciples about how he would be crucified than the mother of two of them approached him to plead for a good seat for her sons in the kingdom heaven. They are right there with her, looking out for their own interests, in spite of all they had learned to this point. "The meek shall inherit the earth" Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount; it was as if they hadn't heard any of it. Read Jesus' response to them again (Matthew 20:22-23) and the following verses. What do you think was motivating the disciples' at this point and what was Jesus trying to teach them? (See also Proverbs 11:2, 18:12 & 29:23; 1 Peter 5:5-6; and 1 John 2:16-17.)

Application:

1. As we saw from the passages in Interpretation #3, sometimes needs are met by a group of people. Today there are churches and agencies that provide help to those in need and yet the actions that are described in our primary passage are acts of mercy and compassion individuals do every day. They do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts, freely given and freely received. It is involvement on a personal level. We are each unique and uniquely gifted to make a contribution to those around us in need. Where on a personal level in your life do you encounter those in need?

Why do you think the other disciples were 'indignant' over the two asking for good seats in the kingdom of God?

7. Compare the two outcomes of each group, as stated by the King.

2. The request for the seat next to Jesus reflected a desire to attain spiritual greatness. The disciples, however, mistakenly defined greatness from the world's perspective and not God's, and Jesus gently points this out by saying they don't know what they are asking. What was the cup from which Jesus was about to drink and how would you say that differs from greatness as the world sees it? (See also your answer to Observation 1; Matthew 5:10-12; Romans 5:6-8 & 8:17-18.)

Interpretation:

1. Read the following passages: Psalm 146:7, Psalm 107:8,9; Luke 4:16-21. What needs are listed and how are they met? How do the needs in these passages compare to the needs from Matthew 25:31-46?

What did Jesus mean when he said to the disciples "You will indeed drink from my cup,"? (See also Acts 12:2; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27; Revelation 1:9.)

2. Jesus equated his needs with the outcasts of society and calls on his followers to see them with his eyes. More often it is easier to judge others by their outward appearance or station in life. What do the following verses teach you about how Jesus wants us as his followers to see people? Isaiah 58:6-8; Luke 9:48; Philippians 2:1-5; Hebrews 13:1-3.

3. Jesus ends this passage with a profound call to servant-hood. His ways are not the ways of the world and he teaches here that greatness according to God's standard is gained through being a servant. After reading this passage and those also listed, how would you describe the pure heart of a servant according to God's design? (See also Matthew 10:17-18; John 12:26; Romans 14:8 & 14:17-18; Philippians 2:1-7; and 1 Thessalonians 2:4,6.)

Application:

1. In our culture, strength is a virtue. The more mentally tough, physically strong and emotionally stable we are, the greater will be (supposedly) our opportunities to be happy and successful. None of these attributes are bad per se, until or unless we rely on them and not on God. He wants us, in fact, to let his power be displayed in our weakness – what we cannot do on our own allows God to work and be glorified. Describe areas of your life where you tend to let pride creep in. What do you think contributes to this? What would it take for you to humble yourself and let God take over?
2. Jesus' call to servant-hood is noble. Most of us picture missionaries in the jungle or people feeding the homeless but his call is not to any one area in particular. Scripture teaches us to serve lovingly and wholehearted wherever He puts us. Describe a couple of areas of your life that would not normally be described as service oriented. How could you incorporate the heart and actions of a servant into those areas?
3. What is one thing you could do this week to apply what you have learned in this lesson?
3. What does the Son of Man do? (vs. 32-33)
4. What are the two groups identified and how are they separated?
5. What does the King say to those on his right? What does the King say they did? How do they respond?
6. What does the King say to those on his left? What does the King say they did? How do they respond?

What questions/comments do you have about these verses?

Week 21: January 16-21

Day 1 John 14

Day 2 John 15

Day 3 John 16

Day 4 John 17:1-26

Day 5 Matthew 26:30,36-46 Mark 14:26,32-42 Luke 22:39-46 John 18:1

Lesson 21: "A Church Where Transparency is Encouraged"

Matthew chapters 21 and 22

What do you think is the main idea of this passage of scripture?

Introduction:

As we begin this section of scripture, Jesus enters Jerusalem to the cheers of the crowd. To many of the people, he is a hero. He has healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons and forgiven sins. It is not surprising that they hung on his every word and listened intently as he taught. They were hungry for the love he offered unconditionally and the food he delivered to their souls. They had not known that a relationship like this with God was possible – that they could come to Him just as they were and be fully loved and accepted.

As usual, the religious leaders were also nearby, observing and listening as he spoke. To them, however, Jesus was not a hero, but a danger. His teaching not only threatened their position in the community, but worse, threatened to reveal the hardness of their hearts. Their purpose in asking Jesus questions was not to learn but to trip him up and regain their status as the religious authorities. But God cannot be mocked. Just as Jesus saw the deep needs of the common people, he also knew the motives behind these questions. His answers reveal God's truth – truth that is clear and is available to all who will listen.

Observation:

1. What is the scene described in the beginning passage?

Pray and read Matthew chapters 21 and 22.

What questions/comments do you have about these chapters?

What do you think are the main ideas of these passages of scripture?

2. List all the characters or groups identified in the passage.

Observation:**Week 25: February 13-18**

1. Where do the events in 21:1-11 take place?
2. Why does Jesus send two disciples into Jerusalem?
3. List the things the crowd did in response to Jesus as he rode into town?
4. When Jesus was teaching in the temple courts (21:23), he told the parable of the two sons. What did the father command of the two sons and how did each respond?
5. Who did Jesus say would enter the kingdom of heaven ahead of the chief priests and elders? Why?
6. Why did the king prepare a banquet (22:1-14) and who was invited?
7. How did these invited guests respond?
8. Who then did the king have his servants invite and what was their response?
9. What happened to the man not wearing wedding clothes?

Day 1 Matthew 23:1-36

Day 2 Matthew 23:37-14:14

Day 3 Matthew 24: 15-49

Day 4 Matthew 25:1-30

Day 5 Matthew 25:31-46

Lesson 25: "A Surprise Ending"

Matthew 25:31-46

Introduction:

Images of hungry, hurting people are all around us in our world today, whether on the street corners of the highways and byways of our daily commute or on our television screens informing us of the latest humanitarian crisis half a world away. There is no escaping or ignoring them. From this passage we learn that indeed Jesus does not want us to and that one day there will be an accounting for what we did or did not do for the "the least of these." If we call ourselves followers of Jesus, we are called to have his eyes, hands, feet and compassion for those around us.

Pray and read Matthew 25: 31-46

4. In answer to a question, Jesus stated the greatest two of all God's commandments and said that all the laws could be summed up by these two. Looking at just the 10 Commandments first given by God to Moses (Exodus 20:1-17), describe how these two greatest commandments are a summary of the ten. (See also your answer to Observation 10.)

Note: *According to Jewish teaching, there are 613 commandments in the Old Testament, including the ten commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Old Testament laws include the laws requiring blood sacrifice to atone for sins – laws that Jesus' death on the cross fulfilled and are no longer necessary.*

Application:

1. Although one is not saved through obedience to any rules, it is through obedience to His word that we live out our salvation and show our love for God. Yet, even after accepting God's gift of salvation through Christ, many of us say no to the Father just like the son in the parable. We may want to do things our way or have trouble obeying particular commands in His word. Think about and then describe areas you find you having trouble being or staying in obedience. Why do you think this is?

How do you think Christians should handle obedience to God's commands when they are at odds with cultural norms?

2. Like the man at the wedding banquet who fit in until the king discovered him, many people try to get to heaven on their own terms. They act in ways they think are appropriate, just as this man did, but are not willing to accept the invitation as God offers it. Similarly, we often try to live according to our own 'rules' instead of abiding in His will. What areas in your life (school, work, family etc.) do you tend to live out on your terms and not God's? What have learned from this study that encourages you to seek and accept His will in these areas?
3. What can you do to this week to apply what you have learned in this lesson?

you learn from the following Scripture about what Christ expects his followers to be doing until then: Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 4:2, 5; Hebrews 6:10-12; I Peter 4:7-8?

2. Review Observation #3 and read Matthew 6: 19-21; Luke 12:48b; Ephesians 6:5-8. What do you think motivated the first two servants to do what they did with what they had been given?
3. How do the actions of the third servant and the master's judgment of him reflect the master's wisdom in giving each man an "amount according to his ability"? Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; Galatians 6:7-8; Hebrews 13:5 before you answer.

Application:

1. Each servant was given a different amount by the master and each made a choice regarding what they did with what they had been given. They were not motivated by "what was in it for them" as it was still the master's money in the end. While we are all created in God's image, as his servants he gives us different abilities, resources and interests. What would you say are the "talents" God has given you?

Week 22: January 23-28

Observation:

1. List all the characters from the passage, i.e. what each did, what each was given.

2. What does the text say is the reason each servant was given a different amount? (vs. 15)

Note: a 'talent' was a unit of money worth more than \$1000.

3. What did each servant do with what he had been given?
4. What was the result for each servant?
5. What did each servant say when the master returned to settle accounts?
6. What was the master's response to each man? Note especially how the master addressed each man.

Interpretation:

1. The servants did not know when the master would return. We do not know the day or the hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36). What do

Day 1 Matthew 26:47-56 Mark 14:43-52 Luke 22:47-53 John 18:2-11

Day 2 Matthew 26:57,59-68 Mark 14:53,55-65 Luke 22:54,63-65 John 18:12-14,19-24

Day 3 Matthew 26:58,69-75 Mark 14:54,66-72 Luke 22:54-62 John 18:15-18,25-27

Day 4 Matthew 27:1,3-10 Mark 15:1 Luke 22:66-71 Ac 1:18,19

Day 5 Matthew 27:2,11-14 Mark 15:1-5 Luke 23:1-12 John 18:28-38

Lesson 22: Part 2 - "The End Times"

Matthew chapter 24

Introduction

The study of end times, otherwise known as eschatology, is fascinating. When one becomes a Christian and knows he has eternal life with God, it becomes personal. What has God ordained for His people, for the earth, for nonbelievers? While the book of Revelation is probably the most well-known for its information on end times, there are other passages of scripture that deal with this subject as well. In chapter 24, Matthew records Jesus as he teaches his disciples about end of the age.

Since they were Jews, the disciples had been taught that their Messiah would come and usher in a new age. He would be king over all men, and there would at last be justice and peace throughout the world. Not knowing if Jesus was going to do this now or at a later date, they asked him when these things would take place and what signs would tell them the end was coming. His answer covers all of this and more. In verses 4-14, he describes to them what will happen at the end of the age; in verses 15-22, he tells them about the destruction of Jerusalem; and in 23-31 he describes his eventual return. At the end of the chapter he addresses the 'when' part of their question.

Although all aspects of the end times are not addressed here, Jesus offers a great deal of insight in this passage – he no doubt gave the disciples all the information he wanted them to have at this point. It is a look into the future, as only God can tell. For believers, it confirms that God is in control and that the future rests in his hands.

Pray and read Matthew 24.

What questions/comments do you have about these chapters?

What do you think is the main point of these chapters?

Observation:

1. What two questions do the disciples ask Jesus after he tells them (in 24:2) that the temple would eventually be destroyed?

2. List the events in 24:4-8 that Jesus refers to as 'birth pangs.'

3. Compare and contrast those who will turn from the faith with those who will stand firm.

4. In 24:15, Jesus speaks of the antichrist, referring to him as the 'abomination that causes desolation.'
 - a. Where does Jesus say he will be seen?

 - b. What should believers do when they see him?

 - c. List the words Jesus uses in verses 19 and 21 to describe this time.

Week 24: February 6-11

Day 1 Matthew 28:1-8 Mark 16:1-8 Luke 24:1-12 John 20:1-10
Day 2 Matthew 28:9-15 Mark 16:9-13 Luke 24:13-32 John 20:11-18
Day 3 Mark 16:14 Luke 24:33-43 John 20:19-31 1Co 15:5
Day 4 John 21:1-25
Day 5 Matthew 28:16-20 Mark 16:15-20 Luke 24:44-53 Ac 1:3-12 1Co 15:6-7

Lesson 24: "Make the Most of Your Opportunities"

Matthew 25:14-30

Introduction:

Jesus left no doubt that he would return. He prepared his disciples for his return before his crucifixion as well as teaching in the parables he told during his earthly ministry. Much of this preparation dealt with "instructions" on living while waiting for his return. The parable of the talents is one example. While we do not know the day or the hour, there is still expectation that we will use the time and resources he has given us to advance his kingdom. This parable illustrates Jesus' recognition that all of his followers are unique in our God-given time, talents and treasures and we are to serve him faithfully as we wait for his eventual return when there will be an accounting for our service to him.

Pray and read Matthew 25: 14-30

What questions/comments do you have about these verses?

What do you think is the main idea of this passage of scripture?

2. In 2 Peter 3:9, the apostle Paul writes that God is patient with his people, "...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." In this passage, we learn that God's patience does have a limit – when Christ returns it will be too late for those who have not accepted his offer of salvation. Many people have a hard time believing that a loving God could turn his back on anyone and shut them out of heaven. How could you use what you have learned in this parable to respond to that dilemma?

3. What is one thing you can do this week to apply what you have learned in this lesson?

5. What does Jesus say about false Christ's and how the elect (believers) should respond to them?

6. Jesus says that his coming again will be as visible as lightning (24:27). According to 24:29-31,
 - a. what will be the signs of his coming?

 - b. how will the Son of Man be seen?

 - c. what role will angels play?

7. Who knows, and does not know, the day or hour of the Son's return?

8. Why are believers to 'keep watch' and 'be alert'?

Interpretation:

1. Jesus states clearly that when the end times come, some will turn from the faith while others will be able to “stand firm to the end,” (Matthew 24:13). What enables a believer to “stand firm” in love and faith in the face of disaster and persecution? (See also John 10:27-30; Romans 8:5, 9; 1 Peter 1:3-5.)

What can you conclude about those who turn from their faith? (See also Matthew 7:23; and 1 John 2:18-19.)

2. Jesus does not refer here to the rapture – the time when believers who are alive right before the beginning of the end times are taken up to heaven to join believers who have already passed away. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16.) If these Christians are already gone when the events in chapter 24 take place, who is Jesus referring to in 24:13 when he says “he who stands firm to the end will be saved”? Similarly, who will be preaching “this gospel of the kingdom” (24:14) when the end comes? (See also Revelation 6:9-11, 7:4, 7:9-11 and 11:3.)
3. After Jesus describes what he calls “birth pangs” (the painful events leading up to his coming), he tells the disciples what the antichrist will do to Israel right before the pangs start. In other words, when those that are alive see the “abomination that causes desolation,” they will know these events are about to begin and that it is time to flee to the mountains. From what you read in 24:15 and the following verses, describe what you learn about this desolation that will come at the hands of the antichrist. (See also Daniel 9:25-27, 11:31-32; and Luke 21:20.)

Why do you think he puts this in a parable about the kingdom of heaven?

3. When the foolish virgins asked for (or demanded) oil, those who had some for their lamps said no. Are they just being selfish? What is Jesus teaching here about an individual’s responsibility to prepare for the kingdom of heaven?

What does scripture say about the role a believer plays in helping others attain the kingdom of heaven? (See also Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:7-8.)

4. When they finally made it to the wedding banquet, those who had gone for oil were shut out. In fact, the bridegroom went so far as to say he didn’t even know them. What is the message being sent here to those who participate in the Christian community but do not have true, saving faith? (See also Luke 13:25-28; 2 Peter 3:10; and Revelation 19:11-16.)

Application:

1. It is easier to prepare for an event when we know for sure it will happen. Jesus called the five virgins foolish because they knew the groom was coming but did not prepare. How sure are you about Christ’s return? Would he consider you foolish in terms of your preparation? What steps could you take (or are you taking) to ensure your confidence and readiness?

Observation:

1. To what is the kingdom of God compared in this parable?
 2. Compare and contrast the wisdom and behavior of the ten virgins.
 3. What occurred at midnight and what were the virgins doing at the time?
 4. Why did some virgins ask the others for oil? What was the response?
 5. Who got into the wedding banquet and who did not? Why not?
 6. What warning is given at the end of this parable?
4. In 24:30-31, Jesus speaks specifically about the Son of Man appearing, who would be with Him and what they would do. Read what he taught about this back in 13:41-43 and 13:49-50. What is it that Jesus wants the disciples (and us) to know and understand about this aspect of the end times? (See also Isaiah 27:13; and 1 Corinthians 15:50-52.)
 5. Jesus compares how people will be acting when he returns to how they were when the flood occurred in Noah's day: going about their daily business, oblivious to disaster until it struck. He doesn't want his people, however, to be caught off guard and tells them to "keep watch" and "be ready". What does Scripture teach about how to do this? (See also Romans 13:8-14; and 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11.)

Interpretation:

1. Being prepared for an event presumes knowing the event will occur. What evidence is there that the virgins (bridesmaids) knew the bridegroom was coming?
2. Why does Jesus attribute their being unprepared to foolishness? (See also Proverbs 1:20-33.)

Application:

1. Jesus disciples asked him two simple questions at the beginning of chapter 24. The length and breadth of his answer indicates his desire for us to have information about, and consider what will happen in the end times. If you are a believer, how do you think you could use what you have learned here to encourage others to follow Christ?

2. Knowing that his people have a tendency to focus on the here and now, Jesus made a point of telling his disciples (and us) about the end times and to be ready for them. In spite of what the tabloids predict, we do not know the Lord's timing and need to be ever watchful for his return. Describe your state of readiness. What steps can you take to remain steadfast in this effort or to improve?

3. What is one thing you can do this week to apply what you have learned in this passage?

Week 23: January 30- February 4

Day 1 Matthew 27:15-26 Mark 15:6-15 Luke 23:13-25 John 18:39-19:16
Day 2 Matthew 27:27-34 Mark 15:16-23 Luke 23:26-33 John 19:16-17
Day 3 Matthew 27:35-44 Mark 15:24-32 Luke 23:33-43 John 19:18-27
Day 4 Matthew 27:45-56 Mark 15:33-41 Luke 23:44-49 John 19:28-30
Day 5 Matthew 27:57-66 Mark 15:42-47 Luke 23:50-56 John 19:31-42

Matthew Lesson 23: "Staying Steady for Christ's Return"

Matthew 25: 1-13

Introduction:

In biblical times, a typical Jewish wedding consisted of 3 parts. First was the engagement, usually arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom. Next was the betrothal – the actual ceremony where the marriage vows were taken. After this, the couple was considered legally married, even if they did not live together or consummate the relationship. The third part was the wedding feast and it is this event that provides the back drop for the parable Jesus tells in this passage.

At a pre-arranged time at the end of the betrothal period, the groom and his attendants would parade through the streets toward the house of the bride, who would be waiting with her bridesmaids. This signaled the beginning of the wedding feast and usually occurred at night, so torches were needed to light the way. The bridesmaids (customarily unmarried, chaste young women) would each have their own torch and so be identified as part of the procession making their way to the feast.

The people listening to Jesus would have been familiar with this tradition and as such, would have been able to discern the meaning of the parable. As we picture this setting in our minds, we too, can understand the significance of his words. It is obviously a message of great importance as the warning he gave at the end has been repeatedly offered. We would do well to take this message to heart and be ready ourselves for Christ's return.

Pray and Read Matthew 25:1-13

What comments/questions do you have about this passage?

What do you think is the main idea of this passage?