

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 8TH-9TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

OLD & NEW (MATTHEW 17:22-27)

ANOTHER BLATANT PREDICTION

We have been talking about Jesus' deliberate move towards the cross, and here we see the second clear prediction given to His disciples about His death, burial, and resurrection.

- The 12 loved Jesus, but were "distressed" more because of their false expectations and fear for their own safety. **They missed the hope that would come after the suffering.**

REMEMBER, THE CHURCH IS FORMING

As Jesus returns to a Jewish region, Matthew emphasizes more responsibilities of the growing community that would be the church.

- The end of chapter 17 highlights the importance of **humility, purity**, how believers are to have **relationships with non-believers**, and the **responsibilities** and **privileges** of being a Christian.

IT IS NOT REALLY ABOUT TAXES

The conversation about taxes is really about the shifting from the OT to the NT.

- **Modern Christians are free from many of the obligations of the Old Testament**, one of those being taxes given for temple maintenance/construction. But, we're taught to **live sacrificially in the hopes of winning many people to Christ.**

THE HARASSMENT DIDN'T TAKE LONG

As soon as Jesus and His 12 went into Capernaum Peter was approached about the question of taxes by the religious leaders.

- Peter told the tax collector that Jesus did pay the tax, but when he went in the house, Jesus challenged him as to **why** He chose to pay the tax.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT CIVIL TAXES, BUT THE HEART

Jesus used an analogy with Peter about heirs of royal families being exempt from tax to show that He was really the King and His people were only indebted to Him.

- The point was Jesus was going to alleviate the weight of the OT law and replace it with grace. It would no longer be our deeds, but Christ's that liberate us.

SO WHY PAY THE TAX IF WE DON'T HAVE TO?

Jesus tells Peter to get the money from a fish's mouth. The reason Jesus did this odd miracle to pay taxes was to not "offend them."

- Jesus was teaching Peter that **we often have to forfeit our rights for the sake of being a good example to non-believers.** This miracle and willingness to pay the tax showed Jesus' **humility.**

SACRIFICE REVEALS THE STATE OF THE HEART

Christians should not aim to offend others, especially non-Christians. Jesus set the example of sacrificing privileges in order to create a rapport with people that need Him.

- **We have to ask ourselves what we care about more; personal freedoms and privileges or the advancement of the Kingdom of God.** What would Jesus do?

HUMILITY (MATTHEW 18:1-5)

A SIMPLE AND IMPORTANT THEME

From this point through chapter 20, the main theme is **humility** and **servanthood.**

- These themes contrast heavily with the opening of chapter 18. The disciples thought heaven would be like earthly kingdoms where rank, class, and authority mark the greatness of people.

IT WAS A PRETTY SELFISH QUESTION

The disciples asked Jesus "who is the greatest in the kingdom?" This question was a selfish jockeying for position of control and privilege in the afterlife.

- Jesus' response is the opposite of the human response. He tells them **the path to real greatness and spiritual maturity comes through childlike humility.**

CHOOSING TO BE LESS, MAKES US MORE

The theme of laying down ourselves for God and others is constant throughout the Bible and has always been counter-culture. Jesus basically told the disciples the more humble they are, the greater the kingdom will be.

- **It is by rejecting pride, stubbornness, and self-righteousness that we become true disciples of Christ.**

IT IS BY HUMILITY WE ARE SAVED

First, Jesus had to be humble enough to take on human form and die at the hands of His creation.

Then, **we must be humble enough to know that it is only by His grace and works that we can be saved.**

- **Humility is the key.** It is humility that leads us to obedience and into the privilege of having a **relationship with God.**

CUTTING OFF (MATTHEW 18:6-9)

HUMILITY GOOD, CARELESSNESS BAD

As much as humility leads us closer to the Kingdom, careless and selfish behavior remove us from the blessings of God and actually invoke punishment.

- **How we treat people is paramount to Jesus.** We're to not only treat others like we want to be treated, but to **love them similarly to how He loves us (10:40-42).**

WE'RE ALSO CALLED TO WATCH OUT FOR EACH OTHER

If it's important that we welcome people, help them if needed, and show them love and grace, pushing people away or causing them to sin must have dire consequences.

- Jesus used a graphic analogy of suicide by drowning to show just how serious His judgement will be on people who would endanger other believer's souls.

"WOE TO THE WORLD BECAUSE OF OFFENSES"

Paul warns Christians in Rom. 14 and 1 Cor. 8 and 10 **to not use freedoms that we have if it causes others to stumble, even if we're permitted to exercise those freedoms.**

- Jesus teaches us that **sacrifice is part of the Christian experience.** We're to value souls more than personal freedoms in order to advance the kingdom.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT AIM TO OFFEND

The word "woe" in v7 means catastrophe. This means that **careless and offensive behavior is not God-honoring and carries ramifications from Him.**

- There are times that the Bible is offensive in our culture, but the aim is not to offend, but to lead people to truth. **Christians are called to direct people, not debate them.**

WHAT DO WE DO WITH DESTRUCTIVE THINGS?

Jesus says if something "causes you to fall away, cut it off and throw it away."

- This means **anything that causes us or others to sin must be deliberately and swiftly dealt with. We cannot afford to dabble in sinful behavior because it's destructive in this life and has eternal consequences.**

BETTER NOW THAN LATER

When we get to heaven, we will not have to worry about physical ailments. Jesus was using an analogy of removing limbs and eyes to show that **present sacrifice has eternal rewards.**

- Practically speaking, it's better to not have a computer at home, to lose friends, or to quit a toxic job in order to stay away from temptations that may cause sin. **1 PETER 2:11-12 (NLT)**

SOME CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- **HUMILITY**

There's no Christian discipleship without humility. Humility is the key to salvation and a relationship with God.

- **STEWARDSHIP OF OUR PRIVILEGES**

Though many things are "permissible," we must be wise enough to know when they're not "beneficial."

- **BEING A WITNESS TO NON-BELIEVERS**

Jesus tells us to "let our light shine before others so they may see your good works and glorify God" and to not carelessly offend. Paul tells us to model integrity, love, good works, purity, and dignity. **The church's reputation matters.**

- **WATCHING OUT FOR OTHER BELIEVERS**

At times we may have to give up freedoms for the sake of others. We need to pray, be a support, and hold other Christians accountable. **These are our brothers and sisters that we should love before anyone else (Gal. 6:9-10).**

- **ADDRESSING OUR PERSONAL SIN**

If humility is the key, true repentance is the fuel. We must clearly identify and feel remorse for sin.

- **TAKING THE STEPS TO REMOVE TEMPTATIONS**

It is not enough to ask forgiveness, we must take the steps to avoid evil and change our thoughts and actions.