

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 2ND-3RD, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

A MAN CALLED MATTHEW (MATTHEW 9:9-13)

Jesus' earthly ministry has begun with powerful demonstrations of His authority through healing, miracles, and demonic encounters (8:1-17, 23-32, 9:1-8).

- Now Matthew records the story of his own call to discipleship.
- Matthew wants us to understand the forgiveness & unconditional acceptance of Jesus, so he shows himself "sitting at the tax booth" (vs. 9)

It was the practice of the Roman Empire to recruit tax collectors/.

- These natives worked for their oppressors, therefore making them traitors
- It wasn't uncommon for them to line their own pockets.

Even though Matthew's chosen profession earned him scorn and social stigma, Jesus extended to him the invitation of discipleship (vs. 9b).

- In spite of his sinful lifestyle, Matthew was invited to leave it all behind and follow Jesus.
- This is the call Jesus extends to all of us.
- It's a call to us as we are to come die to everything we know.

But Matthew didn't leave his tax booth in mourning or grief- he then threw a banquet at his house to introduce his tax collector friends to Jesus! (vs. 10).

- Jesus is there right along with the "sinners", eating and reclining at the table
- The Church is also to be a friend of sinners- we don't join them in sin, but we do reach out because we realize that we're sinners too and Jesus died for us all!

This upset the Pharisees because they ignored sinners- they stayed away from tax collectors and "sinners" who weren't ceremonially and culturally clean like them.

- So they asked the disciples why Jesus associated with such people (vs. 11).
- Jesus' response was that "those who are well have no need of a physician..." (vs. 12).

The Pharisees saw no need for spiritual healing in themselves.

- Those who were well acquainted with their own brokenness were the ones most receptive to His offer of spiritual healing.
- Jesus quoted Hos. 6:6 to make clear that He came to show mercy & change sinners' hearts, not to prop up people who think they're righteous on their own.

A QUESTION ON FASTING (MATTHEW 9:14-17)

The Old Testament only required one fast a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:28).

- But both John the Baptizer's disciples and the Pharisees fasted weekly.
- Fasting regularly isn't a bad thing, but apparently they began believing that any person who fell short of this standard was less devout in his or her faith.

Some Christians today do the same thing- we form personal convictions for ourselves and our families and then judge others who don't share the same personal convictions.

- There are some issues on which followers of Jesus may have different convictions.
- Not all issues are black & white, and can be traced back to a biblical guideline- in such cases, we must use discernment and let the law of love rule (Rom. 13:10).

So John's disciples ask Jesus, "why don't your disciples fast like we do?" (vs. 14).

- Jesus' response was that fasting while He- the bridegroom, the guest of honor- was present would be inappropriate (vs. 15).
- But after He was taken from them, then they'd fast as they long for the day of His return.
- This statement made it clear that Jesus wouldn't reign in this first coming- but in the 2nd.

Then Jesus gives a two-part parable about patches of cloth and new wine (vs. 16-17).

- A new patch doesn't work on an old garment (vs. 16), and old wine skins don't work at holding new wine (vs. 17)- the old garment is torn, and the old wine skins burst.
- Jesus was saying, "something new and different is happening- a new day is dawning."
- New wine and garments represent joy & wholeness.

The old orthodoxy can't contain the new reality of the Kingdom.

- As citizens of the Kingdom, we fast, pray, and pursue God differently.
- We don't do things so that God will approve of us, we do them because He already has.
- Our spiritual disciplines are celebrations of what God has done and is doing.

MIRACLES (MATTHEW 9:18-34)

The man who came a knelt before Jesus was most likely a synagogue ruler.

- He was desperate for a touch from Jesus because his daughter had just died.
- But amazingly, he had faith to believe that if Jesus touched her, she'd come back to life.

Jesus encountered a delay on his way to the man's house (vs. 19-22), but when He arrived at the funeral observances had already begun.

- Jesus' new reality of the Kingdom understands this little girl isn't dead, just asleep (vs. 24) because His arrival redefines death for all of us.

- He touches the girl, she rises from the dead, and everyone in the district hears the news.

As Jesus made His way, He came into contact with another threat to His ritual purity (vs. 20).

- According to Jewish law, a woman having her monthly cycle was unclean for 7 days, and anyone who touched her was unclean "until evening" (Lev. 15:19-33).
- But this woman had been bleeding for 12 years

She would've been considered continually unclean and was probably a social outcast.

- She'd heard about Jesus and had come to the conclusion that she'd be healed if she simply touched the "fringe of his garment" (the tassels of his prayer shawl, "zizith")
- She does and is healed, to which Jesus commends her for her faith (vs. 22).

As Jesus leaves the ruler's house, two blind beggars persisted in praying out to Him as they recognized Him as the "Son of David" (vs. 27).

- There's great irony in the fact that the first who recognize Him as the royal son of David are physically blind (but apparently not spiritually!).
- Jesus took them aside into a house and inquired of them if they faith that He could heal them, to which they reply, "yes Lord" (vs. 28).

Jesus tells them that "according to your faith be it done to you" (vs. 29), heals them, and then warns them sternly not to tell anyone about it.

- Is Jesus authority to heal bound by our faith? No, His lordship is absolute.
- Is there a connection between faith in Jesus and the outcome of our prayers? Most definitely there is, otherwise we wouldn't be encouraged to pray believing and with persistence.

The final miracle involved a demon who was preventing a man from speaking (vs. 32).

- While there is a difference between sickness and demonic workings (Matt. 10:8), the demons do have the power to cause physical afflictions.
- Jesus cast out the demon, the mute man speaks, the crowds marvel, but the Pharisees don't like what they see and begin to criticize.

Religion always criticizes what it can't understand or control.

- The criticism was that He "casts out demons by the prince of demons" (vs. 34).
- In their unbelief, the Pharisees were attributing the work of God to Satan himself.
- The new wine of Jesus' mercy and power couldn't be contained in their old wine skins, so in their spiritual blindness they rejected Him.

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL (MATTHEW 9:35-38)

As Jesus went throughout the region ministering to the people (vs. 35), Matthew gives us insight as to how He felt about the needs of humanity.

- He saw them as "harassed & helpless", and He felt compassion for them (vs. 36).
- Jesus desires His disciples to share His same heart for humanity (vs. 37-38).

1. See their Size ("...he saw the crowds")

2. Feel their suffering ("...harassed & helpless")

3. Realize their Fate ("...the harvest")

Jesus' heart for His disciples is for us to see that same urgency and to pray fervently for "workers to go out into the harvest" (vs. 38).

- Once we as disciples of Jesus understand the size, suffering, and fate of humanity without Christ we realize we don't have time to waste on the pursuits, pleasures, and possessions of this world.
- There is something infinitely more important for us to do! Just playing church and wasting our lives make no sense whatsoever.

THE JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP.

It comes down to faith. Do we have faith?

- ...to leave our old ways of life and come after Him?
- ...to leave our old patterns of thinking & relating to God?
- ...to walk by faith, not by sight, and to believe for impossible things?
- ...to see humanity through His eyes, not our own?