

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 25TH-26TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

THE THINGS OF GOD (MATTHEW 16:21-23)

At this point in Matthew's account of the life of Jesus, He's with His disciples at Caesarea Philippi, where He'd asked them a very important question about His identity.

- Peter had gotten it right and Jesus had responded by naming Peter as the "rock" that the Church would be built upon (vs. 18-19).
- Now there is a turning point in the narrative as Jesus unveils a new plan (vs. 21).

Jesus has declared His identity, and now He will declare His work as He tells His disciples that He, "must go to Jerusalem and suffer...and be killed...and on the third day be raised" (vs. 21).

- Jesus had hinted of these things earlier in the narrative (12:39-40), but now He spoke of these things plainly.
- Upon hearing these things, the disciples must've been deeply shocked and troubled.

What most Jews were expecting in the Messiah was immediate exaltation and the inauguration of the Kingdom.

- As part of Jesus' inner circle, these 12 were probably expecting positions of great authority and power within the Kingdom that the Messiah would establish.
- But now the one that they have identified as Messiah tells them that He must suffer and be killed?

And if Jesus must suffer and be killed, what will the elders, chief priests, and scribes do to His closest followers?

- Peter pulls Jesus aside to rebuke Him (vs. 22).
- Even though Peter's concern seems to be for the honor of the Lord (vs. 22b), he most likely responded out of fear for himself and the other disciples.

Jesus responds by rebuking Peter and calling him "Satan"- his remark was representative of the kind of thinking Satan used.

- Peter was being used by Satan to tempt Jesus to attain the Kingdom without suffering (Matt. 4:8-9).
- Peter was a "rock" on which Jesus would build His church, but now he was a "hindrance" in Jesus' way, attempting to interfere with the plans of God (vs. 23).

Peter's confession in vs. 16 was revealed to him by God, but by vs. 23 he didn't have in mind the things of God, but the "things of man".

- Human nature is that we want to escape hardship, suffering and death, and we want the easiest and most direct path to victory and success.
- But the path of ease and least resistance is usually the path that's not worth following, and it's most certainly not the path that leads to eternal life (Matt. 7:13-14).

When we settle for a lifestyle and mindset that primarily seeks comfort, ease, selfishness, and harmony with the world and its set of values, we're setting our minds on the, "things of man".

- Where do find the things of God? In the Word of God!
- In God's Word we find His plan for our lives- He's never promised us that it's going to be easy, but He does promise us it'll be worth it.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS (MATTHEW 16:24-28)

Jesus now revealed to His disciples that God's plan for the Messiah and the Kingdom would involve suffering and death.

- That same suffering would play a role in the lives of His disciples well, but the ultimate reward will far out outweigh the cost.
- Many people want to follow Jesus, but they want to do it on their terms.
- But Jesus gives us HIS terms for discipleship.

1. "DENY YOURSELF"

- We live in a world that tells us to obey our indulgences, whims, and desires.
- But Jesus tells us that in order to be a disciple that knows Him as Lord, we first must strip ourselves of any claims we hold to Lordship.
- We give up our self-righteousness, self-indulgence, desires, ambitions, thoughts, dreams, and possessions- we lay them down at His feet and let Him be Lord over them.

2. "TAKE UP YOUR CROSS..."

- To anyone in the 1st century, a cross would've been an instrument of death.
- Someone who, "took up a cross" was a dead man walking- their life as they knew it was over!
- We identify with Christ as we willingly lay down our rights and surrender to the Father.
- We embrace the road that He's called us to walk down- even if it means rejection, shame, suffering, and death.

3. "FOLLOW ME..."

- Where was Jesus going? He was going to a cross, then to the grave, and then to resurrection.
- That's where He's invited us- to crucify ourselves, our sins, and our desires on the cross- and then to follow Him into resurrection life and eternal glory.
- He's called us to walk in His footsteps, according to His Word.

The great paradox of life is that if spend all our energy focusing on this life here and now, we will lose the entire point of this life- which is investing in the life to come (vs. 25a).

- What good does it do if we gain EVERYTHING this world has to offer and end up "losing our soul", by never entering the Kingdom? (vs. 26).

- Nothing in the universe is more precious than eternal life for our souls!

Jesus then promises that one day He's coming back, "in His Father's glory with the angels" (vs. 27), and when He does He'll repay each person according to what they've done.

- The emphasis here is less on judgment for the wicked- it's more on the reward or "repayment" for disciples who have given up their lives on earth for the Kingdom.
- Jesus will reward them according to their works.

The New Testament tells us that all believers will stand before the "bema seat" of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) to give an account and receive rewards for what we've done in faithful service to Christ.

- This will be a time of reward, examination and accountability.
- His disciples will present before Jesus the works they've done in service to Him, and they will be tested "with fire" (1 Cor. 3:13).

Jesus will reward those disciples who sacrificed to follow Him and their works are revealed on that day to be "gold, silver, and costly stones"- these were the things of eternal value.

- But some of the other things that are tested on that day will be revealed as "wood, hay, & straw"- temporal, self-centered, self-glorifying pursuits- and they'll be burned up.
- There will be some who enter heaven without many rewards (1 Cor. 3:15).

LIKE THE SUN (MATTHEW 17:1-8)

Since the conversation on suffering and death may have been overwhelming for the disciples, Jesus assured them in vs. 28 that some of them standing there wouldn't taste death until they had, "seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom".

- Six days later, Jesus fulfilled that promise (vs. 1).

On the mountain, Jesus reveals to these three men the glory of His Kingdom as He's "transfigured" before them (vs. 2) and shone like the sun.

- The word transfigured is related to the English word, "metamorphosis"
- In other words, Jesus' glory was not reflected but radiated from within.

Two additional figures appeared with Jesus in His glory- Moses & Elijah (vs. 3).

- Their presence is symbolic of the two primary divisions of the Old Testament- for most Jews, Moses represented the law, and Elijah the prophets.
- But what were they talking about? Luke's gospel gives us a bit more detail (Luke 9).

In the exodus of the OT, the Father used Moses to deliver Israel from slavery.

- Now the Father will send Jesus to deliver His people from slavery to sin and death.
- As glorified Jesus in all His splendor and glory is discussing these matters with the two most respected figures in the entire Hebrew Bible, Peter pipes up and begins to offer his suggestions of what needs to happen next.

Peter suggests that they build three tents for these three figures (vs. 4)

- Peter wants to construct memorials or tabernacles for these three; maybe out of reverence, but probably more out of a desire to stay in the place of beauty, joy, and awe.
- The mountain top seems a long way away from the suffering in the valley of death.

As Peter is suggesting his plan for what Jesus, Moses, and Elijah should do, a bright cloud overshadows them and the voice of God the Father interrupts him (vs. 5).

- Peter is told that he's to listen to the word and directives of God's son- Jesus.
- The presence of God the Father and the glory of God the son was apparently so overwhelmingly terrifying the disciples fell on their faces (vs. 6).

The fear of the Lord is not just some vague reference to respect or reverence- if any of us were to catch a glimpse of the glory of God, we'd be terrified.

- But Jesus comes to them, touches them, and instructs them "not to fear" (vs. 8), as they open their eyes and only see Him in His humanity.
- "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn. 4:18)- God's grace teaches us to fear Him and then shows us His mercy, kindness, and love at the same time.

THE THINGS OF MAN VERSUS THE THINGS OF GOD.

- In this plan of God, are you in or are you out?
- Are you willing to listen to God's son and His plan?