

LIGHT HAS COME

The Gospel of Matthew

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Studies in the Four Gospels," by G. Campbell Morgan
- "What the Bible Teaches, Matthew," by J. Heading
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

Matthew: A dignified unfolding of Christ as befits the King.

Old Testament prophets testified of Him but the carnal Jews of His day did not expect Messiah to come as He did. They were looking for One with personal and national glory and power. They wanted victory over the Gentiles but not a sacrifice. The foundation of the kingdom of God is the cross. This is not what the Jews wanted nor expected.

An overview of the book:

1. Birth of the King, chapters 1-2.
2. Fore-runner of the King, ch.3.
3. Testing of the King, ch.4:1-11.
4. Proclamation of the King, ch.4:12-25.
5. Laws of the King, ch.5-7.
6. Ministry of the King, ch.8-11:19.
7. Rejection of the King, ch.11:20-20.
8. Entry of the King, ch.21-25.
9. Death and Resurrection of the King, ch.26-28.

The King's genealogy, Chapter 1:1-17.

Royal genealogy: Abraham to David.

Legal genealogy: Not necessarily adjacent connection of father to son. Note the word "begat" instead of "son of."

From the promise to Abraham to Christ, Satan tried to break that line by:

- Idolatry in Egypt and Canaan.
- Bondage: Ishmael being born of Abraham and Hagar; Israel in Egypt.

"The seed of Abraham" is often referred to [Jn.8:33,39,41,44; Phil.3:5; 2Cor.11:13-15,22; Gal.3:7-8; Rom.4:16; Heb.2:16.

THE FOURFOLD MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1. THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM, 4:7-11:27
2. THE MASTER AND HIS DISCIPLES, 11:28-16:16
3. THE CHURCH AND THE CROSS, 16:17-28:15
4. THE GOSPEL AND THE WORLD, 28:16-20

Some points to consider:

- The Lord Jesus is the last in Jewish history whose descent from the royal line of David can be fully and clearly established.
- Matthew was the writer. It is only in his own Gospel that the despised name, "publican", is associated with his apostolic name, Matthew (gift of God). He recognized the grace of God to Him.
- He modestly does not refer to the "great feast" he made when he was called to follow the Lord [Lu.5:29]. He must have been a man of means.
- One characteristic word in Matthew is, "fulfilled."
- There are over 60 references to Old Testament writings fulfilled in Christ.
- "Kingdom" is mentioned 55 times: "Kingdom of heaven" 32 times. "Son of David" 7 times.
- The Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Jesus and His disciples up to the time of the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

The five major discourses of the Lord are:

1. The Teacher imparting His own character to His disciples [5-7:28].
2. The Master revealing principles of Christian service [10-11:1].
3. The King enlightening His subjects to the character of the dispensation [13:1-13:53].
4. The Head enlightening the members to happy church relationship [18-19:1].
5. The Judge calling His creatures into account when the age has run its course [24-26:1].

The witnesses to His right to the Kingship of the Kingdom:

1. The witness of history [Mat. 1:1].
2. The witness of angels [Mat. 1:20].
3. The witness of creation (star) [Mat. 2:2].
4. The witness of scripture [Mat. 2:23].
5. The witness of John [Mat. 3:11].
6. The witness of the Father [Mat. 3:17].
7. The witness of the Holy Spirit [Mat. 4:1].

Mat. 1:1-17. Genealogy: the title of the genealogy of Jesus, not the title to the Gospel of Matthew

- Kingdoms up until the book of Matthew: Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, Rome
- Under Rome: Roman laws, taxes and justice system
- Under Rome: appointed Jewish leadership favorable to Rome.

v.2. Three groups of 14 generations: this emphasizes a relation between Jesus Christ and the two outstanding leaders in Jewish history – Abraham and David. Jesus is linked to Israel racially – a new race of people began with Abraham and this race was founded on the principle of faith. He is linked royally – from the kingly line beginning with David

- Abraham identified the principle of faith in a unique way.
- David was the king after God's own heart. Loyalty to God's will is superior to his own will.
- The carrying away into Babylon was to correct the failure of Israel and bring repentance.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST: "I am from above; I am not of this world."

v.18. Birth: a miraculous event. His life began with a miracle from the womb and ended with a miracle from the tomb.

v.19. Just: straight; fair; unbiased; true

v.20. Fear not: Everything is under control.

- IMMANUEL
- "Wonderful Counselor" – when first man knew Him (Adam)
- "Mighty God" – revealed through His dealing with Israel
- "Everlasting Father" – He is known this way to us today
- "Prince of Peace" – in the coming kingdom

v.21. A Son: heir; family representative. "Jesus" – Jehovah Salvation

v.22. Fulfilled:

MATTHEW 1

GENEALOGY

Four hundred years of silence from God passed since the closing of the Old Testament scriptures. The Talmud with all its "dos and don'ts" had been written to bring the behavior of the people under the control of a governing body. Synagogues had been built where the people came to be taught by a class of leadership who felt themselves superior to most people because of their strict adherence to their own laws. Then into this period of spiritual darkness and man-imposed religion, light came into the world in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. "In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of men."

His credentials as the promised Messiah open the pages of the New Testament. Is there proof of His pedigree as the one who was promised? The list of names begins with heroes of faith like Abraham, the father of the Jews and to him from God came the promise of a nation that would bring blessing to the world. The list includes some who were people of poor reputation: Judah's son by his own son's wife, Tamar; Boaz's mother was a woman of faith even though she is introduced to history as a prostitute. His son Obed, was a child of Ruth who came originally from an enemy tribe. David's illicit affair with Bathsheba, produced Solomon who himself, though wise, made a spectacular failure of his own marriages and family life. There were some ordinary people who would have been overlooked entirely if it wasn't for this list of names that put them in the lineage of the Lord Jesus. Some listed were noted for being evil, ungodly men. And yet in His human descent, none of this denigrated in any way the holiness of Jesus Christ. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." His character was not in any way diminished because of His human forbearers.

The fact of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit. No man was involved in His conception. He was the one promised to Adam and the "seed of the woman." The lineage of Mary's husband, Joseph, is given here as proof of His human right as the first-born son to be in the line of promises made by covenants. Joseph

thought he had two choices when he learned Mary was pregnant. He could have her stoned to death or he could divorce her, which he intended to do until God gave him a third option - marry her. He was a righteous man, but was also a discreet and sensitive man who was willing to shield Mary from public opinion. More than that, he was a man who was responsive to God and God's guidance, so as a truly self-disciplined person, he married his betrothed but remained celibate until after the Lord Jesus Christ was born.

All of these characteristics seen in the human chain of people in the genealogy of the Lord, are easily seen in us today. In almost any group of Christians you will meet, there are people who are part of the family of God, who have in their background a wide variety of experiences. There are those God saved in their youth who were preserved from most of the sins of the world around them by virtue of their upbringing. There are those of a shady past who want to keep their days of ungodly living out of any and all conversation. There are those who are often overlooked because they live ordinary lives, do ordinary work and are content to be a quiet help in the house of God without any fanfare at all. There are sometimes those among us who have lived a very ungodly life before they had a spectacular conversion. People write tracts about their testimony and want to "hear how God saved them" whenever a group of people gather. Yet in God's eyes everyone is needed and everyone is special to Him. The focus of all the people in this genealogy is on the Lord Jesus Christ, not on those who were in the background.

The remarkable thing is that from the small insignificant tribe of Israel, and the family of Judah as a son of Abraham, came Emmanuel, "God with us." He never lost any of His divine nature. He always was and will always remain the Great Almighty God. Yet in a remarkable act of grace, "He who was rich, for your sakes became poor..." As "Jesus", He was "Jehovah the Savior." This is the One and only Salvation of Jehovah for us. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

An angel as a messenger from God made clear to Joseph the mind and will of God. Sometimes angels are protectors. At other times they are encouragers, guides, or those that carry out punishment when they fight against the forces of evil. There are angels who patrol the earth on behalf of God's interests. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born, the forces of evil were arrayed against Him. The dignified unfolding of Christ as befits a king begins with His genealogy. Then the angel's testimony was added as another witness. The star that showed the way to the searchers from the east, the scriptures of truth, the testimony of John, the voice of the Father at His baptism and the Holy Spirit as a dove and at His temptation - all give testimony and witness to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of God to the ancient ones of the covenant promises. We today have been adopted as children into that same family as children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

They are there, listed one after the other in the long line of promise -
No matter who they are, the chain is unbroken, the rightful claim is His.
Into the darkness came the Light; to the hopeless, there came hope.
Who would ever have thought such as we, would be part of that far-reaching scope!

We who were strangers to grace and to God, Gentiles without any claim -
Have been brought in as heirs of God, accepted by the power of His name.
But we were not the first, Ruth came before into the place of blessing.
Now we who in faith have accepted Christ, to our heavenly Father are our prayers
addressing.

None of this has happened by chance, it wasn't some strange altercation.
It was planned by God before the world was made to make possible our salvation.
The path of history traces the line of the One who would bring this to pass.
As the generations and years unfolded, the blessing came to me at last.

"Emmanuel" meant that God was here, there was a work He came to fulfill.
"Jesus" the Savior was His name at birth, and He's the only Savior still.
It is beyond my comprehension to define or explain hypostatic union.
But I know that as both God and Man, all glory belongs to Him.

When the angel of the Lord came to tell Joseph what he was to do -
Didn't mean that angel's work down here on earth was actually through.
Those mighty beings God has created to serve Him without a question,
Are still working God's will on our behalf in this day and generation.

From this opening chapter where the New Covenant is explained
Through all the pages yet to follow, there stands out one particular name.
That is the name of "Jesus" who came to earth to bring
To us a full salvation and who has the legal right as King.

“Lord God, this opening chapter of the New Testament opens to my mind many trains of thought. Every one of the people mentioned had a role to fill in the plans Thou hast made. Every incident mentioned has a message and a meaning. How wonderful it is to me to be able to follow this beginning of the New Testament and find the fulfillment of so much of the Old and the blessings of the New. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Matthew 1:1. *“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”*

LEGAL RIGHT.

The story unfolds of Messiah, the King.
History bears witness that it is He who will bring,
Peace to the earth that for long has been sought;
All of the plans of men will be brought to naught;
For it is He whose genealogy proves, He is the One -
The Messiah to reign, is David's true son.

Abraham chose, when spoken to by God;
To turn from the idols when he knew he'd been called
To leave and walk by faith to a place far away;
And he acted in faith on what he heard God say.
“Get out of this country; leave your kindred behind.”
He left in faith not knowing what he'd find.

From the line of that man God called His “friend;”
Came Jesus, the King; to bring finally an end
To the questions that arose from people who looked,
For a Savior-Messiah; and they heard at His birth,
From the angels of God that this One was He;
The prophets of old said the Messiah would be.

The child they called “Jesus” from David's line was born.
It was Jesus the Savior, who God has given to reign
Over the nation of Israel, and all kingdoms of earth;
Will someday acknowledge the rights of His birth
Make Him unique among men, He is the One who is sinless;
And all evil will fall, under the rule of the “Righteous.”

For those of us now, who are looking ahead;
We know Him as Savior and the Living Head
Of the Church He has purchased with “blood of His own;”
And Emmanuel, God's Son for us has once come
To put away sin when for us He has died;
When next He comes, we'll be called to His side.

For the vantage point then as the Bride of the Lamb;
We will see His righteous rule, over every kingdom and land.
The once-despised King, will reign with His rod;
And those who despised Him will know then that God
Has stepped in to legally claim all that is His;
And finally, earth will know the long-promised bliss.

“I live by faith Father, for I know that what has been promised, is as good as done. What a day of rejoicing it will be when the Lord Jesus Christ will be seen in all His glory and splendor and “Emmanuel” reigns; the Savior-King is there with His bride; and peace is finally on earth. What a beautiful way to begin the unfolding of “The New Testament (covenant).” Amen.

Matthew 1:12. *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”*

BORN.

Born - how could it possibly be the “Eternal” had a birth?
He who fills the universe and whose footstool is the earth?
Omnipresent - He is unlimited, not bound by time or space,
And yet, a manger in a little town was Jehovah's resting place.

Born - a unique Son, God's "love-gift" through a virgin mother;
The woman's seed and the Holy Ghost brought the "Light" from God the Father.
Omnipotent - He "self-limited" His power to be found in fashion as a man,
Yet He healed the sick and lame by virtue of His all-powerful hand.

Born - a Man among men, learning from those He taught
When His suffering made our "Captain" understanding of those He sought.
Omniscient - He who knew all, the Source and Maintainer of all things
Experienced the cross, the suffering and pain in order to salvation bring.

"O God of all grace, the "Amazing Grace" of the Lord Jesus Christ is always in my mind as I think of the fact that "though He was rich yet for your sake He became poor" - for my sake. I praise Thee for such condescending grace, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 1:19-20. *"The Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.'"*

JOSEPH.

He was a just man who knew how to love,
Mary was in his heart - he had her reputation to save.
When the messenger from heaven came with a message to tell,
He acted without doubt the ancient scriptures to fulfill.

The facts were plain, Mary was going to have a child;
When Joseph knew He was the Savior long foretold.
He never waited long but when he rose from sleep,
Immediately they married, the promise was his to keep.

The Savior was to be born; Joseph was the guardian of the Son.
Emmanuel was here, the Son of God had come.
He was to name Him "Jesus" who came to save us from our sins,
And Joseph's role was to care for and make a home for Him.

A man may live a quiet life, and still be a man of devotion.
Joseph had his time and work to do in God's plan of salvation.
Obscurity may be my portion here, just doing what God desires,
But what a privilege and joy is mine love for Christ inspires.

"Holy God, I am thinking with a sense of awe, that Joseph and I have both had personal dealings with Thee. Still within the limitations of my experience, I can't easily identify with his experience that night when He was instructed to take Mary to be his wife. Yet, in another way I know what it is like to be assured she is the one God chose for me. I would like to be a just and sensitive man aware of what is best for the wife You gave me. Amen."

Matthew 1:21. *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins."*

HE SHALL SAVE.

A virgin woman - from among all other women of a chosen tribe
Singled out not because of high station in life;
Not because of recommendations of important people;
But chosen by God alone - sovereignly.

A special name - from the Author of the book of life - a name is given
To identify a special son - miraculously conceived and born
Without fanfare or pomp of men, but heralded by angels -
Searched for by men of faith - earnestly.

The name and the work - both identified before His birth;
Both signifying a need that He must meet -
That He alone can meet - His name JESUS -
The Savior needed by sinners - desperately.

His people - "His own" who waited impatiently for deliverance;

Didn't know what they really were missing - forgiveness
Of sins, long gotten used to and accepted - rejected Him;
Not realizing what they would suffer - hopelessly.

Now "His people" are from every place on earth -
They have heard, and believed and accepted Him and His grace,
Finally rescued, redeemed, regenerated, received by Him
They love His name, "JESUS", and worship Him - gratefully.

"The name of Jesus is sweet to my ears Father God, for it reminds me daily that I am not abandoned because of my sins. I am accepted by Thee because He has saved me from my sins. How grateful I am to have been brought to Thee as a "son" who has received Him. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 1:23. *"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name EMMANUEL, which being interpreted is, God with us."*

GOD WITH US.

The dawn breaks, and light slowly lightens the room where we lie sleeping. Even the light on closed eyelids finds a way to penetrate the darkness. My eyes open – and I am reminded, "Light is come into the world." God is with us.

A few simple, child-like words come to my mind and I speak the first waking words to Him who knows the thoughts and intents of my heart – and I am reminded – God is with us.

The table is spread with simple nourishing morning food and, though the appetite may not be too great, the simple sight and smell of that good food reminds me, "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above," – God is with us.

Though all the activities of a busy day, with pressure, deadlines, dangers seen and unseen, spoken words to the Father though they may be brief, reminds me – God is with us.

In the reading of the scriptures at the table, in personal study or devotion, God speaks and guides and reminds me – God is with us.

On my knees in quiet fellowship whether praise, worship, supplication and even in confession, I am reminded – God is with us.

Whether "Good morning Father," "Thank You Father," "Help and guide me Father," or "Goodnight Father," I am blessed and reminded – God is with us.

"I am so thankful Father, that beginning this New Year seems to be full of hope. I wonder if this is the year the Lord Jesus will come for us. I am so anxious to see Him. Please keep me with an eye on the sky every day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 2.

HOMAGE SHOWN TO THE KING, 2:1-12.

v.1-2. Probably one or two years after Christ's birth.

- "Into the house" [v.11]; "two years" [v.16].
- Herod: descendant of Esau (Edomite) a traditional enemy of Jews.
- Wise men.
- His star in the east.
- Worship.

v.3. Heard; troubled; all Jerusalem upset rather than rejoicing.

v.4-6. Where Christ (Messiah) should be born.

- Chief priests: the high priest and his family.
- Scribes: experts in the law of Moses.
- Bethlehem of Judea [Mic.5:2]; fulfilled prophecy.

v.7-8. What time the star appeared: deliberate intention to kill the Child.

- Search: to find Christ is not an accident.
- Sent word: words can be used for good or bad.

v.9. Star they saw in the east.

- The star reappeared and guided them: God guides His own.

- Young child: not the Babe in the manger.
- v.10. Exceeding great joy: what causes joy to those who are wise.
- v.11. Young child... His mother. Whenever these are mentioned the child is mentioned first (v.13, 14, 20, 21).
 - "Fell down": there are a number of times when this act is mentioned.
 - Worshipped Him:
 - Gifts: gold – deity, glory, perfections of His divine Person.
Frankincense – perfections of His sinless life.
Myrrh – the sufferings He would endure.
- v.12. Warned of God: how God warns. No one who meets Christ with a sincere heart is ever the same again.

HATRED AGAINST THE KING, 2:13-18.

Satan tried to keep Christ from getting to the cross beginning with His birth.

v.13-14. An angel of the Lord: The journey to Egypt is a prophecy fulfilled.

v.15. Hosea 11:1.

v.16. Jesus is King by divine appointment.

v.17-18. Prophecy [Jer.31:15] Rachel represents the nation of Israel.

HUMILITY OF THE KING, 2:19-23.

The ancestry and the birth of the King is in chapters 1 and 2. In chapter 3, John, the "forerunner" introduces the Christ.

Four Prophecies in Matthew 2

1. Micah 5:2. Bethlehem: Micah's prophecy centers around authority. He spoke against the false rulers of his time and saw the revelation of the coming of the true King. He was the prophet of law and authority and announced Christ's coming. HOMAGE is given to the Ruler (Governor) as to kings. HATRED is shown against Him by Herod. Today, as then, some bring their gifts and others, in blindness and stupidity, move to destroy Him.
2. Hosea 11:1. Egypt: Hosea's message was concerning the failure and spiritual harlotry of Israel. It was the worst time of spiritual condition in Israel's history. The first part of Hosea dealt with moral pollution and its cause. The second part of Hosea deals with pollution and its punishment. The third is a love song of the Lord in the light of God's past love; the present condition of His people and His present love and the love of God yet to come. Now at last, the Hope of Israel is announced in the Person of this Child. EXILE – the Child went to Egypt. EXODUS – the Child-King bringing many out of the world.
3. Jeremiah 31:15. Ramah: Jeremiah pronounces the doom of a dying nation with bitter tears. Jeremiah 30 – 33 is the heart of the book full of consolation, comfort and joy. Micah – the King has come; Hosea – the Exodus has come; Jeremiah – Rachel will cease weeping some day. SORROW and SONG.
4. Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 33:15. Nazareth: A Branch would come out of the roots of the tree that had been cut off. Nazareth means "a sprout" or "a branch." The green tree was cut down. Now a Branch grows up from that stump. MEANNESS and MAJESTY.

MATTHEW 2

WHEN JESUS WAS BORN

To have lived at that time under Roman rule was a very offensive thing to the Jews. There were at least three, maybe four, districts under the leadership of local leaders, who were under the leadership of Herod, who in turn was under the authority of Rome. This national servitude had the Jews discontented and wanting Messiah to come and break the bondage. Into this nation, and at this time, the Lord Jesus Christ was born. "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son..." In a similar way, today we find the powers of darkness and the anti-Christian movement is expanding all over the world. Atheism is taught as a doctrine to probably one third of the students of the world as the answer to the fundamental questions of life. So now existentialism and the "Up with man" mindset has spread rapidly. There are many, if not most, that teach our children that in the public schools in this country. The teaching of evolution and the mindset that is linked with that, begins early in the school years.

Into that national setting Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Of great interest to me was the fact that in a distant country or countries, God provided a witness to this event. Those who saw that witness in the sky knew what it meant. As the wise men who had studied the scriptures gathered together to journey to seek the Lord Jesus, God arranged that the star would move before them as a personal guide. The scriptures would tell them who they were seeking. The search would be rewarded when they sought Him with all their heart. And

the sight of the Savior would be the reward of their faith. The same principles hold true now. For those who seek the Lord will find him - "When you seek for me with all your heart." God is not wanting to be at a distance from people so He has sent the Holy Spirit and the scriptures to guide us to His Son and to give us life through His name. The Father is still seeking those who will "Worship Him in spirit and in truth." We still worship today the One who was "Found in fashion as a man."

The gifts those men of wisdom brought were significant, not only because of their worth, but also because of their meaning. The gold they brought would remind us of the worth of the Savior who was born in Bethlehem. He was and always will be the Eternal Son of the Eternal God. There was nothing that was diminished about Him when He took upon Himself human flesh. Finally, from among the sons of men, there came a perfect man who could not, nor did not sin because there was no sin in His nature. So, the gold gave testimony to His worth. The sweet smell of frankincense that was opened there before the Lord Jesus, would have filled the room with its fragrance. Perhaps more than one would have wondered at the meaning of that gift. The fragrance of the walk of the Lord Jesus accompanied Him from His birth to His ascension back to heaven. He was here among sinful men - but He was "full of grace and truth." The beautiful scent of His worth, His walk and His words still are appreciated today by those who seek Him and find Him. We remember Him when we review the acts of His mercy and kindness He showed to mankind. The gracious words that came from His lips and the gracious works that He did, all testify to the fragrance of His life.

When the gift of myrrh was opened it would have been plain to those who saw it that the painstaking effort to get that salve from the trees would have great value. The painful rejection of His own nation and people; the fact that people accepted His blessing but rejected His teaching; the bitterness of the suffering for sin He would have to endure; and the myrrh that would be put on His body after He died was all indicative of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not." What a bitter taste it is when people are presented with the blessings of God's grace, and they reject it for the sin-polluted efforts of their own to try to make themselves accepted by God.

God didn't leave Joseph without the responsibility of fatherhood, even though he was not the physical father of the virgin-born, Jesus. This just man was one to whom God could speak in dreams and who paid attention to what God said. God gave him the assurance and guidance when it involved Mary, through a dream. Again, God spoke in a dream and he obeyed the warning to flee into Egypt. Later he was instructed by God in a dream to return to Israel. When he got there, he was warned again in a dream to go to Nazareth. God has ways of speaking to us and He has reasons to warn us as well. Warnings from God always need to be attended to. He knows the end from the beginning of every event. We do not. So, in whatever ways God gives us warnings, we are wise when we pay heed to Him.

As the years passed, the waiting time may have been difficult whether in Egypt or any place we may have to wait until a present danger is past. It seems to me that when we have to wait, we are wasting time. But the waiting times of our lives may well be more important than the working time. The working times may seem important because we are involved and can think we have some credit in the results. When we have to wait, then in faith, we are trusting God alone to do what needs to be done. If He can trust us to be involved in what He is doing, that is a great privilege as well as a responsibility. When Jesus was born there were those who waited - Simeon, Anna and others in Jerusalem. When the Lord was finally here, they had great joy. Now we are waiting again for Him to come. We talk about it, sing about His coming and seek to fill the time of waiting with useful work for God's glory. At the same time, we warn people of the consequences of sin, of rejecting the Savior, and of not seeking the Savior while there is the opportunity of being saved by God's grace.

We don't know just what time it will be when Jesus will come again.
Nor is it really any business of ours when God wants the day of grace to end.
But it really is important that we be watching and ready for it may happen today.
That keeps us active with a purpose in life, rather than frittering our life away.

When Jesus was born there was a number of people expecting Him to come.
Others had a vague general opinion that God still was not done
With the nation nor His people wherever they were found -
And so, when the star was seen in the sky. they looked for hallowed ground.

Those that seek the Lord will find God is seeking them.
He knows who is looking for the Lord Jesus today, the same as He did back then.
God has His own ways of drawing honest seekers that to us are not known.
Those who seek Him with their heart, will make the Savior their own.

Surely there must be some people even now who are searching the scriptures to find

If there are some answers of peace for them, if there can be relief of mind
To settle the longing they have within, to know they are right with God.
Those are the ones we are sent to seek out and point to the Savior through His Word.

I am thankful for every time we get answers to our prayers.
And we find out that to some others, we are God's answers to theirs.
Simeon, Anna and those other people who were people of great faith -
Would have found great joy as God answered and they saw the Savior's face.

There may be things we can bring that to God are of great worth.
The gold, frankincense and myrrh when given at Jesus birth -
Were evidence of something that was of far greater and lasting value.
Love for God and faith in Him were why those wise men traveled.

Out of love for the One we wait for, we will watch and we will wait,
Until the Lord Himself shall come and from this world will take
Those who know and love Him, to be with Him where it is.
That will be the greatest joy to us, for He is our joy and bliss.

"When Thou didst send Thy Son, Father, there didn't seem to be too many who were glad to see Him. Perhaps it is the same today here where I live. But I know this - I will be so glad to see Him, and to see Him honored among His own people - and ultimately by the whole world. I praise Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 2:2. *"Saying, 'Where is He that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.'"*

WHERE IS HE?

A simple question from some men with anxious hearts,
Stirred the people of a city to an awakening civic need.
They wanted to find Him who they hoped would start
To bring national freedom - they would follow His lead.
They wanted a king to restore the nation,
Hoping the bondage of Roman would be gone.
But a king over each soul, that's a different consideration -
They wanted what they wanted - not God's only begotten Son.

The wickedness of Herod was well-known to everyone.
The position of authority, he guarded with his life.
He demanded from the scribes where the child would be born,
So the question, "Where is He?" was to put Him to the knife.
To live his life his own way, was what Herod really wanted;
The question of another king, filled his heart with evil rage.
The death of many children left his darkened mind undaunted,
There are those that think like Herod, even in this age.

Among all the subterfuge and duplicity of this age,
There are some searching souls who want an answer to this question.
They have deep-seated longings the world can't assuage,
And are worried as they travel, regarding their final destination.
Most live for this day alone and let tomorrow bring what will,
Their instant pleasure being what matters most to them.
A few still seek the Savior and some meaning to fulfill
An empty life that up till now, condemns because of sin.

What they really want and need is forgiveness that God gives.
This is granted only to them who search for and find God's Son.
He is near to all that call upon Him, it is only "Look and Live."
They will find the Savior ready and salvation's work is done.
Now He is Lord and King of all who call upon His name;
And they are citizens of heaven in the kingdom of "new-born,"
Accepted now and worshipers with the ancient kings who came;
They have found the One they searched sitting on heaven's throne.

"Heavenly Father, my rhymes are way off today but my thoughts are centered on Him the wise men sought. I am thankful that He has been found of me and I am found of Him. I know it is true that 'A seeking Savior and a seeking sinner always meet.' In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 2:6. *“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”*

PROPHETIC RIGHT.

A dignified unfolding of Christ's right to be King begins in chapter 1 with His genealogy from the ancient past, establishing His pedigree. Everything is in order as generation after generation passes until *“In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son; made of a woman; made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons.”* History establishes His claims. Angels from heaven are witnesses to His claims as King.

Now comes the witness of the scriptures. The scriptures of truth had prophesied His name. The scriptures had predicted the miracle of His being born of a virgin. Even His name “Jesus” means “Jehovah, the Savior” or “the salvation of Jehovah.” Then comes other prophecies relating to the place of His birth. The Person who was born was prophetically established; now the Place where He was born is prophetically established as a witness to the claim that Jesus is the King.

How much more needs to be said, because the witness of two prophets has been given. There is more. Another prophet wrote in the dark past and declared, *“Out of Egypt have I called my Son.”* How could this be if He is born in Bethlehem? Matthew gives the rest of the story as to how this seemingly insignificant scripture lines up with other prophecies to establish His kingly position.

But there is even more: “He shall be called a Nazarene” is indicated by a number of prophets. Although the exact phrase is not in the prophetic writings; the fact of being “branch, twig, or sprout” is referred to by a number of different prophets. The word is used derogatorily as of one who is despised. Apparently, that is the way people looked at the city of Nazareth. The scriptures: not only in one place, but by different approaches, identifies Jesus as the One who has the prophetic right to be the King of the Jews.

We approach such proofs with wonder and worship that such a Person has been so clearly defined in the Word of God, hundreds of years before His coming. How great is our God!

“O God of the ages: in wonder I acknowledge the truth of fulfilled prophecy in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to Bethlehem. It is a special point of praise, that if His coming was so precise, His coming again must be planned carefully but not revealed to us, because then, “He will come to the air;” and later “every eye shall see Him.” I am at rest in my spirit knowing the plans are already made and things are going according to Thy plan. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Matthew 2:10. *“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”*

EXCEEDING GREAT JOY.

I review, and meditate on the past – remembering the ways of God with me – even before I was saved, and know I am alive and well because of God's grace – and I have exceeding great joy!

The Gospel lived before me by the saints of God, and the Gospel preached to me in small classes by faithful teachers; clearly spoken by those I know from week to week – does its quiet work in my soul. Then the passionate voices of those who are committed to the spread of the Gospel sounds and everything together leads me to faith in Christ – and I have exceeding great joy!

The gracious Holy Spirit guides and leads and lightens my life's way before me. Paths unexpected open and I follow Him to places and people I would have never thought about. He opens my mouth to speak God's Word and souls are saved by God's amazing grace. I have exceeding great joy!

A New Year's Day years ago – I meet her for the first time and one year later she becomes my wife. Surely our heavenly Father has brought us together. And by His gracious design He has given us two wonderful daughters and their families. We meet together and read, sing and pray together – and I have exceeding great joy!

I look out, and up, in the morning and wonder – “Is this the day my Lord will come?” It lifts my spirit to think that in the middle of some project or prayer, the next face I see will be that of the Lord Jesus Christ, with a welcoming look as the saints who wait with me, meet with those gone on before and gather to Him – with exceeding great joy!

“Father, when those wise men You guided to the Lord Jesus, saw Him for the first time, they had exceeding great joy. They were men of faith even as we who wait to see Him are. For every foretaste of glory and every blessing I have received, I give thanks - and wait to see His face with exceeding great joy. Amen.”

Matthew 3.

Three times in chapter 3 we read those who “came.”

JOHN THE BAPTIST CAME, 3:1-6.

- His message, v.1-2. Repent and prepare for the King: Jesus’ message [4:17]; the disciples’ message [10:7]; Israel rejected the message.
 - His authority, v.3. The last of the OT prophets [Lu.16:16].
 - His person, v.4. Humble in manner and dress. In the spirit and power of Elijah [Lu.1:17].
 - His baptism, v.5-6. Baptism unto repentance [v.11] was from heaven to 1] Introduce Christ to the nation. 2] Prepare their hearts for the King.
- v.1. “In those days”. 30 years elapsed since His birth.
- v.1-4. The King presented to us...
- v.3. The OT prophecies of Isaiah are linked with John. Isaiah’s prophecies of warning and judgment also include the promise of hope.
- v.4. The man as he appeared to his day and generation. Born to and for the priesthood, John turned his back on the priesthood for the calling of a prophet. He spoke with authority to his generation.
- v.2. The keynote of his ministry: “Repent.” Things are wrong here but the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The ideals Israel has wanted are here and you are not ready.
- v.5. His ministry was 1] attractive – “they went out to him.” 2] convictive – “they were baptized.” 3] invective – “who hath warned you?”
- v.6. Confessing their sin – the people from the area around.

THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCCEES CAME, 3:7-12.

- Their character, v.7-8. Legalists who turned the law into burdens.
 - “Generation of vipers” [12:34; 23:33]. Satan is a serpent – the children of Satan [Jn.8:44] are enemies of Christ.
 - Their need, v.9-12. Depended on their relationship to Abraham to save them [Rom.9:6; Gal.3:7]. Stumbled at the new birth. John magnifies Jesus alone.
- v.7. Generation of vipers. Identifying their character.
- v.8. Fruits meet for repentance. Identifying their sincerity.
- v.9. Children of Abraham from stones: do not trust in being a Jew to make you accepted by God. Identifying their reality.
- v.10. Axe at the root: The King is supreme in His Person. He is supreme in His work. Beginning again at the foundation.
- v.11. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire: external baptism was John’s baptism. The Lord Jesus’ work is superior to John’s because it is eternal.
- v.12. Wheat and chaff.

JESUS CAME, 3:13-17.

- Jesus and John [v.13-15]. Why was Jesus baptized.
 1. Obligation: to fulfill all righteousness [Jn.8:29].
 2. Consecration: the OT priest was washed, then anointed. The Lord was baptized and the Holy Spirit came upon Him.
 3. Commendation: Jesus gave His approval of John’s ministry so common people had to listen to John and obey him. The religious leaders rejected John’s baptism [21:23-27].
 4. Proclamation: this was Jesus’ official introduction to the nation of Israel [Jn.1:31].
 5. Anticipation: this looked forward to His baptism of suffering [Lu.12:50] when He would fulfill all righteousness.
 6. Identification: He identified with sinful man. He carried the sins of the nation.
 - Jesus and the Spirit [v.16]. The sign God had promised to give John to identify Christ [Jn.1:31-34]. The dove is a clean bird; it is faithful to its mate; it is peaceful and gentle. Christ was born through the power of the Spirit and was empowered by the Spirit for His gift and ministry.
 - Jesus and the Father [v.17]. This is the first of three occasions when the Father spoke to the Son from heaven [Mat.17:5; Jn.12:28].
- v.13. “Then” the Lord comes out of the years of obscurity in Nazareth to begin His work.

John: the man according to prophecy [Isa.40:3]

THE MESSENGER: the first 35 chapters of Isaiah's prophecy is dealing with the judgment of Israel because of failure, and the judgment of the nations around. In the second division from chapter 36 -39, Isaiah describes the condition of his on times and explains the judgment he must declare. The third division beginning with chapter 40, points out that judgment is not the final word. Looking through the years, Isaiah begins to describe the blessings that are coming – "the highway of God."

MATTHEW 3

THEN CAME JESUS

I saw in my journey through the scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ stepping into public view after years of obscurity. "The Way, the Truth and the Life" is there presented for the nation to see and from that beginning - the whole world. The nation of Israel had been waiting for a prophet to come and open the way for the promised Messiah. John the Baptist fit the mold. He was like they had envisioned Elijah. He was bold, he was different even in his clothing and food. His lifestyle suited their picture of a prophet, and he practiced what he preached. His preaching was plain, easily understood and challenging. The man God chose as the forerunner to prepare the way of the Lord, moved many in the nation. Even by being at the Jordan River where God had renewed His covenant with Israel before they entered the promised land many generations before, prompted the people to make the journey to the river to hear again the terms of the covenant.

Repentance is not a complicated matter, but it is a matter of the will. Salvation is not a birthright even for an Israeli. There must be a moral and spiritual preparation. Involved in repentance there is a complete halt and 180 degree turn after admitting, "I am wrong." Wrong actions in a self-centered life of deceit, hypocrisy, gossiping, abuse, taking revenge and immoral living - are admitted to as sin and deliberately turned away from. When a person admits they are a sinner and turns from sin to God, God is there to receive that person. Only God can get rid of sin. We have to come to Him before the problem of sin can be dealt with. Many in Israel were moved to come and hear John the Baptist out of curiosity and some came in repentance. John told them there must be evidence to see if the behavior backs up what we confess. The fruitless tree (or person) is about to be cut down if there is no real fruit. The fan will separate wheat from chaff. There is no right or reason to go through religious forms without inward reality.

Baptism follows repentance and the proofs of repentance are a changed life and a fruitful person who follows the way of the kingdom of heaven. When a person enters that kingdom, it includes the kingdom of God now, "the kingdom of God is among you," but also indicates submission to the Messiah (Christ) as King and Judge on earth as well as in heaven. That is when God's will for this whole world, will be done. The changes in those who were baptized then, as well as now, were outward signs of an inward change that was real. It is not a rite that changes people. Rather, it is a testimony that a change has been made. Whether it was the baptism of repentance for Israel, or believers' baptism of today, it testifies to a 180 degree change inwardly that is lived out daily all through our life as those that are in "The Way."

"Then came Jesus." He was really here in this same world I live in. As I read this, I was moved to wonder at the silence of most of thirty years. And then the Lord Jesus Christ walked boldly into public view and in a most public way, to identify Himself with the nation of Israel. Jesus was baptized - not for repentance, for He was absolutely sinless. His baptism was uniquely His own. His was "to all righteousness," a requirement for proof of His Messiah-ship. His baptism was also to announce the arrival of Jesus as the Messiah, and the start of His public ministry. In His baptism He identified Himself with Israel as an Israeli, and it also gave us an example of His obedience to God.

The Pharisees, the religious legalists, were watching this. The Sadducees too, were watching. They were the political people. Others from Judea and Jerusalem, and all the region around Jordan were there when the Father spoke from heaven identifying the Lord Jesus as His Son - "This is my Beloved Son..." The Father also identified Him as the Servant of God - "I am well pleased." The Father gave His support - "pleased." As the Son of God came up from the water, the observers not only heard God's voice, they also saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and sitting upon Him. This public evidence was a significant start to His public ministry. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit all joined publicly to let us know that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." From the bank of the Jordan River and all through the years of His ministry, Jesus could truly say, "I do always those things that please the Father."

The way is now opened to God. The instructions are clear. "Repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" is the way that was made when "then came Jesus." John did his homework well. He was a great prophet who did exactly what God wanted him to do. The message was given and was heard by the nation. Now they had to act on what they heard the prophet say. The lesson is clear. We have no choice but to respond in one way or another to the call to repentance and the warning to "flee from the wrath to come." The decision today is the same as it was to those who saw Jesus step publicly and physically on to the

pages of history. Who is Jesus? Is He God? Where is He? What do the facts say about Him? What will I do with Him? The destiny of each person is decided as we are called to respond to Him. "He came to His own and His own received Him not." They made their choice. I have to make mine and live - and die - with that decision.

The beginning of an era sets a course to follow.
The call to repentance is not words that are hollow.
When a prophet gives warnings, it is important to listen;
The words a true prophet gives is the message God gives him.

When people stop to listen, they are faced with a choice.
Do they pay attention and heed, or ignore the voice;
That tells of the way God intends for us to respond -
And act in faith before the opportunity is gone?

Repentance is not something trivial - not a casual act,
But the outworking of an inward work is a visible fact.
What once was done has been totally rejected.
And we respond to the striving Spirit who once we neglected.

The man who speaks for God may be of a different mold.
He is a man under authority whose speaking may be bold.
But he is convicted of the reality of what he proclaims,
And His authority to speak comes from Jesus' name.

When we speak of the Trinity often people will say,
"How can there be One God and yet only one of them is the Way?"
To them it doesn't make sense that three Persons can be One.
Many believe in the Father, but reject the Spirit and the Son.

There are a lot of things I believe that I cannot define.
But of this I know, it is indelibly imprinted on my mind
It was the Father who sent the Son to die in my place.
And the Spirit of God enables me to believe this wonderful work of God's grace.

By faith I trust what I read in God's Holy Word.
God is my Father, and Jesus Christ is my Lord.
The Holy Spirit since I believed on Christ, now dwells within.
And the Trinity all together gives me power over sin.

"Father God, I do thank thee for revealing the truth of the Godhead to me through Thy Word. I thank Thee for hearing my prayers. I thank the Son for saving me. I thank the Holy Spirit for making it possible for me to live for God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 3:17. *"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in who I am well pleased.'"*

I AM WELL PLEASED.

He was willing to come as an obedient son would respond to his father's desire. He could honestly say, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.'" No one else among the children of men ever did such a thing. I can understand why God was well pleased.

A young boy goes with His parents to Jerusalem. While there He makes a connection in some unknown way, with doctors of philosophy and teachers. The divine wisdom in the boy can be easily discerned by the ancients that heard Him and asked Him questions. When confronted as to why He did this, He said, "Know ye not that I must about My Father's business?" No wonder the Father was well pleased.

At home in the working-class town of Nazareth, He plies His trade as a carpenter. It was clear to be seen that what He did was well done and His reputation was held in high regard. "He increased in favor with God and with man." Surely the Father was well pleased.

To see Him moving from obscurity into the public eye, and walking with steady step toward John in the river; and to see the Lamb of God's choosing stepping into the water and identifying Himself for all to see – this obedient Son was without a doubt, the One in whom God was well pleased.

“What great joy it must still be to Thee Father, to see Him in His glory and with the marks of His obedience on His hands and feet - a true and perfect sacrificial Lamb. I am rejoicing in Him today whose blood was shed for me. I praise Thee for Thy Son, Amen.”

Matthew 3:17. *“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*

DIVINE RIGHT.

A MAN SENT FROM GOD

The plans had been laid before the foundation of the world. The place had been identified where He should be born. The event had come to pass and Messiah was here. The time was near for Him to step onto the public scene. But before that, the way has to be prepared – and John was God’s man. He was the man who was named before he was born. He was the man whose birth defied common sense. He was the man, who when he was an unborn child, recognized the Lord Jesus for who He was. He was sent from God.

When John came preaching: his message was *truth for the mind*. It was a proclamation that the time had come; it was at hand, that God has opened another page of divine dealings with man. His message was *conviction for the will*. Repent, for the kingdom is at hand. A change must take place in every person for God knows the heart of every one. His message was *compassion for the heart*. Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Get ready for God to step into the scene of human events.

John’s message condemned sin; contained promises and changed lives. God’s great prophet established the divine right of the One to be revealed as the Messiah- King. His prophet opened that door to the nation of Israel to receive Him.

THEN COMETH JESUS

He who was the Object of Abraham’s faith; the Lion of the tribe of Juda; the Royal Seed of David – steps out into public view. And the voice of the prophet cries, “Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He steps into the waters of Jordan and is identified as one of Israel’s sons. He comes to His own to lead them into a kingdom so unique that they missed it and denied the divine right that was His.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Creation with its sheltering mantle opens up – God is going to testify. Right from the highest heaven comes evidence – God is going to reveal. A dove encompassing the Spirit of God makes the invisible real – God is here. The voice above all voices is heard and divine right is established from the Highest possible Source – God speaks. He truly is the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Savior-King is here.

“To see walking among men, a Perfect Man, must have been a great satisfaction to Thee, O God. Finally, One who could please Thee and fulfill all the requirements of righteousness was on earth. Not one who was an imposter, like so many others have been, but a real Man among men. I praise Thee for bringing such a One near to us who needed Him. Amen.”

Matthew 4.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE KING, 4:1-11.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS. 4:1-11.

The first temptation, v.3-4. God’s ideal of physical humanity.

- Satan suggests that God should not let Him be hungry. Jesus’ answer – De.8:1-6; Ps.119:11.
- Satan makes an organized and systematic attack upon the Man in all areas of His life.
- Satan makes an appeal to the physical nature – bread.
- He was a real man, yet even though He was Superior, He was hungry.
- Man’s humanity physically is temporary and yet man is the highest, finest and final act of God’s creation.

The second temptation, v.5-7. God’s ideal of spiritual humanity.

- Satan dares Jesus to prove one of God’s promises and misquotes Ps.91:11-12. Jesus’ answer – De.6:16.
- Satan twists scripture. Sometimes carnal Christians do the same. We must keep scripture in its context and meet the conditions laid down.
- Deliberate disobedience is an invitation for chastening.
- Satan makes an appeal to the spiritual nature – trust in God.
- The spiritual man is conscious of God.
- The spiritual man seeks to know the will of God.

- The spiritual man is submissive to spiritual order.
- The spiritual man yields to God's law.
- Spirituality is supreme and abiding over the physical.

The third temptation, v.8-10. God's ideal for a servant.

- Satan is the prince of this world [Jn.14:30] and is permitted to have a certain amount of control.
- The kingdoms of this world are promised to Christ [Ps.2:6-9] but He had to die on the cross to gain this kingdom. Satan was trying to tempt Him away from the cross. Jesus' answer – De.6:13.
- Satan makes an appeal to the secular nature (vocational) – kingdoms of the world.
- God's Servant was born to serve.
- Service follows our worship.
- Temptation attacks the service (vocational) part of His life.
- An imperfect being cannot demand our loyalty. He could not bow down to the devil nor can we.
- We cannot bow down to anything other than perfection.
- If we worship God, we live for Him and obey Him. We worship who we serve.

THE PERFECT ONE DEMONSTRATED HIS PERFECTION THROUGH TESTING.

- There was nothing in Him that would respond to evil.
- Even when standing in His virtue there was the infirmity of hunger.
- Infirmity is not sin. Hunger is a sign of weakened strength and the need of sustenance.
- Hunger is not wrong; bread is not improper, but He would not act independently of the Father's will (His Word).
- He didn't do anything spectacular when tempted.
- He had a passion to complete His service.

THE PERFECT ONE WAS VICTORIOUS.

- He always answered the temptation as a Man, not as Deity.
- His victory was as a Man with God.
- His victory was as a Man for man.

The King is undefeated in His personal life, His character and His service.

The Types:

The last Adam:

The first Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden; the last Adam (Christ) in a lonely wilderness.

The first Adam was tempted when he was at his best; the last Adam (Christ) when He was hungry.

The first Adam was the king of the old creation; the last Adam (Christ) is the King of a New creation [2Cor.5:17].

The first Adam sinned and lost dominion [Heb.2:6-9]; the last Adam (Christ) obeyed and regained what was lost [Rom.5:12-21].

The first Adam was defeated and brought death; the last Adam (Christ) was victorious and brought life.

The Son of David:

David and Christ were both from Bethlehem.

David and Christ were both chosen and anointed by God.

David and Christ were both exiles and persecuted before being crowned.

David and Israel dealt with Goliath for 40 days. Christ dealt with Satan for 40 days.

David used 1 stone out of 5. Christ used 1 book (Deuteronomy) out of 5 (Pentateuch).

David defeated the strong man Goliath. Christ defeated the strong Satan [Mat.12:22-30].

The Angels:

1. Announced Jesus' birth.
2. Reassured Joseph.
3. Made Jesus' name known.
4. Announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds.
5. Protected Jesus by sending His family to Egypt.
6. Ministered to Him after His temptation.
7. Ministered to Him in Gethsemane.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KING, 4:12-25.

There is a one-year gap between verse 11 and verse 12. Some of the events during this time are recorded in John's Gospel...

- Jesus was in the area where He was baptized for at least three days following.
- The first group of disciples is identified.
- The miracle in Cana of Galilee took place.
- The first cleansing of the temple took place as an official presentation of the King.
- The meeting with Nicodemus took place.
- John continued baptizing and Jesus (through His disciples) baptized also.
- John's arrest introduced His official ministry as King.

SIGNIFICANT MOVE, v.12-17.

- Capernaum had often been overrun by Assyrians and was considered on the fringe of things and not a good place to live (the shadow of death).
- The Lord moves to be with the despised and helpless people in the region of death and darkness that the scripture would be fulfilled.
- The light of love and truth came into that dark place.
- Darkness was in the hearts.

SELECTED MEN, v.18-22.

- He called four men to service and work.
- His call came with simplicity. It was not hard to understand.
- He used them in the capacity they had developed before He called them ("fishers").
- These called men answered "straightway".
- The honorable thing to do when called by the Lord is to obey the Lord.
- Stay doing what you are doing (nets) until the Lord calls.

SPECIAL MINISTRY, v.23-25.

- He went everywhere teaching, preaching and healing.
 1. Teaching: His concern for their understanding.
 2. Preaching: His concern for their commitment.
 3. Healing: His concern for their wholeness.
- His fame went throughout Syria.
- They brought unto Him – people with problems.
- He healed them.
- There followed Him great multitudes.

MATTHEW 4

IT IS WRITTEN

As I watched the journey of Jesus. He walked away from all others taking a solitary journey into the wilderness. He was a man led by God the Holy Spirit. I was amazed to see two equal Persons of the Godhead, divine Persons, one leading the other and the Lord submissive to the control of the Spirit. Each One was totally divine and yet willing to submit to the other. I learned that when one knows their place in the plans of God, we are to submit one to another with respect and integrity. Submission to another person doesn't mean that person is of lesser value or importance. It has to do with the roles we are called to fill. The submission of a wife to her husband does not mean she is less worth as a person. It means she knows she has a different role in the family unit to fill. Submission in the legal system doesn't mean the judge is a more important person than the law enforcement officer. They have different roles to fill. In assembly life the overseers are not more important than those they lead. They each have varying gifts given by God to fulfill the work God intends for them.

As I observed the Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness, I noted with questioning concern that He fasted for well over a month there in that isolated and solitary place. The hunger that followed I easily understood. The fasting from food would be the cause of that. But I wondered at the purpose of the fast. He always did those things that pleased the Father so this was the Father's will for Him. Divine Persons are not isolated or separated from each other for God is One. I concluded that He who "was in all points tempted like as we are," had to experience human hunger that He might bless those who hunger.

The fellowship that is enhanced between a believer and his or her heavenly Father by the process of fasting is what He had to experience. There are times when I have to fast from sleep, my own affairs, from being with other people and from food in order to experience close fellowship with God. In the physical realm of life there are times when one must fast in order to have medical procedure done or have some test made, needed to find out problems in the body that must be done to bring recovery to health. Other times people fast from certain foods and other activities to complete a task one has chosen or has been given him by another. In a similar way the proper functioning of the soul and spirit will mean that things will not be indulged in so the will of God can be worked out in one's life. To fast from food for that purpose may be

necessary. To fast from an intended purpose may be another. To fast from human contact may also be necessary.

In the account of the Lord's fasting time, I noticed that the devil had been watching and came with his temptation to seek to bring down the Lord from the perfect holiness of His divine nature to the place of a mortal man. He appealed first to the lust of the flesh. The Lord identified Himself with mankind when He quoted the scripture, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He did not succumb to the physical needs of the human body to respond to the devil's test. In every test the devil gave the Lord Jesus, His response was that of an appropriate word from the scripture. As I considered this test of the quality of the nature of the Lord, I was impressed by the power and authority of the word of God. The devil's appeal to His humanity was silenced in each case by applying the scripture to the situation. The word of God must be hidden in my heart "that I might not sin against Thee." Without any question, I learned that the Holy Spirit can give me the power and authority to resist the devil and not sin, when His word is in me. May I never allow the fasting time when I learn of God, to be lost to me. I also noticed that what was needed by the holy Man, Christ Jesus was supplied from the heavenly storehouse, not from an earthly source. I am more than ever convinced that what I need is a simple and practical word from God through the Bible to respond to each that arises in my life.

It was of interest to notice the journey of Jesus that He moved from Judea and the Jordan Valley to the north. The city of Nazareth was the only place He had to live in order for the scriptures to be fulfilled. The fulfillment of the ancient prophecies is very precise so there can never be a question as to the divine wisdom and purpose behind them. Biblical prophecies are never just circumstantial. They are not just a coincidence. There is a preciseness that cannot be denied as one after another is fulfilled. The light was shining in the darkness and there was no way to ignore it as the Lord Jesus began to call people to repentance. He said, "I came not to call the righteousness but sinners to repentance." I took note of the fact that Jesus moved out among the people who lived and worked there. He did not isolate Himself from them. He was there where they were fishing and was able to speak to them in words that were relevant to them. It is important to be able to connect with people and meet them where they are and speak in ways they can understand.

I need to always be conscious of where I am and to whom I am speaking. The ways people respond to what I might say is up to them and to God. My part is to be understood and relevant to them and the situation in life in which they are found.

The Lord Jesus did not confine Himself to one place but moved about the whole area. He knew what was needed in each place. Sometimes He would teach the scriptures. Other times He was heralding out the Good News and in other times He was meeting the physical needs of the people. That principle of laboring still holds true. There are some who need to understand what the Word of God says so they can grasp its meaning to them. They are convinced by the word as their faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Other people will stop to listen to a herald and seek to understand what is being sounded out. The ardor of the herald and the sensibleness of his message of warning and guidance many cause them to act on what is being said. Repentance takes place and faith in Christ brings them into the light of salvation.

The interest generated by the Lord's teaching and preaching indicated that was a "time of visitation" in which God was working in a remarkable way. It was certainly true when One was on fire for God, people came from all over to see Him burn. They gathered from all parts of the nation to Galilee where the Lord was and divine intervention changed the course of life for many. That same kind of intervention I have seen on occasions but not for some time recently. Can the Lord trust me now with a move of divine grace in some area of His work? Can I in some way help this to come about or am I in some way hindering a time of visitation? Is there some place I should be and I haven't found my way there yet? Am I to teach? Am I to preach? The key to the whole movement of grace in Galilee was the Lord was there and He was the source of the blessing there. May such be the case where I am called for His name's sake.

No casual stroll into the wilderness led the Savior to that place.
The Spirit of God led Him there that the holiness of His Person we could trace.
Tempted? Yes! Yielding? No! There is no sin because temptation is there.
When the Word of God is used, there is authority beyond compare.

The power of the devil is confined to limits within his kingdom.
He cannot demand we follow his lead, nor can he take away salvation.
Greater is He who dwells in us, than he who is the god of this world.
We need to apply the word of truth before the tentacles of temptation around us are
curled.

For those who live in this world of sin, there is a light that we must shed
Upon those who dwell in the darkness and are in the shadow of the dead.
It may not seem like much to us but our light is what God needs
To show to searchers and wanderers the way in which He leads.

The Lord has the right to call to us and bid us Him to follow.
He leads where He wants us to go, and do the things He wants us to hallow.
When we follow Him through life, He gives us a reason and a goal.
The reason we are involved in presenting the Gospel is for salvation of other souls.

There are some things we can do and some things we cannot.
The power of the Spirit when used in a person is something that cannot be bought.
It may be in the place where I usually work or someplace far away.
Wherever God wants me to go is right, whether now or some other day.

In faith it is important that I possess my soul that I God's will may know.
The purpose of meeting needs of others is that I His grace can show.
When through this life I follow Christ whether in desert or city streets -
It is my desire to be ready to give biblical answers to the tests I will meet.

"Father, I pray of Thee today that I might be skilled enough in Thy Word, and simple and practical enough to be understood. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 4:10. *"Then saith Jesus unto him, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'"*

MORAL RIGHT.

It is easy to see; it is made right clear -
Satan had no authority over Him when He was here.
He tried to attract Jesus in His human flesh;
With flesh, world and himself, he tried his best -
But the Lord was sinless even as a man;
The temptations were useless though Satan planned
To bring Him down under his authority;
But though Jesus was a man, He was still deity.

He was and is God, of that there's no doubt.
Often careless men speak foolish words about
The Lord when He was here, that He could have sinned.
But if that was the case, He could sin again.
And if He could sin again, then we are in jeopardy
Of losing salvation, which could not be;
For He is God in His eternal being -
And came here as man, the captives freeing.

He has every right to claim worship from men.
He is supreme in Himself, and has always been
The God of Creation, the Great "I AM,"
And here to the world the God-Man came
To identify fully with sinners in their deepest need.
Morally, He has the right to expect we heed,
Without hesitation, each word and command;
He is God in His being, and in His flesh, He is a man.

All the witnesses are heard from, Christ is the King.
His genealogy from history, natural proofs bring.
The angels of heaven - messengers at His birth;
Brought testimony from heaven and declared it on the earth.
The star that guided the wise from the east,
Brought witness from creation, He is who He said.
The scriptures of truth in fulfillment of Him,
Add the prophetic endorsement - He's the Son of Man.

The Father in heaven, speaks pleasure in the Son.
John at His baptism, says, "This is the One,
Who God made the Bearer, of the sin of the world."
The Holy Spirit led to the wilderness the only One who could
Be perfect among the world of men.
So now we are able to be accepted if when,

We trust this Savior who salvation did bring -
He is Jesus the Lord, our Savior and King.

“What wonderful and glorious proofs there are Father, that Jesus is the One who could fulfill all righteousness and bring us to Thee. I praise Thee for this revelation, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

Chapters 5-7

Matthew 5.

THE FIRST OF FIVE DISCOURSES.

1. Mat.5. The Teacher imparting His character to His disciples.
2. Mat.10. The Master revealing principles of Christian service.
3. Mat.13. The King enlightening His subjects to the character of the dispensation.
4. Mat.18. The Head controlling the members in happy church relationship.
5. Mat.24. The Judge calling His creatures to account at the end of the age.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

The ten-fold message:

1. The Beatitudes, v.3-16: the subjects of the kingdom
2. Moral standards, v.17-48: what Christ said versus “It was said...”
3. Religious motives, 6:1-18: alms [v.1]; prayer [v.5]; fasting [v.16]
4. Mammon worship, v.19-24: “earthiness versus godliness”
5. Temporal cares, v.25-34: anxiety versus trust in God
6. Social discernment, 7:1-6: censuring [v.1]; indiscretion [v.6]
7. Encouragements, v.7-11: prayer makes it practical
8. Summary in a sentence, v.12: such a life fulfills the scripture
9. The alternatives, v.13-14: two ways – broad and narrow
10. Final warnings, v.15-27: false prophets [v.15]; false professions [v.21]; false foundations [v.26]

5:1-2

“Seeing the multitudes...”

- Without prejudice; without any idea of social caste
- Looking on people as sheep without a shepherd; without a moral leader and moral laws
- Knowing people needed a kingdom with a benevolent Leader who cared for them
- They came with all their diversity; with all their needs

“Went up into a mountain...”

- His teaching was for His disciples; to train them how to reach the multitudes in days to come
- His teaching would not be understood nor accepted by those who did not accept the King

“Taught them saying...”

- He taught those who were loyal to the King and His Kingdom
- He cannot teach those who will not obey the teaching and laws of the Kingdom
- People will not obey the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount until they are willing to obey the King
- Even the disciples were a long time understanding the teaching of the Kingdom.
- He taught character before conduct. All the “blessings” of the Kingdom are based on being not doing.

THE BEATITUDES: v.3-12

The word “blessed” is best translated here “happy,” as a state of peace, joy and rest. There are 4 passive characteristics and 3 active characteristics.

How is the heart changed? Back away from the beatitudes and view them in sequence...

PASSIVE

- 1st step: an admission of poverty. God’s gladness is not received by those who earn it; but by those who admit they don’t deserve it. “Poor” does not suggest happiness. This is a recognition of lack and that there is something that supplies that lack. The poor in spirit is happy because he has the kingdom. Poor in spirit means he is in subjection to the King. I must truly surrender my life to the King. You are blessed when you are at the end of your own rope because there is less of you and more of God and His rule. To develop this attitude - [James 4:7-10]
- 2nd step: sorrow. Joy comes to those who are sincerely sorry for their sin. We discover gladness when we leave the prison of pride and repent of our rebellion. We “mourn” over our own sin and failure. Then the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, comes and abides within us and comforts us in spite of

the failure. We are blessed when we feel we have lost what is important to us because the Spirit embraces us with His assurance. [Psalm 51; James 4:7-10]

- 3rd step: meekness. Those who are willing to be used by God. They are amazed that God would save them. They are just as surprised that God would use them. In the spirit of unconscious humility, we have partaken of the spirit of the King Himself who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart..." When we are content with being just who we are, then we possess what cannot be bought. [Matthew 11:27-30]
- 4th step: hunger and thirst for righteousness. This is the result of the first three steps. You admit sin – you get saved. You confess weakness – you receive strength. You confess wrong – you find forgiveness. We are discontented with everything that is not like God. This is a deep desire to see the kingdom of God among men filling and bringing satisfaction that comes with a good appetite for God. He is our food and drink providing the best for us. [John 16:5-11; Philippians 3:7-11]

ACTIVE

- 5th step: mercy. The more you receive, the more you give. You find it easier to give grace because you have been given much. Giving and serving; benefiting the suffering who are around us on every side is the best possible service we can give our fellow-man. We are blessed when we care. When we care for others, we find ourselves cared for. [Ephesians 5:1-2]
- 6th step: pure in heart. Deception is never acceptable to the pure in heart. There is wholeness, undivided affection in those who are totally loyal to the King. When the mind and heart is right, this is an inward condition that allows us to see God outwardly in the outside world. We see what God is doing when others cannot. [1John 3:1-3]
- 7th step: peacemakers. The peacemaker brings peace wherever he comes. He manifests the nature and likeness of the Father. This has a positive effect on others. This person can show other people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That is when we discover who we really are and our place in God's family. [Romans 12:9-21; Hebrews 12:10-11]
- 8th step: persecuted. When our commitment to God brings persecution; that drives us even deeper in our commitment to the kingdom of God. When you are lied about, discredited or put down; that means the truth is too close for comfort to those people. Be glad when it happens because the Lord is glad and heaven is glad. The prophets who spoke for God before experienced the same thing. [2Tim.3:12]

SALT AND LIGHT, v.13-16

Salt is needed where there is corruption; light is needed where there is darkness. Corruption must be stopped and light is needed to know what is right. Kingdom-living people have influence. We do not dispense salt, we are salt. What we say only has value if I am what I profess. Private and public life cannot be different if I am to be a good influence. The work of salt is on the "earth." Salt cannot change corruption into incorruption, but it prevents corruption from spreading. I can prevent things from being corrupted in the first place. It creates opportunity for good to work. We are the medium by which earth-bound men and women stop and repent. Salt preserves, that is influences; salt purifies, a little salt cannot purify a big mess; salt promotes thirst.

Light reveals what is right. The world (cosmos) needs kingdom-living people to give light to it. We are not illuminating the universe but the world in which we live, so the truth of God can be seen. Light by its nature is energy. It reflects on objects. It shines. There is generated light and reflected light. There are seven colors in the prism that indicates completeness.

SIX WAYS TO THINK LIKE CHRIST. Mat.5.

	EXAMPLE	IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO...	WE MUST...
1.	v.21-22. Murder. hatred.	Avoid killing	Avoid anger and
2.	v.23-26. Offerings & others.	Offer regular gifts.	Have a right relationship with God
3.	v.27-30. Adultery. be faithful.	Avoid adultery.	Keep our hearts from lusting, and
4.	v.31-32. Divorce.	Be legally married.	Live our marriage commitments.
5.	v.33-37. Oaths. commitments to God	Make an oath.	Avoid casual and irresponsible
6.	v.38-47. Revenge.	Seeking justice for ourselves.	Show mercy and love to others.

MATTHEW 5

DISCIPLES LEARNING THE CHARACTER OF THE TEACHER

My mind's journey with the Lord brought me to a mountain where He sat down to teach those who were following Him, but in particular, those who were genuine learners. They weren't there just out of curiosity. There were ten distinct parts to His teaching on that mountain. The "beatitudes" or "blessings" are more than just eight ways to be happy. These, are not just promises of ways to find pleasure and prosperity, but rather the means to experience hope and joy independent of the circumstances of life. In the kingdom of God, the attitudes of humility and sacrifice are very different from those of worldly kingdoms. The contents are real and identifiable. Instead of pride and independence, there is an intelligent mind-set of knowing one's self and the humility that comes with a right evaluation of myself.

Our emotions also are affected when we are in the kingdom because we do not insist on having personal happiness at any cost. To mourn over our own personal sins and those of our assembly, and of the nation, reminds us that when sin is forsaken or whatever the cause of the mourning and sorrow is - in the kingdom, God gives restoration and comfort. There is a real source of wisdom in meekness. This is a right understanding of God that produces a consistent humility before Him that never deteriorates into a casual relationship that no longer inspires awe. God in grace, accepts us and gives needed power and grace for living, but that power is always to be under control. People of meekness who know themselves and have the wisdom to discern what is needed around them, are those needed to lead and guide others in the kingdom principles here on earth and in the future.

Godliness is the result that accompanies the hunger and thirst for righteousness. This desire will be for personal righteousness and justice. A real desire for righteousness in others and in all of society is characteristic of the godliness that does not have too long to wait to bring the hope and deep inner joy that does not depend on circumstances. Demands for justice to be done should be tempered with mercy. A proper evaluation of an event or attitude can reveal much that was hidden to a person who is merciful. To withhold what was legally deserved may at times be what is needed for effective recovery to kingdom living. Laws are needed to establish standards. The point of laws is to bring appropriate behavior and recovery to those who are under those laws.

The center of our personality, what we call our "being," in the Bible is often referred to as the "heart." That really includes the mind, intellect and the will by which we make our decisions. That, and our emotions reflect our personality. The well-being and spiritual joy that is in one who is pure in heart, is greatly contrasted by those who do not know God nor come to know Him because they think deception is acceptable. The pure in heart will not only know God, but they will see Him. There is a sense in which that is possible by faith now. It will be one of the many blessings in the future when we will see Him as He is. Those who promote peace reflect the character of God. Their peace is not just for themselves, but they promote that in others. That is a Christ-like, godly characteristic of one who is in God's family.

Persecution gives believers opportunity to display features that are in those who are part of God's kingdom. To live righteously even when under attack may be offensive to some who have weak commitments to what is right and true. There is a price to pay for righteousness. In all of these attributes and attitudes the character of the Lord Jesus Christ is displayed and hopefully, imparted to His disciples both then and now. The spiritual flavor and preservation of those who make these reasons for well-being their own, will affect others who are living around us. It establishes the proof that there is a standard of righteous living that is essential to those who are followers and learners of the Lord Jesus Christ. The light displayed by those who conduct themselves in the kingdom in this manner is such that people can see the reality of true faith being lived out in their midst. When we are quiet but should speak; when we go along with what is going on around us; when we deny the light we have or let it go dim and hide it for business or personal reasons; when we ignore the needs of others who need to know the truth we know - we do a great disservice to others, ourselves and our Lord. When we follow these kingdom principles, we are able to glorify our Father who established them in the first place.

As I listened and paid heed to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, it was plain to see He in no way negated the law by anything He said. What He did do as He spoke, was give the full meaning of the law. He focused the attention of the people on the deep underlying foundation principles of the law. He pointed out the need for total commitment to those principles rather than mere outward acknowledgement and obedience to them. The original purpose of the law was, and still is as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. We are not bound by the ceremonial laws. The point of them was that people would worship and love a holy God. Today we still must worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The principles of the civil law were to guide the conduct of the Lord's people. The instructions contained in them are timeless and apply in every culture. The moral law reveals the nature of God and the spirit of that law goes way beyond keeping them externally (which no one does) but produces a righteousness that only comes by faith in Christ and His work. He fulfilled that completely and because we are in Him, His righteousness is imputed to us. The Pharisees were very

righteous people who were content with the outward evidences without the inward reality. The hearts and deeds are both needed to fulfill the intentions of the law. The quality of our goodness is more important than the quantity and superficial allegiance to the truth of God. The righteousness of those in God's kingdom comes from what God does in us, not what we do. It is God-centered, not self-centered, and there is a reverence for God in carrying out those principles rather than an attempt to get approval from people. Those fundamental principles were in place long before the law was written.

Therefore, we must avoid the anger and hatred that are behind murder. It is not just that we do not kill someone. In giving offerings and other gifts, a right relationship with God and other people is needed for that gift to even be acceptable. Avoiding adultery does not fulfill what is behind the law. We are to keep our hearts from being full of lust and commit ourselves to being faithful. In dealing with sin, we need to take whatever action is necessary to avoid the act that follows the temptation. Divorce was never to be intended when it came to forming marriage bonds. It was not to be an option for solving problems or getting out of a relationship that seemed to be dead. The marriage contract was never to be abused. Rather than looking for excuses to leave a marriage, effort must be made to find what is needed to resolve the relationship.

In the kingdom, the Lord intends that one's word should be enough assurance of what one says to be true, rather than making an oath. He expects us to always tell the truth. When that is what we do, we do not need to back up our words with an oath or vow. When insults are made against us, the expectation of the Lord is that we be prepared to take the injury or insults without demanding retaliation by legal or any other form of action. Personal revenge for a person's own satisfaction was to be substituted by doing good to those who wrong us. This is not a natural reaction but it does help a person of faith to reflect well the attitude of the Savior. By loving and praying for our enemies, we can overcome evil with good. To willingly give up one's rights in the face of injustice was, and still is, a radically opposite response to what most would expect. The moral standards we are to live by, rise way above and beyond the standards that are set by the law. There is a moral perfection that we aspire to in this life that is based on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. The holiness of life that follows is not a mere superficial outward form, but involves a desire to love like Christ and demonstrates His mercy to the world. Christ-like character and holy living take time to develop and mature. There is a wholeness and maturity that is seen in both attitude and behavior. When that is growing in us there is a demonstration of love for others that will have a tendency to make us like Christ. We rise above mediocrity in all areas of our lives and there is a move toward the maturity that God is working in us.

What is it that sets them apart;
These people that choose to live by faith?
What makes them seem like joy is natural -
Not just a smile that is pasted on a face?
There is something that is deeper than nature -
It is a change of the heart within.
The reality of that is demonstrated -
When there is a deliberate turning from sin.

It is not just a change of lifestyle -
But something more fundamental takes place.
The character and life of the Lord Jesus -
Is the template of the life they trace.
What did they seek to do;
In body and spirit and soul.
As salt and light in this world -
They are persons who have been made whole.

There is a higher response to the law -
Then just seeking to keep its demands.
The fulfillment of the principles behind it -
Gives meaning to the work of their hands.
What they chose to avoid is one thing -
But what they choose to do is another.
The desire behind these oracles -
Is love for God and genuine love for others.

When the Lord took time to give teaching -
To His disciples - and to you and me;
He had in His mind that in His kingdom -
Truth and righteousness people could see.
New attitudes give life new dimensions -
That extend far beyond those of mere men.

The conduct and lives of believers -
To our Lord are a reflection of Him.

The message the Lord gave on that mountain -
Were principles of kingdom living then and now.
It is now and was then His intention -
That to these principles of living we would bow.
When we put them into practice in this world;
There is evidence of the life of God to be seen -
In the persons and the words of God's people -
That are glimpses of kingdom glory that gleam.

"Gracious God, my Father: teaching given by the Lord Jesus on that mountain have spoken again to me today. There is no question that the standards are high and the demands seem unreachable. But I turn to Thee to give Thy servant the desire and faith to see this worked out in my life. I know Thy grace is sufficient for this, so I commit myself to Thee again today for this day and those ahead. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 5:2. *"And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying..."*

THE CHARACTER OF THE TEACHER.

How can we impart our character to others?
Teachers do this as well as fathers and mothers.
It is not an easy task to make inward changes when,
We are dealing with habits already formed in men.
When the Master sat down with His disciples and taught.
He presented kingdom principles, and it seemed that He sought
To carefully explain how character from within,
Is lived out in life, and gives light unto men.

The standards we live by have their source in the law;
But the reality of truth is not in outward forms at all.
Christ has fulfilled the law's demands in Himself.
Now through His provision, we depend on His help
To make us acceptable to God as the Master explains;
The kingdom provisions that new life we will gain.
We learn by the example of Him who truth teaches,
And the character of Him to His disciples then reaches.

It will never be easy to follow our Lord.
The demands of the kingdom are not of the world.
To truly love enemies is not understood;
For most of our enemies are not very good.
We want, by our nature, to see our enemies put down;
But the Master says, "Bless them," not enemies shun.
If the man that opposes shall smite on your cheek;
Let that same one understand; it's his blessing you seek.

So, if I'm going to be like Him, I will be like the salt.
I won't be complaining or trying to find fault
With all that is happening when it seems to go wrong.
I will try to right wrongs as I travel along
On this road that leads onward in the heavenward way.
I will seek to bless others and brighten the day
Of those in the dark by bringing clear light;
Through the character of Him who banishes night.

"How I would like to be like my heavenly Teacher, O God. My desire is to be like Jesus. It would be so satisfying to see some who have listened, learn kingdom principles and apply them to their own character-building experiences. I hope I am not taking some credit here, but I do see evidence of changes in some of those young men and women who have spent time studying Thy Word while they were with us. Bless them with strength of holy character, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 5:48. *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."*

THE CHALLENGE.

Is God asking of me what is impossible to do?
Is He expecting real perfection - not things done for show?
The challenge of fatherhood seems beyond my reach -
I'm wondering if this is a standard for me, that I might teach -
MY CHILDREN.

Perfect World [Gen.1:31]
I read that when God created everything, He said it was very good.
That reminds me that every task I attempt must be done the way it should
Be - for looking on and learning from the way I approach each job at hand
That I am doing this work for the Lord - not just to be seen of men -
ARE MY CHILDREN

Perfect Word [Ps.19:7]
Every word God spoke was truth, we can be sure He meant what He said.
He never told a joke, all He said was in a way no one was deliberately misled.
I too need to remember when I am speaking to others,
Never to say things in a way that will leave others to wonder -
ESPECIALLY NOT MY CHILDREN

Perfect work [De.32:4]
Things not seen by men are God's most important works.
Redemption and reconciliation - salvation by faith's simple look -
Remind me that what really counts when my life's work is done,
Are those attributes and lessons passed on from my heart alone -
TO MY CHILDREN

Perfect Ways [Ps.18:30]
God's perfect ways are obviously different than mine.
From both Him and hopefully me, the strength of character shines
When my works and words - and especially my ways -
Makes consistency of life and the words that I say -
ACCEPTABLE TO MY CHILDREN

Perfect Will [Ro.12:2]
God's perfect will He wants to make known to me.
Not conformed to the world but mind-transformed is the way to be.
To a man who is a worshipper and wanting God's way for his own,
He is bound to be the right kind of man in his home -
AND BEFORE HIS CHILDREN

“O my heavenly Father, on this day that was set aside 100 years ago as “Father’s Day” there must have been some recognition that all was not going right in many homes. On this day as I speak to people about Thee, my gracious Father, may I have grace in my lips, love in my heart, peace on my face and an obvious sense of the well-being of a child knowing all is well between my and my Father. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Matthew 6.

CHILDREN IN COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER.

v.1. Alms – righteousness.

v.2. Hypocrite – those who do good acts for appearances only; not out of compassion; actions good; motives hollow. God rewards those who are sincere in their faith.

v.3. Motives must be pure when giving; not for some benefit in return.

v.4. Motives in three areas: generosity [6:4]; prayer [6:6]; fasting [6:18]. Acts should be God-centered, not self-centered.

v.5-6. Public prayer was one way to get attention. Prayer is private communication with God, not public style. There is a place for public prayer but if that is the only place you pray; your audience is not with God.

v.7-8. Persistent prayer is encouraged but shallow repetitions are condemned.

v.9. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to honor God's holy name: majestic, holy, personal, loving.

v.10. God's kingdom was announced in the covenant with Abraham. It is presently in the hearts of believers. “Thy will”- God's perfect will to be accomplished.

v.11. God is the provider and sustainer. We trust God daily.

v.12. Those who have been forgiven need to be willing to forgive.

v.13. God allows testing time but temptation comes from Satan.

- v.14-15. To deny forgiveness is to deny our common ground as sinners. Having received forgiveness, we pass it on.
- v.16. Fasting gives time to pray, teaches self-discipline, lets us live with less, helps us appreciate God's gifts.
- v.17. Olive oil was a common cosmetic. Go on about your routine. Don't make a show about it.
- v.18. God is to be our witness as to what and why.
- v.19. Treasures are what we think about and work for.
- v.20. Treasures in heaven is seeking the fulfillment of all God's purposes.
- v.21. Where is our heart centered?
- v.22-23. The person who lives for God's interests will live a life flooded with light. If we live for both worlds then we are in darkness. If you know Christ forbids trusting earthly treasures yet you do anyway, that is intense darkness.
- v.24. If possessions are becoming too important, cut back. Our loyalty will be to things that cannot fade.
- v.25. Worry may [1] damage your health [2] consume your thoughts [3] disrupt your life [4] affect the way you treat others [5] may make us doubt God. Worry immobilizes; concern moves to action.

Seven Reasons not to Worry:

1. The same God who created life in you can be trusted with the details of your life [6:25].
2. Worry about the future hampers your efforts for today [6:26].
3. Worrying is more harmful than helpful [6:27].
4. God does not ignore those who depend on Him [6:28-30].
5. Worry shows a lack of faith in, and understanding of, God [6:31-32].
6. There are real challenges God wants us to pursue, and worry keeps us from them [6:33].
7. Living one day at a time keeps us from being consumed with worry [6:34].

The first seven chapters of Matthew present Christ as the King, to the nation of Israel. In the next five chapters, in spite of the proofs given, the Jewish leaders had rejected the King. If Israel refused Him and His kingdom, then what happened to the kingdom? The kingdom cannot come until the nation of Israel receives the King. It is postponed to the second coming of Christ. When He came the first time He preached, "Repent; for the kingdom of God is at hand." When He comes again, "They shall look on Him who they pierced." Zech.12:10

The Universal kingdom refers to the fact that God rules everything and everyone. He is the Sovereign, the Creator, the Sustainer of all things. Ps.29:10; 103:19; 1Chr.29:11. The second aspect of the kingdom refers to the rule of God on earth mediated through humans. "Thy kingdom come..." Mat.6:9-10. He had the patriarchs in the Old Testament through which He rules. In the New Testament the human instrument is the Man, Christ Jesus. This kingdom has some who are outward professors but are not really Christians, and some who are genuine Christians.

MATTHEW 6

CHILDREN IN COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER

While watching in my mind those disciples gathered around the Lord Jesus sitting there and teaching them the features and facts of the kingdom, I was impressed how father-like He was with them. They were hearing a real explanation of the lifestyle they had lived before they met Him. It had been basically a life lived out of habit and culture. Now they were learning the reasons for all of the uniqueness of kingdom living and a life of faith. He spoke plainly about the motives behind three key things those people did. As He taught these acts of righteousness, they were familiar with: giving, praying and fasting - He dealt with the motives behind the acts. Spiritual growth and maturity now and some kind of reward in the future, make these efforts well worth while.

The reward of the Father is given to these when they give of their substance to the poor. It was not a suggestion that they do this. It was presupposed. The point the Lord was making was that this would be done between the giver and the receiver without anyone else knowing about it. For others to observe and know what is done in our giving is all the reward we would ever get. The praise of men is fleeting at best and any honor because of giving alms will soon be past. False piety and self-glorification are always a danger when giving. Making a show of what is an obligation in never an acceptable way to meet the needs of the poor.

Prayer to the Father as individuals is a private, personal matter and is to be kept that way. There is a time and place for public prayer, and there is a time and place for private prayer. There is also the attitude of prayer we are to be in at all times so we can pray without ceasing. The length of a prayer and the amount of time spent isn't the issue in this exercise. Personal communication with the Father is the point. Reverence for God, the kingdom of God and the will of God always comes before our requests according to the model

the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples that day. It would be appropriate to say, "Hallowed be Thy name - on earth as it is in heaven." And to say, "Thy kingdom come - on earth as it is in heaven." And also, to say, "Thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven." These things should be evident when we pray: reverence for the holiness of God; the kingdom is already here so there should be in me conduct appropriate to a citizen of the kingdom. The will of God should always be the motivating factor in the activities of my daily life. After a proper attitude before God in prayer is shown, then the requests for meeting daily needs; the forgiveness for moral debts we owe can be asked for, and the requests to not be led through the trials and testing times so deep that we are tempted to be unfaithful, can be made.

Forgiveness by the Father cannot be expected when we harbor an unforgiving spirit against others. It is inevitable that there will be those who will unfairly accuse you of something. Others may take some action that will adversely affect you. In these events that happen to us, there are certain ways we can deal with them. If something is able to be addressed, then there is a biblical protocol to follow. I am to go to him privately to deal with the contention in as private a way as possible. Hopefully that will settle the problem. If not, then we take witnesses and follow the pattern the Lord taught. There are times when things happen and nothing can be done. When that is true, then we go on with our life without making an issue over something that cannot be changed. The forgiveness we can give is an honest act in the heart to which the Lord Himself gives witness. We leave the matter there and go on with our life of faith lived before the Lord in confidence that the Father can forgive us when we sin and confess it to Him.

Honoring the Father involves giving Him the priority in every action we take. The practice of fasting is one way we can give all of our attention to the Lord and His interests. All other distractions are removed that we might connect in a special way with our heavenly Father over some matter that needs our individual attention. The whole point of this fast is our fellowship with Him, not some ostentatious activity that is displayed to others. Other people should not even know it is going on. There should be no ashes on one's head or a long-faced appearance because of going without food. In outward appearance we should attend to our normal way of life including the way we dress our hair, our clothes and our facial expressions. Fasting is something personal between me and the Father that will restore me to fellowship with Him; strengthen my faith in Him and confidence that He will guide me in the work I am to do; and bring joy and a sense of worth to that which comes from God only.

Serving the Father is a daily occupation for those in His kingdom and family. Hoarding riches for personal use and being greedy for more, is condemned in the kingdom of God. Riches are not condemned in themselves, but the wrong use of them and the desire for them is. By their very nature they deteriorate and will ultimately all be left behind. Others will want what you have and you will become occupied with riches itself rather than the One from whom every "good and perfect gift" comes. Treasure in heaven is laid up for by the motive behind our work here on earth. Things that have eternal value that are done here, will have eternal value in time to come in heaven. We are able to let our spiritual vision give light as to what God sees and what our service is to be like from God's point of view. Spiritual eyesight can become clouded over. When that happens, we fall into a materialistic trap and all becomes dark around us, and the light that should shine from within is darkened. Far too many unhappy Christians are around who still try to serve mammon.

The Father has made full provision for us. Therefore, we do not have to worry. Worry really has bad effects on those who for some reason cannot rest on God's promises. Worry can damage one's health, consume our thoughts, disrupt our life and usefulness, affect how we treat others and affect our own fellowship and trust in God. To doubt God is really sin. There is a real difference between worry and legitimate, honest concern. Worry paralyzes people and may stop them from being productive. Concern moves us to action to deal with whatever is needed to rectify a situation that needs attending to. Our responsibility is to seek God's kingdom. Then turn to God for help and become concerned for His desires and obey Him. There will always be competition for our interests and service. God's interests need to be first in any activity; any daily routine. Laying plans for tomorrow is a good thing but worrying about tomorrow is not. Thinking ahead and trusting God for guidance takes care of worry. Worrying can actually affect our relationship with God today. Worry paralyzes; concern mobilizes.

There will always be people in need, who need practical assistance.
When we do what is our responsibility for God, do it without resistance.
To serve the poor with a generous heart pleases our heavenly Father -
Who knows the reason behind the action, even when it is a cup of water.

A closet to pray in, really just means there's a place where God and I meet.
It is appropriate that in honest humility I bow at my Father's feet -
Because God is holy and His kingdom is great; His will is to be done by me.

The respect and reverence in prayer is needed now, not just when His face I'll see.

To forgive as the Father has forgiven me is not always easy to do.
There should be made obvious to the one I've forgiven, some evidence that shows -
My forgiveness is real, not just some light-weight words that cannot be proved.
Real forgiveness came from the Lord's own lips, and by Him all can be saved.

There are superficial ways that are used betimes as attempts to show reality.
Whether in feast or fasting, thanks or supplications, there must be sincerity.
Men can only see the external, it is God alone who sees the heart.
He knows the motive behind everything I do because He was there at the start.

To serve the Father in sincerity and truth is to follow the Lord's example.
The amount of service is measured by hours when sincere motivation is ample.
He knows the heart as well as the labor when it is really done for love.
Love for God and love for each other is the best way we can possibly serve.

Worrying is an unusual characteristic for those who live by faith.
We started out trusting God alone to save us from our sins by grace.
To distrust Him now is to dishonor the One who all things does provide.
Just because we can't read the future, doesn't mean God is trying to hide.

God is our heavenly Father; He wants the very best for His own.
We trust Him for the future, in the past He every care has shown.
As children in communion with our Father, we have every right to trust
That He has our interests at heart and whatever He does is best.

"Gracious, loving Father, I want to thank You for loving me. I really do love You. And I want, heavenly Father, to please Thee in whatever way I can. So, for this day when we are preparing to leave tomorrow, please guide Thy weak son in ways that will honor Thee and will further Thy work. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 6:2. *"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may have glory of men."*

SOUNDS.

What sounds are these we hear in the streets and in the gatherings of those in our land,
Who are calling for money, and making sure all know how much they give in their hand.
The trumpet is blown when the chaff is sown by those who want people to think,
They have done a great work by the amount they give, not realizing they are raising a
stink.

There are many who know them and can see underneath, that this is all done for a show.
The trumpet blower blows, and the giver bows low, accepting men's praise as he goes.
The hungry still hunger, and the homeless still shiver as the alms are placed in the box.
The watchers they snicker, they know it is quicker for them to beg than to ask.

But in contrast to this, there comes the small sound of a door closing to a man's secret
closet.
What's happening in there as the man kneels in prayer, is God is drawing near to His
servant.
He opens his heart to the God he knows personally and appeals in the name of the Lord.
Then God answers him with more blessings to him, than were asked for while he knelt on
the floor.

Then comes sounds of two voices, as they make some choices, they will live with for the
rest of their lives.
One forgives the other for he is his brother, the problem that separated them - gone as he
truly forgives.

Another quiet sound as one washes his face, he has not eaten any food for awhile.
He doesn't pretend to be thought good by men, his longing is for God's personal smile.

The sound of the worker as he bends to his job, is not just to get rich here on earth.
He knows where the value of service is real; it is treasure in heaven has true worth.
So, don't think the noise of the trumpet so loud, is what really counts in the end.
The small sounds that count are the ones that God hears as His ear towards earth He does
bend.

“There are so many noises Father, that are made in the name of God, that sometimes we forget what is real. May my closet door not squeak or my floorboards creak. May my sounds be of reality that only You hear. Amen.”

Matthew 7

TEACHING ABOUT CRITICISM

v.1-2. Rash, unjust judgment in the sense of condemning is forbidden [Rom.2:1; Lu.6:37]

- Judgment according to justice is lawful and necessary as in a magistrate passing a sentence.
- Forming an opinion is not condemned. We all form opinions of conduct we know is evil.
- A habit of forming a judgment hastily, harshly – and a call to express what we consider to be discerning, private judgment without knowing the real circumstances – is condemned.
- The traits that bother us in other people, are often the bad habits that we dislike in ourselves.

v.2. If you censure others for some deed they have done, you will be dealt with in the same way.

v.3. “Mote” – small piece of chaff; “Beam” – squared off timber. Do not be quicker to judge small offences in others than the large ones in ourselves.

v.4. This person is unfit to show what is right to others, when he is walking in darkness himself.

v.5. The hypocrite professes what he is not. Deal with your own faults first and then you can be consistent in dealing with the small things that obscure your brother’s vision – making allowance for his imperfection and human frailty.

v.6. It is wrong to entrust unholy people with holy teaching. They will only ignore and/or tear apart what you say. A pearl is something precious. To give doctrinal teaching to debased people who do not appreciate it, is wasting our time.

TEACHING ABOUT THE PURSUIT OF GOD

v.7-8. There are three ways of seeking the things we need from God:

- “Ask” – earnestness, humility; “seek” – diligence, sincerity; “knock” – perseverance: no half-hearted efforts
- Things God has promised that would be best for us and His kingdom: God is willing to forgive sins; provide for us; save our souls; be with us in trials; comfort us in death; extend the Gospel world-wide
- There is nothing higher than this that we can ask and be assured that He is willing to grant

v.9-12. When our children ask for something to eat, would we give them something that would hurt them, even though it may look the same? A fish may resemble a serpent in some way, but no parent would attempt to deceive his/her child with something that could injure the child.

- When we ask in faith and according to God’s will, He gives what He knows is best. God is not selfish, begrudging or stingy. We don’t have to beg or grovel when we come to Him with requests.
- He is our Father. He understands, cares for and comforts His children. How great the contrast is even when compared to an earthly parent who is fallible.
- By stating what is known as “The Golden Rule” in a positive way, the Lord Jesus made it more significant. It is not hard to refrain from harming others. It is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for others. This is what God is like.

TEACHING ABOUT THE WAY TO HEAVEN

v.13-14. The way to heaven is not the great highway that men walk. It is the narrow way through the “wicket” (see Pilgrim’s Progress), a little door in a larger gate literally. On this narrow way, people walk a solitary walk often. This requires personal diligence and determination to enter into this way where we walk alone. It requires effort and thought to enter in through the strait gate. The gate is nearly obscured by all the activity on the highway the majority of people are on having entered through the wide gate. There is very little thought given to entering in through the wide gate onto the broad way because that is what everyone seems to want to do. The strait gate has to be looked for.

TEACHING ABOUT FRUIT IN LIFE

v.15-20. False prophets are those who claim to be able to foretell future events. Perhaps in this place it means religious instructors. Whichever of the two it means here: a false prophet is teaching incorrect doctrine, and making claims that are not from God.

- They seem like sincere, innocent and harmless sheep outwardly but inwardly they are evil like dangerous wolves on the prowl. Their nature is evil and their objective is dangerous.
- The proper test of the character of a tree is not by what the bark or leaves look like, or even the blossoms it might bear. The value of a tree is determined by the fruit. Pretensions may look good, but true conduct determines the principles we live by.
- A good tree (or person) cannot help but produce something of profit. A corrupt tree (or person) produces nothing beneficial.

- Love to God and man is from the root (new nature) from which the fruit of righteousness and of the Spirit abounds.
- The end of every false and deceptive teacher who is motivated by money, fame or power – is the fire.
- There is going to be evidence one way or another as to whether a teacher is false or true. Look at the results of one's life and efforts to determine what is of God and what is not of God. Examine (try the "spirits") what is being taught and what is being lived by those who teach.

TEACHING ABOUT RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

V.21-29. The Lord is more concerned about our walk than our talks. He wants us to do what is right, not just say the right words. Our life will only withstand the difficulties if we do what we know is right. What I believe and what I do cannot be separated.

- To just say religious things but not to obey the Lord, indicates likely there is no relationship with the Lord at all.
- Just knowing and saying what is right does not mean a person has eternal life. Faith in Christ alone is the only thing that matters as far as eternal life is concerned.
- "That day" is when final reckoning of all accounts is settled before God. Miracles are an act of God displaying His own power through another person or agency. It doesn't have to do with the moral character of a person or the legitimacy of his claims.
- Many who had never been true followers but had done miracles, will be revealed as those who are not true Christians. This is not teaching the falling away doctrine but rather the opposite.
- Under the pressures of life and calamities in life, obedience to God's Word sustains and protects us. Trials of afflictions, passions and attacks of Satan, cannot undermine the power of God's Word.
- To read or hear God's Word and not do what it says, is the greatest self-deception a person can make. Such a person is lost.
- The people of Jesus' day were astonished to hear God's truth defined in such a way. His authority from God was not at all like the self-created man-made messages they were used to hearing.
- Authority that is sound, rational, convicting and irresistible is far superior to the trifling, frivolous words that do not reach the conscience and the heart.

MATTHEW 7

THE BUILDER, BUILDING ON A ROCK

In the ears of my mind, I heard the Lord Jesus' words move from personal and family imagery to that which is public. Now He gave teaching to the disciples as to how kingdom principles and kingdom living are to be done in view of those around us. He taught them in a series of contrasts that differentiate between those in the world system and those in the kingdom of heaven.

Criticism is something we have to live with every day. Whether I like to admit it or not, I do evaluate others and their activities and they do the same to me. The challenge is to make sure any judgment is discerning rather than hypocritical. Critical thinking is not what is condemned but the kind of judgment that tears down a person. Usually the tearing down of others has as its underlying motive the prideful building up of my own ego - either to my own self or to others. A bit of sawdust I might see in another person's eye is very insignificant compared to the board that is sticking out of my own eye. When I think it is time to help another person with "a fault," it is incumbent on me to deal first and foremost with those things in my own life that need to be dealt with. If I go ahead and pass on my own "pearls of wisdom," before facing the negative things in me and my own life, the very ones I thought I was going to help will attack me.

Following hard after the awakening of self-examination and the work of one's conscience, the Lord Jesus taught about asking and receiving from God Himself. The order is important. There is no effective communication with God until I have dealt with my own arrogance and sin. When a person turns in faith to God for help in times of need, the request should be specific. Our heavenly Father knows what is needed. Our need in prayer is to be confident that what we ask for is in the will of God. Some things we may ask for are already given and we need to seek them. Often the answers are already written in the scriptures of truth or has been ministered to us by one who has spoken to us in the will of God. This may happen in public meetings or in a private conversation with one who is in fellowship with God. A knock at the door may actually be a knock at someone else's home who we know and trust, who will be God's answer to our prayer. Wise counsel will be the "bread" of the Word of God, not the hard, stubborn counsel that comes from worldly opinion. Answers that come from God will be easily digested like the nourishment of an egg rather than the biting, poisonous venom of vicious advice. Our Father in heaven knows us, and He knows what we need. His answers are not too hard to find after we ask, seek and knock. Do not complicate what God has made plain to us already.

The contrast of the roads we travel in life is not a difficult matter to discern. To live for this world and all it offers is popular with most people. It may be attractive to us because it is open to any and everything one desires. One can do what they want, go where they want, act how they want - except they cannot please God on the broad road, they cannot go to heaven on the broad road, and nothing they do will satisfy their soul and spirit on the broad road. The appeal there, is to the sensual living of those who are dead to God spiritually. Life on that road is only measured by "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." For those who enter the narrow way through Christ the open door, life is far less complicated because the guidelines are clear. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Our lives are guarded by knowing and doing the will of God. Many things do not have to be considered because we know that decision and action would be contrary to the principles of the kingdom of heaven we are to live by. On the narrow road we are not limited to things that bring no lasting joy or satisfaction. Actually, it is just the opposite. The causes of deep joy and lasting satisfaction are to be found wherever we turn. This doesn't mean we will not have difficulties or causes for sadness, but in the parameters of holy living, we can find joy and experience sorrow at the same time. We can lose everything of material worth and still have "all things" in Christ. The walk of faith by people who live by faith in God, lets us go through persecution and flattery; good times and bad; whether we are full or empty; rich or poor - and still live a life of contentment and rest in the soul.

I heard the Lord give His disciples warnings regarding religion that is based on wrong premises. There are, and will yet be, those whose root stock is without the ability to bear good fruit. Much that pleases people when it comes to "spiritual" things is based on emotions and false promises. People want to feel holy, to feel good about themselves, to feel out of themselves sometimes. They want some kind of ethereal religious experience that false prophets say is a work of God. The Lord gave a simple test to His disciples as to how to discern what is false and true when they hear someone say they are speaking for God. Look for the fruit! What kind of fruit is it? It isn't hard to see the difference between Christ-likeness and godly living, or worldly likeness and worldly goals. Good trees bear good fruit because that is the nature of them. Bad trees in turn have an evil nature. Man's way of success and God's plan for godliness are not at all alike. One is pleasing to the sensual nature of human beings. The other pleases God and will lead to persecution and being separated from those on the broad road. The fruit of kingdom living will be the fruit of the Spirit.

In the public life a believer lives, many will say, "Lord, Lord," and insist they are a "good person" and are in the kingdom of heaven. The word "Lord" is more than just an acknowledgement of who He is. The implication behind that statement indicates He is the Judge who sees and knows "the thoughts and intents of the heart." The contrast between what a person says and what they do is not hard to tell. People can "talk" a good talk, but the "walk" proves the validity of the words they say. We must do what is right for kingdom living, not just talk about it. The fact is, what I do cannot be separated from what I believe. Faith in Christ alone is what counts in the difficulties of life; when the test of a personal relationship with God comes; when it comes to having assurance of eternal life now, and what will count when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. Building on the fundamentals of biblical truth results in genuine repentance, being born again as a child of God, being a true learner and follower of the Lord Jesus and having real life when the storms of life come.

The tearing down or building up of another's life - or mine,
Depends on what I am looking for and what, in truth, I find.
The beam that blocks my understanding can blind me to what is real.
The little bit of dust in others, a little water of the Word can heal.

If I take the time to ask and seek and knock that I my soul can feed;
I will find that truth is there for me to have, that is truth indeed.
It will not be superficial because it will come from my heavenly Father,
Who delights to hear His children pray, and to answer them is no bother.

In the public life of one walking on the broad or the narrow way -
It is not really hard to see which way he is going - we watch what he will do and say.
The fruits of righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit is there for all to behold.
Evidence of good fruit or bad, is seen as the events of life unfold.

To say, "Lord, Lord" and not know Him can be known by one's attitude.
There is a fundamental humility when one is guided by the Lord.
There is appreciation there for who He is and what He says.
To hear His voice and do His will is an obvious public test.

We all are building lives on solid rock or sand.
Both houses of spiritual dwelling places have the imprint of someone's hand.

One is built by the Master's blue-print, His Word is very real to me.
The other may look like it is just the same until there comes the waves of a stormy sea.

Opinions of men may come and go, often they are being changed.
But what is based on the Word of God has the authority of His name.
The building of one's life for God does not happen overnight.
Even before an ungodly world, they expect believers to do what is right.

"O Lord God, may Thy Word and Thy power be seen in the series of meetings we are beginning here. May there be seekers who have been watching Christians, who will seek the Lord, not just a different life. May Christians be found faithful and trustworthy to guide the new lambs and sheep. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 7:3. *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"*

NOTES AND BEAMS.

It is hard to see, it takes careful searching, why are you looking so hard?
The reason you can't see it is that big log in front of you.
What log you say? Why the one sticking out of your eye.
The one that is impairing your vision;
The one you are trying to ignore.
The one that is so obvious to everyone but you.
The one that hinders everything you put your hand to.
The one that you don't like to admit is there;
The one that colors your vision;
The one that throws your discernment way off kilter.

That little mote: why is it such a bother to you?
How did you come to notice it in the first place?
He asked for some advice and you picked up on that little flaw?
Can it be that you are such a nit-picker? Are you for real?
That little mote only makes him blink a little faster when he cries.
That little mote doesn't affect his vision in the slightest.
That little mote isn't known at all – only to those you told.
That little mote hasn't hindered his worship or service in the least.
That little mote doesn't change the value of that brother or his service.
That little mote only let others know you are a very small person.

Wait a minute, you mean I'm the one with the beam?
Yes, you looking in the mirror, that is a genuine beam stuck in your eye.
You mean I am the nit-picking, gossiping, pain in the neck?
Yes, I am the one that needs some eye surgery to get my eyesight back again.
You mean I am the one causing the problem and not the one with the mote?
Yes, the mote has you sidelined, side tracked and if you're not careful, wrecked.
You mean it is serious to be looking for motes in your brother's eye?
Yes, very serious – especially when I have a beam in my own.
You mean I had better stop looking for motes in other people's eyes?
Yes, because you are already half blind when you can only see out of one eye.

"O God, please help me to mind my own business. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 7:24. *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:"*

THESE SAYINGS OF MINE.

His sayings were clear, easily understood by all;
Who need some plain guidance in life.
There are answers to prayer God will give when we call,
And truth from the Lord, when problems are rife.

To "ask" with an attitude of humility and need,
Is not a complicated formula to follow.
To "knock" with resolve, and diligently "seek,"

Only demands that our pride we must swallow.

To turn from the wrong through a small wicket gate,
Means I choose to listen to the call of my Lord.
Others around may want the highway that's great,
But through the narrow gate, I must enter alone.

Each action in life is considered a fruit
That is known to be either bad or good.
Decisions that are based on the strength of God's truth,
Bear witness to the power of God's Word.

The sayings of the Lord when He was teaching His own,
Are instructions for our living each day.
To obey them and do them abroad or at home,
Brings God glory when His will we obey.

In a personal way I am challenged this morning,
To consider if I am only a "hearer."
I need to consider this parable as a warning;
Avoid self-deception - be a "hearer and doer."

"Father God, in this text of scripture I realize are both blessings and warnings. I hear a lot as I read the Bible and listen to what others have to say about scriptural truth. But I am shortly going to be speaking to a lot of people about some important things in Revelation, and I want to be more than a teacher who knows things. I want to be able to speak of felt truth - things I have, and am experiencing. By Thy gracious providing, please help me to speak Thy truth from my heart. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

WHAT JESUS WROUGHT

Chapters 8-10

Matthew 8 THE CREDENTIALS OF THE KING

THE KING ACTING IN POWER

What Jesus taught [chapters 5-7]

The Lord Jesus Christ had just presented the Manifesto of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, presenting the vision of life in the kingdom giving the standards to live by [ch.5-7]. He had authenticated Himself as the Messiah [ch.3-4]. Now in chapters 8-10, we read of the credentials of the King beginning with ten miracles giving evidence of His power. These testify that He who presented the ethics expected in the kingdom is the One who gives the power to live them out. He is not suggesting better ways of living, but acts to reach people where they need Him.

What Jesus wrought [chapters 8-10]

He gives three illustrations of power and we see the effect on the people by what they saw. Then there are three more illustrations and the effect and again the third time He repeats the same thing.

10 miracles...

1. Cleansing the leper [1-4]
2. Centurion's servant's palsy [5-13]
3. Peter's wife's mother's fever [14-15]
4. Stilling the storm [23-27]
5. Demoniacs healed [28-34]
6. Man cured of palsy [9:1-8]
7. Woman with hemorrhage [9:18-22]
8. Ruler's daughter raised [23-26]
9. Two blind men given sight [27-31]
10. Dumb demoniac healed [32-34]

POWER OVER DISEASE

MEETING NEEDS AT ITS LOWEST [v.1-4] A testimony to great need

At the bottom of the mountain

- The Leper came with a known need: the Greek word for "leprosy" was used for many similar diseases – some were contagious
- The Leper came with an honest confession
- The Leper came with a submissive attitude, "If..."
- The Leper came with worship, "Lord..."

- The Leper came with confidence, “Thou canst make me clean.”

HE RESPONDS TO AN APPEAL FOR ANOTHER [v.5-13]. The principle of authority
In the city

- The Centurion came with the need of another: palsied; paralyzed
- The Centurion came with personal humility, “beseeching ... I am not worthy...”
- The Centurion came with great faith, “speak the word only...”
- The Centurion came with intelligent confidence, “my servant shall be healed...”

HE RESPONDS TO A PERSONAL NEED [v.14-17] The principle of substitution
In the home

- The Woman in fever needed the help of others
- He touched the woman and the fever left.
- She arose and ministered to Him
- She responded by becoming His servant

Lessons: God’s purity is great than man’s pollution. His virtue and purity healed the leper
His authority and deity extended to the Roman’s servant
His compassion and touch healed Peter’s mother-in-law

Isaiah 53:4. In order to deal with the underlying causes of diseases – sin – He took hold of sin itself. The physical need was evidence of the spiritual need which He would deal with at the cross. He restored the healed ones to their natural state. These were restorations made by the King to restore a lost order. All this was done that men would listen to, and obey, Him.

POWER OVER DEMONIC FORCES

Three areas of power: Personal, Physical, Spiritual

THE PERSONAL

The scribe came with impulse and daring: The Son of Man had no place in this world where He could fit in with the world system around. Those that follow Him do not belong here. The necessity of the cross to deal with our need was before Him. The second man was called to service. He had conflicting affections. Not realizing that affections hinder us in following Christ. He was not going to attend a funeral but was wanting to wait for his kin to die.

THE NATURAL

His supremacy over nature shows His power. We do not have to be afraid even of the things over which we have no control. Retain confidence in the Lord in spite of all adversity. Wait for His deliverance and trust His for peace when the difficulty is all past.

THE SPIRITUAL

There are times when we are tempted to give way to evil spirits. We are told to “try the spirits” which include teachings as well the demons that promote them. The Lord Jesus had authority over demons. Beyond human ability is the power of the King. There is no limit to His power in heaven and in earth.

MATTHEW 8

THE MASTER, AND HIS AUTHORITY

There are people with problems everywhere we turn. When Jesus came down from the mountain crowds followed Him. Some were curious. Others were critical of Him. Still others were needy people with problems, and for the first time they had hope. One hopeless man on his knees before the Lord, testified publicly of his faith in Christ to meet his need. There was no question in his mind about the Lord Jesus' ability to meet his need. His concern was about the Lord's willingness to heal him of leprosy, that serious incurable disease that had physical and social consequences. The Lord's response to the plea of the outcast man was to touch him and declare His willingness to honor the man's faith. That touch was probably the first the leper had felt for a long time. Some things may seem to us to have no solution. God does not leave our pleas unanswered. He has a purpose in allowing problems that are impossible for us to solve that our faith and hope may be placed in Him alone. When God works for us and through us, He is not seeking publicity, nor will He act prematurely. He has plans and purposes to fulfill through us. When He chooses to use us in His service, He does expect us to act in faith and give Him the credit for all that is accomplished for His glory "that no flesh should glory in His sight."

I followed the Lord Jesus in my mind as He entered into Capernaum and was confronted by a centurion who was used to one hundred men obeying his orders. This man, in faith, overcame the obstacles of pride, culture, race, religion and perceived power, to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in true humility and a real expression of faith. The leper had felt the Lord's touch. The centurion heard the Lord's word. There never was a question in the mind of either man as to the Lord's authority. They just wanted His help and for Him to use that authority on their behalf outside the prohibitions of the law or man-made traditions. It is never right for us to limit God in our minds. He is not bound by our preconceived perceptions as to how God is going to work His will. He is going "to will and to do of His good pleasure." The way we think God will fulfill His work in any given situation may be far different than how He actually does it. He can use any person, and any means, at any time and in any place to do His will. When God is willing to use us in His work, it is a time of great privilege.

In Peter's house, again the touch of the Master's hand was used to connect His healing grace and power to a needy person. The cool touch of His grace is greater than the hopelessness of sin or the uncontrollable effects of sin. The Lord can use His authority to overcome every obstacle or claim sin seems to have against us. As I watched the private scene in that home, I saw a remarkable act of gratitude on the part of that older woman. Her immediate response was to rise and wait on Him. I thought of times when God had intervened in my life and I wondered if I have ever responded with more than a "Thank You." An action of gratitude is more significant than an attitude of gratitude. Some well-thought out action in the future wasn't what this woman was waiting for. Peter's mother-in-law saw a present need and immediately went about filling that need. She was not waiting to do some dramatic feat in the future. She was there to do the menial tasks of a house servant and to do it for the Lord. I learned that it is not so much what I do that counts. Rather it is why I do a service and for whom I do it. I can do it "as unto the Lord and not unto man."

The powers of darkness are never far away when a work for God is being done. Whether it was among the people of God or the people "on the other side," the Lord Jesus was not limited in any way from overcoming those emissaries of the devil. The effects of the devil can be felt at times when God is working. The authority used over them was not some dramatic earth-shaking event or a tragedy over which we have no control. The power of His word was again all that was needed to bring about the desired result He had. The satanic hosts fear the Word of the Lord and are not able to resist that authority. When the Holy Spirit brings a suitable word of scripture to our mind in times of opposition, it is well for us to immediately use that to drive away the thoughts, temptations or actions that result from such an attack.

There is a cost to be a follower of Christ. The desire may be sincere but the motives behind the desire cannot be less than honest. To follow the Lord is not just an adventure. It is a calling to labor in His field whether in good or bad weather, with favorable or unfavorable results. Discipleship is not easy or comfortable. Often it will cost a friendship of long standing or popularity among people we look up to. It will certainly cost our time, comfortable habits and traditions we have been used to. They will have to be abandoned. Following Christ is a commitment, a yielding of investment in life to investing in treasure in heaven. The rewards from that kind of investment are the ones that yield the full value of living for God and serving Him.

When I saw the Lord Jesus Christ sleeping during the stormy crossing of the sea, I was impressed with His calm in the face of perceived danger. There was no reason for anyone to fear, even though it was natural, because He was there. What is normally a life or death matter to us is very insignificant when the Lord is involved in the situation. I may not see the security of faith, but I can experience it and exercise it in times of distress and danger. Faith in Christ is well-placed faith.

I learned as I followed in my mind the Savior and those who followed after Him, that faith in Him leads to a sense of His touch in every situation. It is not for publicity or just to see some miracle take place that we see the hand of God working for us. It is a testimony to His Person and power when we confidently rest in Him. When that touch of the Lord comes into our lives, it should be only natural that we respond with gratitude by meeting needs that are at hand, and doing what we do as to the Lord.

Humility is a natural result of facing our own limitations. That response to His presence in our lives is natural because we are in the presence of the Supreme Authority of the universe. When that power is used for us, and occasionally through us, it is an occasion for praise and honor to be given to Him in a special way. How great is our God! How greatly is He to be feared! How great an honor it is to be able to serve Him! How gracious of Him to let us be participants in the kingdom of His glory and grace!

Let every knee bow down, let every tongue be raised in praise.
The Lord of hosts has come, and our voices to Him we raise.

His power and authority are made plain, He has come bringing blessing to man.
The One who makes the world' with His word, has touched a leper's hand.

The helpless are delivered, from that over which they had no power.
With words of a gracious response, He gives deliverance in the same hour.
Gratitude and honor are due Him in whom we place our faith.
People all around are blessed and delivered by His amazing grace.

The outcasts are received again, those in bondage are set free.
Whoever came in faith to Him, the Lord set at liberty -
That they in turn might realize there was One who could forgive sin.
Forgiveness was granted to the vilest of sinners who came in faith to Him.

We are able to experience calmness through the trials and storms of life.
Resting in faith upon the Lord relieves all of our fears and strife.
Dangers that to man seem great are to Him dealt with by a word.
Even the strongest winds that blow are subject to the Lord.

The enemy of our souls will not cease trying to bring us down.
People of faith need not to fear him when Jesus as Lord we crown
As the One we know as personal Savior and to whom we yield control.
He knows what is suitable to the event - He is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

With child-like faith we trust Him alone who has reasons for each event.
I may never know why things happened, or why this test was sent.
But I do know Him, and trust Him to do whatever He thinks best.
And with the confidence of faith in Him, I choose in Him to find my rest.

"Father in heaven, the assurance Thou hast given me over many events that happened in my life, is still there. I trust Thee to give Thy servant suitable words for this afternoon. Help me to be precise and still say what needs to be said. Please give to us a sense of Thy power and presence today and in the coming meetings. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 8:1. *"When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him."*

TAUGHT, WROUGHT, THOUGHT.

What Jesus taught was clear and plain:
From the Beatitudes to the final warnings to men;
In the ten-fold message He spoke on the mount;
Jesus' kingdom truths covered all of the ground.

Morals and motives; worship and work;
Spiritual and social - He left none in the dark.
Encouragements and warnings; choices to make -
Lessons He taught to the people, we are wise to take.

When He left the mountain, there were needs everywhere.
People with sicknesses, others in despair -
Were wanting His help, they knew Jesus alone,
Was the One who could do, what needed to be done.

There were lepers and palsied; fevers and blind -
Demon possessed ones, followed behind -
Because the miracles He did, they wanted to see,
Could only be done, by none other than He.

Ten miracles in all from chapter eight to though to ten:
What Jesus wrought is there for all to be seen.
Add on to the teaching from five on through seven -
The proof is in place - He is the King sent from heaven.

From eleven through eighteen we find the reactions of men.
What the people thought of Him enlightens us then -
To the variety of ways people respond to the King.
Only those who really know Him, true honor will bring.

“Father in heaven, what great blessings came to men through the Savior. His teaching gave guidance; His miracles gave proof; to His followers He gave life. I am glad that I have life through Him. Thank You, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MATTHEW 9

POWER TO FORGIVE

9:1-17

v.1-2. “Their faith” – that of the needy man and those that brought him to Jesus. We are able to help others to believe. “Forgiven” – the sins that cause his disease thus fulfilling the prophecies of Isa.53:4-6, “He was wounded...”

v.3- 8. Criticism is to be expected wherever God works.

v.9. Matthew was one of those despised by the Jews. He was a sinner in the eyes of the people. Christ looks beyond what man sees, and sees the man – and calls him by His authority. Matthew had to complete the relationship by following Christ and not saying “No.”

POWER OVER TRADITIONS

v.10-13. Matthew’s first act as a disciple was to gather those of his own class to eat with Jesus and His disciples. They had to learn what Hos.4:6 means – God is more anxious to have mercy than to receive what men bring to Him.

v.14-17. Why fast when we are experiencing God’s presence and working among us. We fast when there is a felt or unmet need.

SUMMARY

- Sin is forgiven
- One despised is accepted
- God’s heart is revealed, “I will have mercy.”
- God has set new forces in motion in His kingdom work

9:18-34

POWER OVER DEATH

v.18-26. A wealthy man came with quiet dignity to make his appeal. A beggared, outcast, sick woman came secretly to get her need met. The ruler had enjoyed 12 years of sunshine and joy. The sick woman had endured 12 years of suffering, and would have been an outcast because of the nature of her disease.

v.27-34. Two blind men came noisily, persistently and determined to be heard. A dumb, demon possessed man was brought by others as he was too far gone to come himself.

All appealed to the Lord Jesus Christ for what they needed. Each was beyond the help of men. He responded to each need differently, appropriately and in a perfectly suited way.

- He was ready to meet the ruler’s need without being pressured in any way, and in a tender act of sympathy and power – death was vanquished. He has power over death.
- He met the woman’s need before she spoke and she was publicly recovered before eyes of all after 12 years of rejection – disease was cured. He has power over disease,
- He allowed two blind men to pour out all their hearts of frustration, and with a tender, healing touch – sight was granted. He has power over darkness.
- He exercised His authority over demons when the dumb man was brought by others, and without an audible word - unheard power brought freedom and speech. He has power over the devil.

9:35-38

v.35-36. The King and His compassion: He deep feeling for those in need and identified with it and knew what He had to do. He knew the necessity of being a shepherd to them and giving His life for the sheep. He saw His kingdom as humans in need.

v.37-38. He was willing and wanted the help of others who would be laborers in His field. He calls for laborers to gather in the harvest.

MATTHEW 9

REACHING PEOPLE

The journey of Jesus brought Him back across the sea of Galilee to Capernaum, the place where He lived and did many wonderful works. There were those living there who in faith had full confidence in His healing power. There were also those of authority who had control over people. The presence and power of the Lord Jesus in their community exposed their deceptive motives and challenged the religious beliefs they held and taught to the people. The presence of the Lord among His people doesn't give room for hypocrisy or self-serving religion. Sincerity of heart and the reality of God with us, changes people and places.

When a man was first forgiven of his sins and healed after, it exposed the unreality of those who were religious. The paralyzed man was unable to help himself, and no one else could help him except to bring him to the Lord Jesus who had power on earth to forgive sins and proved that power over the inward spiritual problem, by using His power over an outward and physical problem. Men are limited, for "man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." It is cause for praise when one is physically recovered from some serious problem. Often, we are filled with awe at such evidence of God working on behalf of one who is in great need. How much more is there cause for rejoicing and praise when one is forgiven of their sins and born into the family of God by the Holy Spirit.

There has always been those skeptics and others who deny the existence of God and belittle the actions and proofs of faith. They always want an explanation from the natural course of things or some scientific data to give an answer to what is a work of God. To think that God works today without any assistance from men, makes them uncomfortable. It means they are accountable to God.

When the Lord paused at the tax collector, Matthew's table, few who were following Him would have expected Him to call one to follow Him who would have had a reputation for overcharging and cheating people because he was working for the Roman government. Probably even less would have thought Matthew would leave that lucrative position where one could make material gain and become wealthy. But when the Lord calls a person to follow Him, it is well that we remember who chose us to do that. His voice of authority, His word of invitation should never be denied. When the Lord and His disciples sat at Matthew's table eating with others who would be considered less than respectable people, His reputation would have been hurt before those who were concerned about appearances. The appearance of holiness should not excuse us from the obligation we have to connect with sinful and needy people. The poor, immoral and outcasts are in need of the Gospel and the Savior, just as much as those we would consider more likely to be saved. The Lord made it plain that His mission was to those who were sinners, not to those who considered themselves, "good people."

Questions about forms, traditions and religious practices often arise when people try to make themselves acceptable to God. It is not unusual for people to compare themselves and what they do with what others do in other places around us. Our success or failure in the things of God is not measured by comparisons. We may at times, be measured by how we are meeting the needs of others around us. Other times we may be measured by our ability or the capacity a group may have to fulfill the obligations we can see. The final measure of acceptance is, what place does the Lord Jesus Christ have in any work or activity. The joy of fellowship with Him and assurance we are in the will of God is not able to be denied even by those who criticize. Our joy in the Lord and the joy of the Lord, is our strength - not our size.

Who would have thought a spiritual leader in the community would be kneeling before the Lord and asking Him to raise his dead daughter back to life. What an expression of faith in Christ! It was too late for anyone else to help his daughter. There was something about the Lord Jesus that inspired hope in a time of hopelessness. With both the father who lost his daughter, and the poor sick woman reaching out her hand in faith to touch the garment of the Lord, there was faith in the Person - the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman had not been able to lead a normal life for twelve years. She would have been considered untouchable by that society. At the same time, she fell sick, a little girl baby was born to the ruler. The joy in the one home came when the joy in the other home was lost. We may be wanting to give up on someone we have known for years. Their situation has gone way beyond our ability to help. God can change that when a person is willing to reach out a hand of faith to the Lord Jesus and touch Him for the healing of their soul. Faith in Christ is never misplaced faith - never! For He can change what seems unchangeable and give hope and purpose to a life that has wasted long years. When it is too late for any help, we can give one, we can go to the Lord on their behalf. He can do what no one else can. He can bring life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Broken relationships, binding addictions and habits can be dealt with by the power of God. He can forgive! He can give new life! He can do what is impossible with man, "for with God, all things are possible."

In the eye of my mind, I could see the Lord leave that home and other people rush out to tell the news of the miracle of bringing back to life a child who was dead to all who would listen. Two blind men in particular heard and were following Him as best they could and their calls were unanswered. Their frantic calls would have become more distant as the sighted disciples and the Lord walked on. Those calls were to the Messiah of Israel and the Lord walked away from them. This was not the time for the Messiah to take over the leadership of the nation. Other things had to come first. They finally caught up with Him in the privacy of a house where He questioned them about their personal faith in Him. The scriptures are true, and what they have to say in prophecies are true. But saving faith is not in the scriptures - it is in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those two blind men had to confess Him as their Lord. Then He was willing to attend to their blindness. Though the Lord Jesus was stern in telling them not to publish what had happened to them, they

did it anyway. The Lord can, and does still, heal people, but it was not His intention to be known as a miracle worker who just heals bodies, but the One who brings spiritual healing and life to sinners who are dead to God in their sins.

The two men who could see now, were met when they were going out of the house, by people bringing a demon-possessed man in. He could not speak because he was a mute and could make no declaration of faith in Christ. The Lord knew the problem was greater than the man could deal with and drove the demon out of the man's body which that evil spirit had been using for its own evil purposes. The critics were there waiting to condemn the Lord Jesus for doing what had never been done there before. There will always be those who pass their personal judgment on a work of God no matter what it is. Some will criticize out of envy, others out of spite. Some have preconceived religion-based ideas as to how God has to work and cannot accept the fact that they might be wrong. It is not our right to condemn them in return, but to let what God is doing speak for itself.

None of those things stopped the Lord from going on to accomplish His purpose. The Gospel had to be preached. People had needs to be met. His compassion encompassed them all as He looked on their confusion and doubt. The harvest is still there. The need is still great. Confusion is getting more chaotic as the days pass and people do not know where to turn or what to do. Many will not listen to us but that does not mean that we can stop laboring in the Gospel. God is still able to do above all we ask or think.

There are great needs around that seem more than we can meet.
Who knows what is going on in the lives of those we casually greet.
The help that we can give is probably limited at the best.
But it is within our capacity to tell the weary, Christ will give them rest.

The measure of faith required can be very small indeed.
When a person comes to Christ, He is there to meet their need.
He can do what we cannot, He can, and will, forgive their sins.
Our part in all of this work is to bring the needy ones to Him.

We really will never know the value of a word -
When in a brief conversation we talk to a person about the Lord.
The word of God when spoken can do more than we ever can do -
But that same word may lead to repentance and faith before it's through.

Whether it is one or many we seek to lead into the light,
At the final end of an event or work, it is God that gives them sight.
So, with faith, I too must act when reaching out to others -
And put my trust in God as the ripe harvest we seek to gather.

I have wondered at times about the value of a touch.
In the Word of God, I read that effective prayer avails much.
It is with assurance God knows the heart; I pray someone will reach out a hand -
And when they do so in simple faith, God responds as only He can.

Exactly what is needed, is what God is willing to give.
From the storehouse of His fullness, He dispenses so they can have
The blessing they need whether life, or healing or their sight.
God alone can discern the need, and what He gives is right.

“Father, before us this day is the privilege of telling others of Thee and Thy saving grace. Give power and authority to Thy Word I pray, and save some of those who have been attending. Save them for Thy glory. May all of us who are workers together have the joy of seeing new life spring forth as Thy Holy Spirit works. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Matthew 9:38. *“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into the harvest.”*

WORDS.

TEACHER IMPARTING HIS OWN CHARACTER TO HIS DISCIPLES

Words from the highest authority –

“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Words of plainest invitation –

“Follow Me.”

Words of clearest explanation –

"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Words of fullest meaning –

"Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them."

Words of kindest comfort –

"Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Words of greatest assurance –

"According to your faith be it unto you."

Words of urgent appeal –

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

Throughout the first section of Matthew's Gospel defining the King and His kingdom, the Lord is presented as a Teacher imparting His own character to His disciples.

"Father in heaven, I can see how important it is to act on the infallible words of the Lord Jesus. What He says, I have full confidence, He does. My responsibility is to act on that which He tells me. Thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MATTHEW 10

His Power to Delegate Authority. 9:35-11:1

9:35-38 THE WORK OBSERVED

v.35. Compare the wording with Mat.4:23. They are identical except for the word "Galilee" and "all the cities and villages." His healing was to authenticate His Person – who He truly was.

v.36. "Compassion" – to feel sympathy, is only used in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

"Fainted and scattered" – like sheep bothered by wolves; no one to guide and protect them; no spiritual guidance. The religious leaders were keeping them from the true Shepherd.

v.37. The harvest is ready and ripe. There is much to do and few to do it.

v.38. Ask God, to send out additional workers to bring in the harvest that waits

10:1-4. THE WORKERS IDENTIFIED

v.1. 12 learners/followers/apprentices. These 12 men were designated as official representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ and were given authority to act and speak on His behalf. That is what made them "apostles" – specifically sent forth to represent and official."

v.2. They are designated here as pairs and probably sent out in this fashion. Two sets of brothers are named – INFLUENCE.

v.3. Philip and Bartholomew (Nathanael) his friend – COMPANIONSHIP. Thomas and Matthew, Thomas a twin and Matthew refers to his past – CHANGE. James and Thaddaeus (Judas, son of James) – OBSCURITY DOESN'T LIMIT SERVICE.

v.4. Simon, the zealot and Judas Iscariot (probably named for his hometown) – one was a revolutionary, the other a schemer.

10:5-23. THE WORKERS INSTRUCTED

The appropriate message, 5-15

v.5. They were to limit their proclamation: it was not for those who were non-Jewish or half Jewish

v.6. Israel only was to hear the kingdom message because they were people God had covenanted Himself with.

v.7. Israel needed to accept her King – Hew was here. If Israel received Him, all nations would be blessed through Israel.

v.8. The miracles they performed would authenticate their message.

v.9. Keep it simple because you are not representing a business enterprise. You are the only equipment you need

v.10. Don't go out and buy things for your journey. Use what you have. In Mark 6:8 the staffs they could take were their own. They were not to go out and buy new ones.

v.11. A "worthy" person would be one who would favorably respond to the message preached.

v.12. When you come to a house, be courteous in your greeting, be gentle in your conversation.

v.13. If you are not welcomed to a home or even a city, quietly withdraw. Don't make a scene – just wipe off your shoes and be one your way.

v.14. Simple make it clear you are not going to make a big fuss; shrug your shoulders and move on.

v.15. Leave the judgment to the Lord who will deal with those who reject His message in a coming day.

The anticipated response, 16-23

- v.16. The work they were given was hazardous. They were going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack. Be calm, don't call attention to yourselves, be as shrewd and cunning as a snake and as inoffensive and harmless as a dove. Don't forcibly oppose the enemy.
- v.17. People won't understand; will impugn your motives; will smear your reputation.
- v.18. Don't be upset when you are hauled before civil authorities. Just trust the Lord.
- v.19. The judges provide you a public platform to speak for God and against what is wrong.
- v.20. The Spirit of you Father is the Holy Spirit. He will supply your right words for you to speak.
- v.21. When people realize you represent the Living God and not some idol that will make them feel good, they will turn on you – even some of your own family.
- v.22. It is a great irony that when you are proclaiming God's great and eternal love, you will experience a lot of hatred. This is often because righteousness, condemns the unrighteousness they are involved in.
- v.23. Don't quit doing what God has called you to do. Don't cave in under the pressure that will be put upon you. It will all be worth it in the end. We can't guarantee success and we can't measure success in spiritual matters. The Lord who is coming is the only One who can do that.

10:24-33. THE WORKERS COMFORTED

- v.24. The Lord was not asking His disciples to do something He had not experienced. He anticipated how the disciples would be concerned and reminds them of their relationship to Him. He was the Teacher; He was the Master and they were the learners and servants. Discipleship means following the Master, not being superior to Him.
- v.25. If men called the Master who was Head of the household, the lord of the flies, expect them to say the same of you who follow Him.
- v.26. Three times they are told "Fear not" [v.26, 28, 31) those whose true motives will be revealed in the judgment.
- v.27. The good news of the Gospel had been covered up but now it is to be loudly proclaimed out in the open. What the Lord tells us: "speak...hear...preach." The 1st "Fear not."
- v.28. The 2nd "Fear not": the rage of man is not to be feared because men can only kill that which is temporal, not eternal. We are to have a reverential fear of God, because He has the supreme authority. Fear of God keeps us from fear of men.
- v.29. God keeps track of the most insignificant things because He is God and everything in the universe is in His space.
- v.30-31. Hair is less in value than a sparrow and people are so much more valuable so we need not fear.
- v.32. It is the most reasonable that the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ confess Him before men. The reward of Him confessing us before the Father far outweighs the difficulties you might encounter in serving Him.
- v.33. This is not the denial of failure but of habitual choice.

10:34-39 THE WORKERS ADMONISHED

- v.34. This is a figure of speech that is a result of His coming. He came to make peace through the cross work and to save the world. He cannot gloss over evil for the sake of harmony.
- v.35-37. Some family members may be opposed, so we have to make a choice between Christ and family.
- v.38. Love of one's own life is more apt to turn us aside from commitment and love to Christ than even family opposition. To take up the cross, means we are willing to devote our lives to the Lord even unto death.
- v.39. Love of Christ must overcome the instinct of self-preservation. Self-gratification really is a great waste of one's own life.

10:40-11:1 THE WORKERS REWARDED

- v.40. Not everyone will refuse the message of the kingdom. Those who recognized the disciples as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ are acknowledged as receiving Christ.
- v.41. To receive a prophet's message, is to receive the prophet and the one who sent the prophet. To receive a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.
- v.42. No kindness shown to a follower of Christ will go unnoticed. The Lord gives real dignity to those who represent Him and will reward him in a coming day.

MATTHEW 10

FOLLOWING CHRIST

As I read the account of Jesus' journey here on earth and the principles of the kingdom of heaven were given in very clear words, I heard Him call twelve who had been listening to Him and following Him from place to place. Now He gives them an opportunity to be participants in the work of the kingdom. There is a great difference between being an observer of what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing and being involved in it. He gave them His power to do His work. They were not demanded, they were called. They were not going

out to be hucksters or those who were claiming benefits for themselves. They were going to be sent as representatives of the kingdom of heaven. They knew what they were to do. They knew where they were to go and they were told how to prepare for, and carry out, their commission. The Lord was in the process of training them to be ambassadors of the kingdom.

In our service for God we are not to be free-lances without barriers and parameters in our work. There will be those who will accept our message and there will be those who oppose and reject it. Conducting ourselves in innocence and caution, and at the same time being faithful to the Lord and His word and work, calls for wisdom and planning. When we know how to approach a work and what our goal in it is, we can do that work without an offensive manner or an arrogance that turns people away from us.

Religious people will often take exception to the fact that we are not working under their auspices and leadership. There is a sectarianism that separates people into opposing groups. When we go out to speak for the Lord and serve Him alone, we are under a higher authority than man-made opinions and doctrines. There will be public ridicule from religious opposition. To retaliate in kind is counter-productive and usually results in deeper antagonism against the simplicity of the Gospel message. Do not fear that attitude nor the attempts made to humiliate you. The Lord will acknowledge you before His Father when we are willing to acknowledge Him before men. If we in some way try to disown Him before men, He will disown us before the Father. Those are fearsome words. It is an honorable thing to be able to speak for the Lord about things that are eternal.

There will be opposition to the spread of the Gospel by governments who claim to represent the people. Hostility is to be expected. We are to be sensible and prudent when that arises. It is not necessary to roll over and play dead or quit. Nor are we expected to be gullible to every unreasonable demand people in authority make. At the same time, it is wrong to be deceitful in dealing with those in authority. There is a balance to be maintained in the work to which we have been called. There is a place between being vulnerable and demanding that wisdom will guide us to when we are led by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will even provide the right words to say when we have to give an explanation as to our work and why we do what we do. Living for God will bring persecution, and persecution will bring opportunities to present the way of salvation. We can be confident when God leads us into these situations, that He has a reason for us to be in it and He can produce what He wants from it.

It is harder to face opposition from one's family and those closest to us than any other form of opposition. To be betrayed or despised by those we love in the flesh will never be easy to take. We can never take for granted that we will be accepted by those who do not want the Gospel message, even if they are part of our earthly kindred. Standing firm to the end is not the means of salvation but it is evidence of reality in our commitment to Christ. When one is devoted to the Lord and willing to do His will in all He calls us to do, we can rest in confidence and stop worrying about the outcome of our efforts. When the Lord Jesus Christ returns, then all the world will know who He is and who we have been representing. We do not need to fear the outcome of our commission because the day will come when God reveals the real proof of His kingdom. Satan's falsehood will be exposed. Our obligation is to be faithful in what He has called us to do. There will be troubles and everyday life will take its toll on us. Through it all the Lord will sustain and maintain those who are standing for Him.

Superficial harmony isn't the kind of peace the Lord came to bring. He does not gloss over sin. When sin is exposed there often will be real antagonism against those who present God's truth. All conflicts will not be resolved and disagreements between believers and unbelievers is inevitable. The Lord Himself will be the One who brings lasting peace. His presence and Person are the deciding factor in our relationships. He does not encourage or demand conflict and disharmony. He was simply stating the fact that when we identify ourselves with Him and follow Him daily, conflicts will arise. Different morals, standards, goals and lifestyles do set us apart. Our first priority is to God and His kingdom. Our peace and comfort are not to be expected if we are committed to following Christ. If we hang on to what we want in this life like financial security, power and prestige, we will lose what is valuable in the next. We need to hold earthly things with a loose grasp. More important is how we respond to, and meet the needs of others.

To follow Christ, when others don't, means sometimes we walk alone.
This life is not really measured by the successes or what we may have done.
But rather by what Christ has called us to do for Him each day.
Some things may seem not all that important to us, but when we hear Him say,
"Well done good and faithful servant," then we will really know -
The value of the things we've done and where we're called to go
That those who are unprepared for living and for dying,
Will hear the Savior through our words and turn to Him relying

One Him alone for salvation by trusting in Him by faith
Knowing that to be ready for heaven is only done by God's grace.

There will be times in the service of God when we will find it hard
To get beyond the antagonism and opposition against God's Word.
When such times come, we need to remember that all power belongs to Him
Who saved us by His grace alone, and now calls us to speak to men;
And tell them in Christ's name to be reconciled to God -
That they too will repent of their sin and turn unto the Lord.
Whether from the religious groups around, or family or government -
It is important that believers remember who it is we represent.
Our words need to be reinforced by actions in life that are consistent.
God can bless both His Word and the person who to his call is not resistant.

To live by faith and serve the Lord in this world that measures success
By numbers who attend a church or think riches is how God does bless -
Is not all that easy especially when we know that we who live by faith are few.
Those who watch from a distance wonder when we're going to be finally through.
But when God Himself who started us off on this road with this work in hand -
Urges us to continue on and take this message throughout the land -
Then far be it for me to quit the work because the task is hard.
This is not done to be seen by men but for the glory of the Lord.
When He says, "That is enough. Go on to another field."
That will be the time to change, but we will not to adverse pressure yield.

"Gracious God, this place where we are found now is obviously a ripe harvest field. May it please Thee to save some of those who were there last night and bring others to hear Thy Gospel. Help Thy servants to be faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 10:18. *"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."*

I SEND YOU.

THE MASTER REVEALING PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Act on the Master's command –

"Go rather to the lost sheep..."

Carry out the Master's commission –

"Preach...heal...cleanse...freely give."

Live as the Master charged –

"Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses."

Stay till the Master's work is completed –

"There abide till ye go hence."

Treat the Master's enemies with caution –

"Beware of men: for they will deliver you up."

Speak for the Master with confidence –

"The Spirit of you Father which speaketh."

Warnings from the Master who cares –

"When they persecute you...flee ye into another."

Words from the Master that comfort –

"Fear not them which kill the body..."

Choice given by the Master that challenges –

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life for My sake shall find it."

"O God of the heaven and earth, I am committed to this call Thou didst give. Keep me from slacking back for any self-centered or selfish reason. I honestly do want to be a faithful steward of the Gospel and of the word of truth Thou hast entrusted to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT

Chapters 11-18

Ten reactions:

- John the Baptist, undecided. 2-11 (3)
- This generation, unresponsive. 16-19 (17)
- Galilean cities, unrepentant. 20-30 (20)
- The Pharisees, unreasonable. 12:2-38 (10, 14, 24)

- The multitudes, undecided. 13. (13-15)
- The Nazarenes, unbelieving. 13:53-58
- Herod the king, unintelligent. 14:1-13 (2)
- Jerusalem scribes, un-conciliatory. 15:1-20 (2, 12)
- Pharisees, Sadducees, unrelenting. 16:1-12 (1)
- The apostles, glad recognition. 16:13-20 (16)

MATTHEW 11

v.1 Jesus commissioned His disciples. He also had His own work of preaching and teaching to fulfill. There were the new difficulties and the attitudes of His enemies to be faced. Preaching is necessary for the conversion of sinners. Teaching is necessary for the edification of saints.

Challenge to the King's authority, 11:2- 16:12

11:2-19. IN THE REJECTION OF JOHN, THE BAPTIST

JOHN'S INQUIRY, v.2-3

John knew who Jesus was so would not have been perplexed by the miracles He did. This loyal-hearted messenger had to be corrected and vindicated. He was no doubt looking for a public declaration of His Messiah-ship. Jesus was not doing what he had expected Him to do.

JOHN AND JESUS: John's earlier descriptions of Jesus were with great words and he seemed to believe the Lord Jesus would break down the abuse, oppression and evil that was against Israel. But now when he was in prison, there was no great judgment that had fallen, abuses were still everywhere and Jesus had just a handful of plain men following Him. He was preaching good news instead of judgment. When there are troubling questions that we can't answer, we have to look at the promises of scripture and trust God that what He is doing is right.

JESUS' ANSWER, v.4-6

His instruction to John's disciples was to tell John what they had seen and heard. Sinners are blind in their understanding; the lame cannot walk in paths of righteousness; the leprous are defiled with sin in themselves and are infectious to others. Others are deaf to the voice of God, and others are dead in trespasses and sins. The Gospel preached is the Good News that cures all our spiritual diseases. We are not to be offended, not stumbled, because what is happening or the outcome is different than what was expected.

JESUS AND JOHN: The Lord Jesus Christ made sure the disciples of John knew who He was. John was fulfilling the prophecies regarding the Messiah. Look at what is happening in the light of prophecy. It is important that whenever we are uncertain about what is happening, to look at the big picture of prophecy. Jesus said about John...

- John did not fail even though he was in prison. He told the truth no matter what it would cost.
- John was not a soft man. He was a loyal man.
- John was not just a witness; he was a herald.
- Of natural men, there never was a greater in moral fiber, mental breadth and personal strengths.
- As a spiritual man, John was of a priestly but became a prophet.
- As a Jew, he was a statesman who was concerned about the welfare of the nation of which he was a part.

JESUS' DISCOURSE, v.7-19

Jesus wanted the people to know that in the history of mankind, there was no one who surpassed John the Baptist as an honest, loyal person who was prophesying the truth. Yet in the kingdom of God the lowest person is ahead of John. The law and the prophets were based on anticipation. These culminated in John preparing the way of the Lord (Messiah). Now our hope is based on experience and realization that are clear and able to be seen.

Those who enter the kingdom of heaven must use the kind of violence that tramples under foot pride and every kind of opposition to coming to Christ. Now we know and are content, to trust the King. This will need strong determination on the part of every one who come to Him.

The unreasonableness of the age and generation was such that they complained when there was joy and then complained when there was sorrow. They were like children playing wedding one time and then funeral another time. Don't be angry at your discontented children because they are just like their parents.

Now the Son of Man was here and they were complaining because He wasn't. He came as a friend, comforting, cheering them, eating and drinking in fellowship with them, and they turned on Him and called Him gluttonous.

Wisdom is justified by her children (works). Look at the results and let them speak. John came in power and strength to warn the nation and call them to repentance. Now the King has come in tenderness

and concern. Lessons to learn are that honesty when in doubt is valued. God will patiently answer in His own time and way so the doubts can be dealt with completely.

MATTHEW 11

EVALUATION

In His journey, Jesus went to other places to pass on by teaching and preaching, the message of the kingdom of heaven. From place to place people heard of their need to repent and believe the Gospel. That news reached into the prison where John, the forerunner was being held for his faithful preaching. He must have been wondering when the Lord Jesus Christ would take control of the nation's government and free them from the power of Rome. There are times when we have to be reminded of the big picture of God's dealings with men. By our own nature we want, and kind of expect, all the changes needed to be done, to happen right now. The fact of having the whole scriptures in our hand helps us to see things going on in the world from God's perspective.

The Lord Jesus does understand the needs that are linked with our humanity. He knew what John was looking for and He gave him a message that would assure him God was working; that his call to repentance was reaching people. The Lamb of God was dealing with sin and its consequences. John had the nation, the corporate body in mind. Jesus was changing the hearts and minds of those who made up the nation. The work of the kingdom of God was going on in the individuals. John's vision was limited to a small nation and a small number of people. The kingdom of heaven is composed of multiplied millions of people who will all be a permanent part of the work of God and will be actively involved in that for ever. John had his call and work that was effective. He fulfilled the purpose for which he was chosen. He was greater than other prophets in that he saw the result of his prophecies fulfilled while he was still alive. He was the true forerunner, the Elias who was promised. We each have a calling. The people of God have been gifted by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Spirit is within us; the Father and the Son are with us. So, the work God intends from us, is being done effectively when we do not doubt what God is doing through us. John didn't know all the things that would take place by the Lamb of God he proclaimed to the people. People in the kingdom know Christ and also have experienced the value of His finished work on the cross. Those entering the kingdom are not taking a casual stroll into it. There must be faith and courage, determination and endurance to enter the kingdom of heaven. There will be obstacles to overcome. The Lord Jesus evaluated John and his work as a prophet and as one taking on Elijah's role. He boldly confronted sin and he pointed people to the Lord, fulfilling his work as a prophet effectively.

The Lord then evaluated the people of that generation. Whatever He said or did, they opposed. Like children who play weddings or funerals, the Pharisees took the opposite view from His. Their cynical, skeptical attitude was because His message challenged their comfortable, self-centered lives. It is necessary when we are confronted with truth, to evaluate ourselves and see if there are changes, we must make in our lives to be consistent with our message and our Christian testimony.

As I followed in my mind the activities of the Lord in that area where He did so many miracles, it became very clear to me He sees beyond the external affairs of people and looks on their hearts. Even though God has blessed us with many things, people take them for granted and before long think they deserve them. Self-satisfied and self-centered people often overlook the God of heaven and think they are a god to themselves. The phrase, "I am a good person even though I make a few mistakes," is quite common among those we meet. Many do not like grace because they feel capable of meeting all their own needs and do not want to be dependant on anyone. Not too many every ask for mercy - not even convicted criminals. They look for others to blame for the things that have happened to them. God draws near to those who know their need and admit their guilt and accept responsibility for their own sin. When there is genuine repentance for sin and faith in Christ, God extends His mercy without hesitation or any qualifying actions.

The Lord Jesus also evaluated the need of those who are burdened down with the cares of life and have a sense of guilt for sin. His words revealed the extent of the interest and unity of the Father and Son as they act on behalf of those who are willing to come as children to Him. The self-sufficient people who are well learned in the ways of the world will usually miss the eternal blessings of God that are understood and received by faith. Those who are humble and admit their need of God, are the ones who will come to Him and find the rest they seek. He knows in an intimate way every issue and event of life we face. The Father and the Son know each other completely. When we are yoked to Him, we too can learn the intimacy of personal fellowship and communion with our Lord. He frees us from oppressive burdens and helps us to learn what His meekness and lowliness is like. He doesn't take away the obligation and privilege of labor with, and for, Him and is able to accomplish the purposes He has for us. The yoke and burdens the Lord allows us to bear is not something that is oppressive. It is a great joy to share in the work of the kingdom with the King of kings Himself.

To sum up the value of labor for God is beyond our ability to do.
We are not able to really measure the worth God puts on a human soul.
When He lets us take a brief look through His eyes at the labor and service of others -
Then we can rejoice when we see some of the blessings that flow through our sisters and brothers.

One may be a messenger like John was for the Lord, another a harvester in the field.
Some may serve Him the quiet of home-life, others wield the sword and shield.
Whatever we are called to, God equips us, we need to do what we do for Him.
There will be some who need to "stay by the stuff," while others go souls to win.

One thing all kingdom people have in common is they are all people of faith.
They had their start in their walk with the Lord by experiencing His saving grace.
The power they have is not of their own, it comes only through the Spirit of God.
He enables them to live and serve Him acceptably when they are yoked unto the Lord.

There are many places we will go where for some reason no interest is shown.
Others may find a lot of interest where plain Gospel preaching is not known.
I may wish I was in a place where there seem more results when the Gospel is daily preached.
For His own reasons God has placed me where I am, so those around me I can reach.

When the final day comes and things are reviewed before the Lord at His judgment seat.
It will be a great joy when we find out what the Lord used, and the people we there will meet.
One has sown seed, another has watered, God Himself gave the increase.
All will be delighted when we see our Lord honored after the labors of life have ceased.

With a quiet joy we take upon us His yoke so that the burdens of life -
Will not cause grief and weariness, for His strength makes our burdens light.
The Father has revealed to us what really counts and what His will really means.
The whole of the Godhead works on our behalf to bring from my life what never could have been.

"Father, I trust that what Thou hast given me to do can be blessed by Thee. May the words spoken and yet to be spoken be acceptable to Thee and bring results in the salvation of souls. The Lord's people are praying and there is a deep desire I believe to see Thee honored in precious souls being saved. Please help Thy servant to speak for Thee this day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 11:25-26. *"At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."*

REVEALED.

The future's not bright, it is hidden from sight
To those who seem so wise.
But to children of the day, on the heavenly way,
What's ahead is clear to our eyes.

When the Lord was here, it was made very clear
He was truly the Son of God.
It seems strange to me, that others thought that He
Wasn't the Messiah God had foretold.

Even John the Baptist, when he heard of all Christ did
Said, "Are You He, or look we for another?"
He was undecided, because many, Christ derided,
Though He knew Christ, when he was in his mother.

All the people gathered round, and their fickle voices sound,
Like children playing games of death and marriage.
They were unresponsive, wanting only things that He gave,
Though blind and the poor believed the message.

In all the cities there, where His mighty works declare
He really is who He has claimed to be.
With an unreasonable bent; they refused to repent,
And the consequences they have yet to see.

As Jesus prayed the Father, He knew there was no other
Way to reach the prudent and the wise.
But with simple faith in Him, the simple will go in,
While the skeptics and unbelievers all will die.

“O God of the simple and babes: I am glad that faith isn't some complicated idea that goes beyond the reach of most people. We who are simple can get the message of the Gospel clearly, yet so many educated people seem to think they are nearly gods themselves. Have mercy on this lost generation, and in some way let those who are honestly looking, find Christ. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MATTHEW 12

There were challenges to the King's authority...

- In the rejection of John, the Baptist. 11:1-19
- In the condemnation of the cities. 11:20-30
- In the controversy over His authority. 12

Conflict concerning the Sabbath, v.1-21

Conflict concerning Jesus power and its source, v.22-37

Conflict concerning a sign, v.38-50

CONTROVERSY OVER SABBATH-LABOR, v.1-8

- The disciples were poor men involved in missionary work. They understood who Christ was, and did not hesitate to eat from the field.
- The Pharisees did not criticize the disciples but Christ. They put the responsibility for their actions on Him. He had set them free from the traditions of men.
- In Christ's answer He assumed responsibility for their actions. He reminds them that necessity can over-rule ceremony [1Sam.21:1-6].
- He is, in essence, saying your criticism is due to ignorance, not enlightenment. They did not understand the things of God.
- The King is saying that He has the right to use the Sabbath as He chooses. If priests are free from guilt when offering sacrifices, how much more He who is Lord of the Sabbath.
- Ethics are always more important than rituals.

CONTROVERSY OVER SABBATH-HEALING, v.9-13

- The Pharisees made an immediate connection between the Lord and a man who had a great need. He makes His point by showing ownership, “If a man has one sheep,” not “If a man see one sheep.” He is not just claiming the Sabbath belongs to Him, but the man belongs to Him.
- Ownership is the emphasis, and this is a work of necessity. This is My man. He is Lord of the Sabbath because it is His day, He is Lord of the corn of the field which He makes grow, and by healing and saving this man on the Sabbath, He is fulfilling the purpose of the Sabbath. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath and particularly to that which is His own.
- As He moved out of the synagogue, He healed them all; they were all His.
- He is greater than the temple; Lord of the Sabbath; Owner of man and the Restrainer of judgment.

PHARISEES SEEK TO DESTROY JESUS, v.14-21

- Jesus knew that the scripture relating to Jehovah's Servant had to be fulfilled [Isa.42:1-4]. The Trinity is identified in this passage – Christ is “My Servant.” His “Spirit” was on Christ, the Messiah, who proclaimed justice and gave nations hope.
- Christ restrained from judgment during His ministry of grace. He withdrew so that He would not smite them for their hypocrisy.
- Bruised reeds are weakness that is weakened further. Smoking flax is destroying itself. He withheld from this judgment to accomplish His work in His own way, and send out blessing to the Gentiles. His mercy had not yet been completely shown. There was more to accomplish.

PHARISEES BLASPHEME THE HOLY SPIRIT, v.22-30

- Here is an underhanded attack. The man brought to Him was without any ability to communicate. He was possessed with a demon. Yet, He was able to instantaneously heal the man.
- The effect of the miracle reveals what the Pharisees complaint was, and why they attacked the Lord Jesus. Now observers believed He could be the Son of David.
- He answers their attacks by a simple statement; “a kingdom divided...” would mean Satan was working for his own destruction.
- The next statement points out the inconsistency of their position, because there were others who were casting out demons and practicing exorcism.
- He now declares that by the power of the Holy Spirit He cast out demons, and they must concede that the kingdom of God has come.

PHARISEES COMMIT THE UNPARDONABLE SIN, v.31-37

- The one unforgivable sin is permanently rejecting Christ [Jn.3:18, 36]. Some would not be able to comprehend a divine Person living among men, and allowances were made for such actions as speaking against the Son of Man. The power evidenced by His deeds should have never been misunderstood.
- Jesus had just performed a great miracle of healing and casting out demons, but the Pharisees rejected this witness of divine power and authority. They attributed His powers to Satan. This specific sin cannot be produced today because the Lord Jesus isn't here in His physical presence on earth.
- They demonstrated an attitude that is permanently resistant to the Spirit of God, the deity of Christ and the saving power of the Gospel. The Pharisees were strongly condemned by the Lord because their hearts were evil.
- There are three parts to this statement: the first is a warning that if unbelief is persisted in, there is no forgiveness. The second is an appeal to make the tree good and not attribute good fruit to an evil tree. The third is a severe condemnation that cannot be mistaken

THE DEMAND FOR A SIGN, v.38-45

- Jesus had just performed a very significant sign-miracle when he filled out and completely healed a withered hand and another of authority over the powers of darkness. These men were not prepared to accept any sign the Lord might give them. Their use of the word "Master" or "Teacher" was an insult because they refused His teaching.
- The last sign would be that of Jonah. Any other sign would have no effect upon them. In the giving of this last sign, His death, burial and resurrection, a whole new opportunity would be extended to them to repent and believe the Gospel.
- The last judgment is the verdict passed on these men and their generation. The men of Nineveh were honest, they received the sign, they heard Jonah's preaching and they repented. The queen of Sheba listened to the wisdom of a man. So less enlightened people responded, while there were those there, and today, who should understand but reject the striving of the Spirit of God and reject Christ.
- The last state of such people who cast out the unclean and do not replace it with the clean, is much worse than at the first. We must take care that outward cleanness and decoration does not take the place of a repentant, grace-filled, heart-warmed person whose reality is not "put on."

THE TRUE BRETHREN OF JESUS, v.46-50

- Mary and her children must have heard of the plans of those who wanted to harm her Son. However, natural ties do not have priority over our devotion to God and His people.
- The Lord did not lose His affection or fail in His love to His mother and brothers. There is the understanding given that the will of God for us is supreme over all other considerations.
- So, if we are actually doing the will of our heavenly Father, we are related to Him as family – as next of kin. It is through this spiritual relationship and devotion to God's will, that His kingdom is set up. Sacrificial service is a demonstration of how close we are to that which is His will for us.

MATTHEW 12

OPINIONS AND TRADITIONS

It didn't seem like the Pharisees could ever understand the basis of the law they professed to uphold. When the Lord Jesus lived out what the law's intention was, they chose to reject, not only what He did and taught, but who He was. The man-made commands they had added to the law made it possible for them to keep "the letter of the law" while missing the point of the law all together. When one is hungry and eats what can be found at hand to eat, is much different than going out to harvest a crop that they might profit thereby. But to the Pharisees, they would consider a handful of food from a field a harvest. When one has a physical need and you are in a position to help that person, that is very different from one going about the daily tasks of life. When an animal is in danger of dying, the present need is what we are obligated to meet. The law and its demands do not rise above human need. It was given that we might act in love to God without reservation and accomplish the purpose of meeting needs of people around us. The conviction a broken law leads to is because our tendency is to excuse ourselves from the spirit of the law, and by the law become aware of our sin.

Legalism isn't because the law of God is in any way wrong, but because we try to qualify it with opinions and traditions of our own making. There will be those who want to impose their traditions on others. That leads to the sin of sectarianism. When people of faith live by faith, they will find their guidance in the Word of God

rather than opinions of men. That is not legalism. If for some reason we develop convictions that are not based on the Word of God - that is legalism. When that happens, those convictions have to be abandoned and we must get back to what God intended the law to do in the first place.

As I followed the path of the Lord, I saw Him leave that place rather than continue the confrontation He had been engaging the Pharisees in. There are times when we will have to do the same. The Lord had other work to do and other people to teach beside the Pharisees. It was not time for Him to die yet. We too may have to walk away from something rather than go on in confrontation because the whole work we are involved in could be adversely affected by continuing to try to change the minds or opinions or traditions others may hold.

When the work of God we are engaged in does not seem too effective and there are no great results to be seen, this does not mean we are wrong in what we are doing. As was the case when the Lord was here, some things are best to be done quietly and without fanfare because God has His own plans and purposes to be fulfilled. It is not unusual for us to find out at a later date that God has been working in ways and with people we know nothing about. When the Spirit of God leads and guides us, we may not know at the time how it is being done. "Wait on the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart."

There is no question about the fact that Satan will seek to hinder and destroy any work of God. He attempted to take the life of the Lord Jesus at His birth. He tried to get the Lord to yield to his temptations in the wilderness. Again, in the Lord's hometown of Nazareth, he tried to have Him killed by being pushed over a cliff. Even before He was crucified, He tried to get the Lord to avoid going to the cross as the sacrifice for our sins. There never is an iota of truth in any statement that would say Satan is the source of a work of God. Doubts, deception and defeat are from the world, the flesh or the devil - not from God. We cannot remain in a neutral position when it comes to following Christ. Either we follow God and His ways and His Word, or we follow the god of this world, Satan. To attribute the work of the Lord Jesus when the Holy Spirit convicts and brings one to repentance and they reject the Savior, leaves a person without hope of salvation.

Often, we do not realize what is within us until a situation arises where we must speak without any subterfuge or false modesty. The words that come from one's mouth reveals what is in one's heart. Cleaning up speech can be done but that doesn't solve the problem as to what is in a person's heart. When the Holy Spirit changes one from within by giving us a new nature, then the new motives and new attitudes toward God and others, changes us not only inside but also what we say and do outwardly.

There are those today who want to see signs as to the Person and power of Christ before they will believe on Him and trust His Word. Miracles may give a proof of the power of Christ but as to who He is in His Person - that must be accepted by faith. That faith comes through God's Word. There is plenty of evidence in the Bible as to the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. The work of God in believers is proof that faith in Christ is a living vital faith by which we are born into the family of God; by which we live and die in faith knowing that we are with the Lord. The sign of Jonah in the day in which our Lord lived, is the same sign we have today - the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Gospel message. The evidence of His truth is already in place. When people try to clean up their lives on their own strength without a work of God in their soul, that does not last. In fact, it leaves people more open to satanic activity because we are empty of all spiritual opinions, let alone spiritual life.

The Lord Jesus always honored His Father and mother. He always accepted responsibility for His family even seeing to the welfare of His mother when He was on the cross. But it was then, and still is today, a fact that our spiritual relationships are as binding as our physical relationships. We cannot ignore the needs of our family and we cannot ignore the needs of God's family. For us to honor our parents is still an intact responsibility. The same is true in relation to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The opinions we have are only relevant to the degree they correspond to God's Word.
Far too often people make decisions without a real "Thus saith the Lord."
When that happens, our opinions get in the way of the words of grace and truth.
Only when those opinions are based on the Bible, are they of any worth.

Jehovah's Servant was identified by the scriptures of truth He lived.
People could see He was fulfilling them well as He of Himself did give
To meet their needs and make plain to them He was truly the Servant of God.
The foolish opinions of those who condemned had no validity in the light of the Word.

When the Lord chooses to use us, we never need worry when we are sure it's God will we do.

Anything others may say we can ignore, the proof of rightness comes when we're through.
There is no reason to doubt or fear what people may do or say.
Many traditions men have made, were formed for those living in another day.

Opinions based on the Word of God, and traditions that bring God glory,
Are ones we need to heed and follow when they are consistent with His-story.
Some things have been tried and proven to be the will of God for every nation.
Other practices have worked all down through the ages as means of bringing salvation.

Some no longer want to preach the Gospel; they say it is out of date.
"It has pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save..." is what the scriptures
state.
So, in spite of changing opinions we continue, but some we will need to abandon.
If they don't have the glory of God as their point, we will need to truly forsake them.

God doesn't leave us to our own devices, He has a pattern He wants us to follow.
When we do His will, He can use that to ensure the words we say are not hollow.
Mothers and brothers, those who love Him will be on the same page and agree
That God is able to bless and accomplish far more than we can ask or see.

"There are times Father, when I feel very inadequate to meet the needs that are upon us. This is one of those times. You know the unbelievers who are attending these Gospel meetings and know what they need to hear. Would it please Thee today to put in my mind and heart the message and the words I am to speak tonight. May I be found in full fellowship with Thee as I speak to those who will attend. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 12:18. *"Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen: My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles."*

EXTRAORDINARY!

"Behold My Servant:" See Him in His life, labor and love. We look at this extraordinary One and see a delighted Master commenting on One who He picked out above all others to carry out the Master's will. He was uniquely qualified; He brought pleasure and full satisfaction to the soul of His Master. It wasn't only that He was qualified to do what He was asked, but He was willing to do it. Beyond that, the Master put His own spirit upon Him so that He and the One whom He served would think and act as one. Surely my soul is delighted with such a Servant who unhesitatingly does the will of God. I too, am to be a servant. "A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation."

"Behold the Lamb:" See this Lamb in His sinlessness and sacrifice. "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter..." Why such a Lamb as this, slain, as it were, from before the foundation of the world? A sinless substitute was needed and there was no other; no other man; no other way; no other one who was the same as me without the sin problem, and who could or would do such a thing as to bear away the sin of the world.

"Behold the Man:" See Him in His beauty and sympathy. He was brought forth before the people who rejected Him. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He stood before them bound, humiliated, abused – an object of normal sympathy. In the beauty of His nature; in the holiness of His character; in the righteousness of His life He should have been received with open arms and hearts – but no. When Pilate said, "Behold the Man," they said "Away with Him, we will not have this Man to reign over us." Thank God, I look upon Him and can honestly say, "He is altogether lovely. He is the fairest of ten thousand to my soul."

"Behold the Sower:" See Him in His words, works and faithfulness. See this Holy One, moving among the people and blessing them with His works as He heals the sick, feeds the hungry, forgives the sinners, befriends the friendless, gives life to the dead, blesses the children. His words of truth and life sound forth so that the testimony is given, "Never man spake like this Man." His words are truth and they are life. His faithfulness to God was seen and heard as He glorified God here on the earth. May I too, in my own life, "glorify God in my body and my spirit which are His."

"Behold your King:" See Him in His might, majesty and authority. The cross is past; the resurrection is an established fact; the ascension of the Lord has taken place, so now we wait for His return. At the right hand of God, we "Behold" our King; as the One that moves the hearts and actions of earthly rulers, we "Behold" our King; as the One that changes dark sinners into children of the light, we "Behold" our King. We

see Him in His might and majesty. We see Him in His dignity and authority. We say of him, "My Lord and my God."

"Behold the Greater." See Him in His supremacy, pre-eminence and glory. There is no one that can compare with Him. Solomon in splendor had only reflected light. The flowers of the field have glory only as it comes from the dark ground with life from the Greater. The mountains in their intimidating greatness and silence only reach so high and then with their long fingers point to Him who is the Greater. And here am I in limited, weak, almost speechless, reverence before Him saying, "Unto us which believe, He is the preciousness." And He is not ashamed to call us "brethren" and "friends."

"Behold your God:" See Him in His deity, dignity and glory. He is the Father of eternity; the great "I AM"; the Self-revealing One; the Originator of all things; the Creator; the Alpha and Omega; the God of Grace; the God of Peace – all the titles and names and honors men could ever give to Him are nothing compared to who and what He really is. Heaven is His throne; earth is His footstool, and yet He stoops to dwell with and in men. He meets with His own; He hears their cries and the thoughts and intents of their heart He knows, and He answers according to His will.

"O God, the God of all and everything: my heart is fearful and glad at the same time to speak thus to Thee. With such extraordinary displays of Thy Person; I now go forth to join with others in worship, praise, adoration and thanksgiving. I go softly in my spirit; quietly in my heart; humbly in my mind to say "Thanks...honor...glory...praise be to Thee for who Thou art, Amen."

Matthew 12:35. *"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."*

ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART.

A vault lies deep within the guardhouse of my soul.
Words read, heard and expressed take their place –
On their shelf in the treasure-house they remain – forever.
Thoughts make their way continuously –
Sometimes orderly, other times scattered – but constantly,
In a place of their own, they wait there, and wait, and wait.
Actions done, leave indelible impressions – motives behind them –
They line up in endless rows and take their places – waiting.
Attitudes that express themselves on my face or hands –
Body-language is waiting for its turn to show its power.
Impressions: quick like flash-bulbs, others slow and invasive
Move into their places in the assigned recesses of my heart.
On and on they come; day after day in unceasing lines
They enter through the senses and take their places.
The heart-soul expands and receives each one – good or evil.
What am I to do? How am I to get and keep control of all these?
Is there some way to sort and sift all that enters into this guardhouse?

Clearly there are choices to be made – outward choices.
Choices for good or evil, choices that affect me – and others;
That bless or curse, that bring good or evil.
An opportunity is here: open the store-house;
Draw from the resources that lie within awaiting usage.
Don't hesitate: act in haste; the need is here and now.
Understanding from words – come forth!
Thoughts now in orderly fashion – make your presence known!
Past experiences that apply to this situation – act quickly!
Attitudes that have been cultivated – assess the situation!
Body-language – get out there and do your thing. You're needed!
Impressions learned by past similarities – give some guidance!
Meet this present need. We need some "good things."
Here, in this place, at this time, we need them NOW!

"Father God, I know every day is a new day and every situation is a new one. I pray that I am ready to respond as the need requires. I sincerely want whatever comes forth to be good and godly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MATTHEW 13

Mat.13:1-2. THE PLACE.

"The same day." The things that had gone before in chapter 12 had just taken place.

"Out of the house." In His early ministry, He was often in houses. From here on in His ministry, He is outside a lot.

"Great multitude." In spite of official rejection, there were many people interested in Him.

"He spake in parables." Before this He spoke in clear terms. People refused to listen to Him. From here on, He speaks in parables.

Mat.13:3-23. THE PLAN.

Parable: a comparison or an illustration. Something alongside of something else; an easily understood earthly story to give understanding to spiritual truth.

- Parables are instructive: to teach, you must communicate to people in analogies they understand. Spiritual concepts, hard to understand, can easily be understood when given in simple everyday terms.
- Parables are effective: 1] They make truth concrete because people think in pictures. 2] They make truth portable. If you remember the story, you can recover its meaning. 3] They make truth interesting. They grab attention. 4] They make truth personally discoverable.

First Parable: v.3-23. The Gospel being preached throughout the world.

1. The Sower: v.3; v.18; v.37. The Lord is the Sower in this parable.
2. The Seed: v.19. The Word of the kingdom. The message about the King and His kingdom. Seeds cannot be created by man. Man cannot produce seeds. The Lord does not call on us to create our own message. We do not produce new information about God; we build on the revelation of the Word – divine revelation.
3. The Soil: v.4-8; v.19-23. The issue is not the soil, but the condition of the soil. All soil can receive the seed if it was broken up and cleaned of weeds and rocks. The condition of the heart determines how receptive a person is to the Gospel.
 - The wayside hearer: hard-hearted; stiff-necked; unresponsive; indifferent. No repentance; no sorrow for sin; no guilt; no concern; no conviction.
 - The stony hearer: a quick response; emotional; moved by excitement; a good feeling; a lot of joy. They never deal with the issues. The results of inadequate evangelism. They have never been redeemed; not genuine; no root; unreal; offended.
 - The weedy hearer: "cares of this age"; "deceitfulness of riches"; falls into temptation; worldiness is to the heart, what weeds are to the soil; "you cannot serve two masters." These kinds of soil are to be expected.
 - The fruitful hearer: 1] The promise – there is good soil out there. 2] The product – fruitfulness; multiplied.

Mat.13:24-30,36-43. THE KINGDOM AND THE WORLD.

The wheat and the tares: true and false believers in the church age. We will never fully purge the world of counterfeits. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of this earth. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." [Ps.24:1]

"The Most-High God ruled." [Dan.5:21]. He has allowed Satan and sinners a certain amount of freedom. He has mediated His rule through the patriarchs, monarch, priest and prophets, and the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Ultimately, He will rule in the millennial kingdom and after that earth and heaven will be merged into the eternal kingdom.

The disciples were curious about the kingdom [Acts 1:6]. The disciples were confused about the kingdom. What about those whose rejected the kingdom?

THE NARRATION. Mat.13:24-30,36.

v. 24. The Scene: "his field"; "good seed".

v.25. The Sabotage: "while men slept." -- nighttime; "sowed tares". The time of attack is night-time. They slept, not because they were lazy but because it was night. The enemy sowed tares to ruin the crop. He sowed it "among" the wheat. It was everywhere throughout the whole field.

v.26-27. The Surprise: the servants were shocked because the tares were everywhere, not in just a few locations.

v.27-28. The Solution: let them alone until the wheat is ripe.

v.30. The Separation: at the harvest, when the wheat is ripe – burn the tares. Put the wheat in the barn.

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM: v.31-33

- The mustard seed: the kingdom will start small and will spread world-wide. It will be widespread and influential and be a haven for many diverse people. Small things can have large effects. All music comes from 8 notes. English comes from 26 letters.

- Expectation: the disciples thought the kingdom of glory, power and majesty would come, but it didn't. Jesus explains why in Mat.13.
- Explanation: parable#1. The Lord is King but He will allow people to reject His message. Parable #2. We are to simply evangelize and leave the results until the end of the harvest. Parable #3. The kingdom will have a small beginning but will ultimately influence the whole world.
- The first two speak of the battle of right and wrong; the second two of the victory of the good.
- The first two describe the nature of the kingdom: believers and unbelievers, side by side; the second two describe the power of the kingdom.
- The first parable talks about the breadth of the kingdom; the second parable talks about the length – the end of the harvest; the third parable talks about the height (extent) of the kingdom; the fourth parable talks about the depth (hidden in the world).

v.31. It began as a small group of the church but has since become a monstrosity including atheists, idolaters, and evil-doers of every kind. Its branches reach into every society and every nation, church councils, ecumenical movements leading up to Babylon the Great.

INSTRUCTION:

- The parable introduced: planted for oil, medicine, flavor.

Lessons from mustard seed: small things can have large effects.

- All music comes from 8 notes.
- English comes from 26 letters.
- The kingdom will start small and will become world-wide.
- Sin starts small but doesn't stop.

Lessons from leaven: not everything can be seen that is evil – or good.

- Thoughts, ambitions, plans.
- Doctrines, practices, decisions.
- Permeating effects in far greater proportion than we can ever conceive.

v.32. The Holy Spirit says, "Come out of her My people" [Rev.18:4]. The birds represented Satan in the world. The kingdom of heaven is infiltrated with all kinds of forms of departure in doctrine and practice.

INSTRUCTION:

- The potential illustrated: mustard seed can come from a small seed to a bush large enough to ride under on a horse. The mustard seed is the smallest agriculture seed. Weeds and wild flowers are not planted as a crop even though they may be smaller. The mustard tree does not have the properties of a timber tree but a tree large enough for birds to make a nest in its branches.

INTERPRETATION:

- The commencement: explained that it would start small with a little group of people
- oppressed, rejected and blasphemed. Exemplified by the Babe in the manger that burst forth into an eternal kingdom.
- The culmination: the kingdom started out very small and it will be very large in the end. Ps.72:8-11... "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." Isa.54:2-3. "Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shalt inherit the nations."
- Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and Zechariah all prophesied about the extent of Jesus' kingdom. This parable is meant to encourage us to remember that, even though the battle is intense and we are in the minority, the kingdom is growing. The Lord wanted His disciples to know that they were going to win in the end.
- Trees in the Old testament represented the Babylonian kingdom in Dan.4 and the Assyrian kingdom in Ez.31:3-6. Large nations have often been described as a big tree with small nations sheltering under its branches. The USA is an example of this. In
- Christ's kingdom, there are those that shelter in Christianity's blessing even though they don't know Christ. There is an environment of protection for all, even those not in the kingdom.

v.33. Leaven: the two thoughts regarding this passage. Evil in this case.

THE INTERNAL POWER OF THE KINGDOM:

INSTRUCTION:

- The common practice was to leaven dough causing it to rise.
- A small portion, leavens a large amount.
- The pattern was a small amount in 3 measures of meal.
- The power is that a little can do a lot.
- The person doing this is a woman.

- The particulars are that a little, influences a lot in a positive way.
- The leaven has to be placed in the meal.

INTERPRETATION:

The leaven (the kingdom) influences the meal (the world). Here it represents the good influence of Christ's kingdom, Gospel and people in the world. Often leaven represents evil in the world or in people, but not in this way and case. Leaven is really used to illustrate permeation as in a church or inn doctrine. Often the permeating influences of past life affect us now. Another interpretation is, the meal is the kingdom and the leaven is evil influences in the kingdom.

v.34. The multitudes heard the parables but not the interpretations.

v.36. The people are sent away and the disciples are taken into the house.

THE INTERPRETATION.

v.37-38. The sower identified: The Son of man.

v.38. The field identified: the world, not the church.

v.38. The good seed identified: the children of the kingdom planted by the Lord all over the world wherever He wants us. The church in the world, not the world in the church.

-- We are in the world to perfect the saints: we are matured by the difficulties the world gives to Christians. 1Pet.5:10. "after – suffered – make you perfect; Jn.16:33. "tribulation."; Jas.1:2-4. trials mature us.

-- We are in the world to persuade sinners: to influence tares into becoming wheat. Jn.17:15. we are supposed to be in the world.

v.38-39. The tares and the enemy identified: tares – children of the wicked one; the enemy – the devil, darkness and evil personified. Eph.2:2. "children of disobedience"; Jn.8:44. "your father the devil (Jewish leaders); 1Jn.3:4-24. comparisons; 1Jn.5:19. in the wicked one; Mat.5:37. unrighteous behavior proceeds from the devil. The Lord sows, believers in the world. Satan sows his people everywhere. They are everywhere, doing the same thing God's people do.

v.39. The harvest time identified: the end of the age. We wait until then even though we would like to see the world changed.

-- Unnecessary condemnation: if we try to pull out the weeds (judge the world), we are going to end up condemning Christians because we don't have divine insight. Some Christians have tried it (Crusaders etc.)

-- Necessary compassion: Christ's patience. The Lord was patient tolerant and gracious. He treated sinners with meekness, love and kindness. God is still waiting for sinners to come to Him. We are not executioners. Christian principles: we are in a difficult position because we are in the world. However, wheat will always be wheat. We may be next to the tares but they can't change our nature.

v.39. The reapers identified: the angels. Christians are to influence the world. We preach against sin but love sinners. The angels will do the reaping.

v.40. The comparison: we wait until the King comes back with His angels [2Thes.1:7-9].

v.41-42. The condemnation: gather together everyone; cast away those who offend Him. Death by fire is the most horrible experience.

v.43. The conversion: judgment is over, the kingdom come. "the righteous will shine forth..."

THE APPLICATION.

v.43. Are you a child of the kingdom or a child of the enemy? If you are a child of the kingdom; influence the world for God.

v.44-46. The pearl of great price: The Church in the world; the treasure in the field.

The net: the end of the age.

Mat.13:47-52. WARNINGS OF HELL

God allows both good and evil to be together during this time – the wheat and tares. Eventually there will be judgment. This last Parable tells of coming judgment when the redeemed and the damned are separated. The Lord gives us this teaching in a word picture.

THE PICTURE, V.47-48

v.47. The net used for the catch is a dragnet that brings in everything before it. This is different from the casting net the Lord uses to illustrate catching people for Christ in Mat.4:19.

v.48. The good fish were kept and the bad were cast out.

THE PRINCIPLE,

v.49. All are being brought by the Lord to eternity where they will be separated on that shore. The time with will happen is at the end of the age. The angels are mentioned as separators here in Mat.13:41 and as

agents of God's judgment in Mat.24:31; 25:31; Rev.14:18-19. This is not a parable like the field where good and evil coexist, but this is teaching of eternal separation and warnings of hell. The kingdom of heaven moves unseen toward the shore like when a fish is touched. It moves faster ahead of the net until they are dragged on shore flailing until they die.

v.50. Hell is not eliminated from the Bible. The Lord warned of it in Mat.5:22, 29-30; 8:12; 11:20-24; 12:36-37 and in Mark and Luke as well.

- The place of punishment: misery, darkness, suffering
- The torment of punishment: body and soul are forever and ever in unrelieved torment
- The degrees of punishment: some will suffer more than others [Lu.12:47-48]
- The duration of punishment: endless; rejecters of God and His grace have made their own eternal choice

THE PROCLAMATION, v.51-52

v.51. "Do you understand?" Good and evil are together for a time and then comes eternal separation. Confirmation: "Yea Lord." We must go and warn people of coming judgment.

v.52. You disciples are now like scribes, biblical scholars. Use your influence. You are like one who has supplies in his stores house to distribute to meet people's needs. Scatter the treasure for the benefit of others. Some will be saved and others will be lost. Whatever the results – people must hear the truth and be warned.

HIS OWN PEOPLE

Unbelieving Nazarenes

v.53. The Lord leaves Capernaum for the last time.

v.54. He comes to the familiar scenes of Nazareth. The men of Nazareth were familiar with Him and wondered at His fame. They had a dangerous attitude of familiarity. His teaching and insight could not be denied so they had another attitude of astonishment.

v.55-56. Because of these two attitudes they came back to the ordinary and natural view of thinking of the Lord as just like them.

v.57. Their final attitude was they were offended or made to stumble. "He was a rock of offense." They could not or would not admit to what was obvious.

v.58. He did a few miracles but their unbelief stood in the way of the purpose of the miracles. There are always going to be things we cannot understand. As believers who have known the Lord and have experienced His grace in our lives, we dare not treat the Lord or the Lord's truth in a casual familiar way. He is our Lord and Master. We must never allow as spirit of unbelief to hinder our faith and service.

MATTHEW 13

KINGDOM TEACHING

The journey of Jesus brought Him to the shore where He sat in a boat and taught kingdom principles to the people. This time it was ethical and personal teaching. He took time to explain what the kingdom is like. All over the world God's Word is going forth. The seed has life in itself. That seed has to be distributed on the soil in order for the life principle within it to respond to the warmth and dampness of the earth. It also needs the heat of the sun and then life springs forth. It is the same with the Word of God. The soil lies waiting. The warmth of the Holy Spirit and the water of the Word are ready to do the needed work to bring life. The Word of God has to be taken in hand and presented to the people of the world that they might hear God's truth. It is true that some seed doesn't enter into the earth because of the hardness of the ground. In the same way some seed doesn't enter the minds and hearts of people. The devil is there to take it away even as people listen to it. Often a person leaves the place where they heard the Word of God and immediately forget what they heard. We are ever conscious of the many ways Satan uses to keep people away from the kingdom of heaven.

There are the kinds of listeners: the stony ground hearers, recognize the truth of God when they hear it. It often brings conviction of sin on them and it seems like they may be truly saved. The joy they say they have when they hear the Gospel, seems like that of one who is saved by grace. The problem is that when the Gospel of God reaches the conscience it doesn't usually produce feelings of joy but sorrow when people are brought to awareness of the awfulness of sin and repent of that toward God. Joy accompanies the relief of knowing one's sins are forgiven after they are saved rather than hearing of the need of salvation. The seed may have germinated in the awakening of one's need but there is no root into the warmth of the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the seed of the Gospel goes into places where thorns are rooted there, a struggle for the life sustaining power in it occurs. Thorns draw on the same nutrients as good seed but brings forth that which is

not of God. Materialism, pleasure, ambition, fame and success all compete for the same life source. The soil that can give good life-sustaining food, can also produce that which is deceitful and harmful.

In the kingdom of heaven often there are difficulties in determining what is true and what is false. There are those who use the same words as the True Sower of the seed, the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man. But being "born again" may to some people be a church ordinance or a resolve to make changes in life rather than a work of the Holy Spirit using the Word of God. Some will use the word "saved" as an experience they have had rather than a work of God that is the result of one coming to Christ and receiving Him. We are not always able to discern the real from the false, so we must faithfully continue to present God's truth and leave the sorting out and the results to Him. The real and the counterfeit are known by Him and in time the reality of a confession will show. It is true - "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Interestingly the Lord used the smallest seed a farmer would plant, a mustard (canola) seed, to teach us that in the kingdom of heaven God can produce much from what seems very small beginnings. The canola oil comes from a small source, but can be used with other crushed seeds to bring great benefit for many people. The reality of faith at work can never be overestimated. It is possible for God to use what seems to us an insignificant act of trust to bring about blessing when He adds the power of His Person and life to a simple act of faith. In a similar way, a little bit of yeast that is unseen and remains unseen can produce large results either for good or bad. What seems to be invisible can have a great impact on the world around.

Many people do not have any idea of the value of the kingdom of heaven among them. To many people, Christians are a hindrance to what they feel is important. But to God, what is valuable is worth more than the whole world. That is the Church He bought and paid for with the blood of Christ. There never should be a question in my mind either, as to what is of real importance in life. I need to learn what is valuable to God and is what is of real value to me. There are some things I need to abandon forever, so that what is important might take the place of greatest importance in my life.

When presenting the Gospel to people God has called me to reach out to, I may have to take steps to separate from what is obviously not good. It is right for the ones who are really saved to be separate from those who are not. There are evidences of reality and sincerity that go along with a real work of God, that are not hard to identify. God knows those that are His. He will produce through those that are truly His, whatever is needed. In the treasury house of God there are provisions for every need. It is our business to bring those things that are suitable for the issues of the moment, to people who are in need of hearing those truths. What they hear by way of review and by teaching, may be things they have never heard before.

Reactions to teaching often varies. Some will appreciate what they hear and others will find fault. It is not unexpected when people who know us well, criticize what we teach. If it is taught by someone they do not know, the reaction would be quite the opposite. Any service we do, really needs to be honestly done for God as our priority.

The outcome we will leave for Him to judge, as to suitability and as to how the hearers respond to the teaching. Any teaching that is given, whether it is how to enter the kingdom, or the conduct, principles and practices in the kingdom, has to be received as from the Lord and acted on in faith.

The things taught by the Lord in the past -
Need to be applied by the hearers in the present.
Kingdom principles are made to last -
There is a real purpose as to why they were sent.
When the truths of the Gospel are taught -
People respond in different ways.
Some buy the truth and sell it not -
Others' conscience by God's truth is not fazed.

There are going to be those who are not real -
Although they make professions of faith.
It is not us but the Holy Spirit who seals -
Those God reaches and saves by His grace.
So, we are limited in what we can do -
As far as determining who is in the kingdom.
God alone can see all the way through -
And knows those who have real salvation.

What we do know is God intends us to sow -
And sometimes we are called upon to water
The seed of the Word of God that we know -

Then pray God to make that seed prosper -
And bring forth good fruit that remains -
With evidence that is unmistakable.
Those who have been cleansed from sin's stains -
Can trust God with an assurance unshakeable.

“Gracious God, Thy Word is being sown here night after night and it seems like it is going somewhere good. It has also been sown and watered here for a long time. Would it please Thee to awaken those who are coming night by night to the reality that it is faith in Christ that saves, not their faith in their own believing. Give light to those in darkness I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Matthew 13:2. *“And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.”*

TRUTHS TO BE TOLD.

Out of the house to where the people are.
Out of the house God's truth to share.
Out of the house to the side of the sea;
There to teach truth that all might believe.

On the shore near the boat the multitude stands;
In parables He taught them the way God has planned.
The Lord knew that the people did not understand.
All the truths God wants them to know.

He went into the house the explanation to give.
In that house were those who believed.
They knew Jesus had come here to save;
All those who call on the Lord.

In the house He unfolded those things
That made clear the truths He came here to bring.
The future, the cost, the value of men,
Were explained by the Lord there that day.

Then He left there because the time had come
For Him to return back to His earthly home;
And for those He had taught after He had gone -
To practice what He had preached.

In His own country, instead of giving Him honor,
They were offended in Him, because of His power.
And were not willing to pay Him attention any longer,
Because they did not acknowledge Him Lord.

So, whether in public or in private, I must -
Acknowledge Him Lord - the Savior I trust.
And in my home and with my family, I rest -
In the Lord and the truths that He gives.

“O God in heaven, when Thy Son was here, how wonderful that He was willing to teach in all the places people could be found. Out in the open where everyone could hear, He gave the people what they needed to hear. In private, He gave clear explanations to those who had ears to hear. How I want and need to hear His word speaking to my soul. Amen.”

MATTHEW 14

Matthew 14: 1-2, 13

OPPOSITION: [Mat.14:1-22] to the King

- The Nazarenes (unbelief)
- Herod (superstition)
- Multitudes (materialism)

THE FALSE KING HEROD

v.1-2, 13 are connected. The Lord withdrew from the desire of the multitudes.

v.3-12. The Character of Herod

- A guilty conscience made him want to get rid of Jesus
- An ambitious, cruel tetrarch (ruler of ¼ of Israel)

- A descendant of Esau reigning over part of Israel (Jacob)
- He gave himself to excess
- A man of a troubled conscience
- He made an evil oath that violated every principle of right and truth and would not admit it was wrong

Lesson: If we have said something wrong, be willing to break from such a statement and do what is right.

Lesson: You cannot kill truth even though you may silence the voice that speaks it.

Lesson: If you reject the “voice” of the Lord, you have rejected the Person of the Lord. “No John – no Jesus.”

v.13. Herod never saw Jesus again until Pilate sent Jesus to him

- The True King sent a message one time to Herod and called him “that fox” [Lu.13:32-33]
- He could not kill Jesus until His “three days” of work were done. The first two days would be what men saw and the third day was the dark day when He was on the cross.
- Herod was abandoned by the Lord Jesus

Lesson: Sometimes it seems like the people are rejecting Christ, when it is really Christ rejecting them.

- The Lord turns away from one who rejected Him and meets the needs of many others
- The people wanted to make Him King [Jn.6:14-15]. The Lord is not made King by the choice of men.
- The motive of the people was material.

ACCEPTANCE: [Mat.14:22-36] by the Father as the King goes to converse with Him from whom He would receive the kingdom

NATURE: King’s authority

- The King could do mighty works here because there was a little simple faith in those who were convinced as to who He was
- Faith is not always bold but it is in the right Person we take hold on
- Those of His own city who thought they knew Him, kept Him from doing mighty works for them
- The fearful followers obeyed Him even though the normal action would have been to turn and run before the wind to the shore

OBEDIENT MEN: King’s acceptance

- They obeyed in perplexity
- Obeyed when fearful
- Obeyed and ventured in faith and had victory because of it
- Worshipped the King in simple words

Lesson: We may not know that God is doing, but He knows what is happening to us

Lesson: Even though He is at the right hand of God, He is immediately here to meet our need

Lesson: Most storms we understand and learn from them, but others come like a phantom in the dark night – we cannot explain everything

Lesson: Often the best things that happen to us come because of the darkest times

Lesson: What seems like a long time when we are going through trials is only a short time when looking back after it is over.

MATTHEW 14

MEETING NEEDS

As the Lord Jesus moved among the people, He met the wide variety of their needs in such a way that there was no question He was the answer to John the Baptist’s prophecy. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” The death of John the Baptist at the hands of the immoral king Herod, and because of a vengeful woman, moved the Lord Jesus to seek some privacy in a desert place. The faithful witness’s voice was now silent and perhaps the Lord wanted to go to a place to remember His faithful servant. When one dies who has been faithful to his calling, there is a void left among the servants of God that is hard to fill. Others may take that one’s place in the work of the Lord, but there will not be another just like that person. God calls His servants home when their work is done, but God’s work continues on. We miss the ones we labored with and the loss is great, but God’s kingdom work still goes on with others taking up the challenge. We may need to take some time to mourn their passing, and then we get up and go on about the work we have been called to.

The people who followed the Lord into the desert were just as needy as ever. There was no one else able to meet this need. How gracious and kind was the Lord Jesus as he was moved with compassion to meet their urgent needs. His own need to grieve the passing of His forerunner was overshadowed by the need of the multitudes who sought Him. Sincere compassion is a result of making the needs of others ourselves, and meeting them as best we can rather than expecting someone else to do that. There will always be those

around us who need us and who we can truly help. Compassion is a sense of loving and caring for others without an obligation of some sort that makes us act on behalf of others. We need to be aware of the hurts and real needs of those around us and comfort and care for them. The actual needs are so many that in ourselves we would not even try to respond to them. But God implants compassion in His own children of the kingdom so we can rise to the challenge of reaching out to the men, women and children of our day and place, and carry the bread of life the Lord gives to distribute to them.

There is a personal need each person in the kingdom has that no one else can actually help us with. That is the need of personal communion with God as our Gracious Heavenly Father. We must always make time for this. The Lord Jesus Christ and the Father are One, and yet the Lord made it a point of maintaining that relationship as a man with His God through prayer. The acknowledgement of the presence of God in every aspect of our lives is maintained through consistent prayer and communion. The point of praying is that we are found in fellowship with God and are allowed to participate with Him in His work. Through prayer we know what we are to do in the daily events of our lives.

The crossing of the Sea of Galilee would not have been an unusual event in the lives of some of those disciples. Going against the wind would have made the crossing slow and tedious because of the need of tacking to make any headway. The night was almost past when they saw the Lord coming to them walking on the water. This was not just a figure of speech as it is used today. This was an actual fact that He who is the God-Man used the power and authority He has over His own creation, to teach the disciples some important lessons. They would have learned visibly, and in the case of Peter, experimentally, that what is impossible with men is possible with God. They had already experienced the taste of the best wine being created instantly at the marriage in Cana. They had witnessed healing miracles performed by the Lord. They knew the Lord had power over death for He had raised the daughter of Jarius, back to life. They had experienced the miracles of five loaves and two fish being multiplied to feed from ten to fifteen thousand people.

Now they saw the Lord of the wind and the sea in control of the elements that are uncontrollable by man. The power of the Lord Jesus Christ is far greater than that of gravity, wind and sea all together. His authority over gravity was even extended beyond Himself when He told Peter, "Come." No power in earth or heaven can ever supersede His power. In the same way Peter sank under the control of the elements and gravity, so when we turn the eyes of our faith away from the Lord, we lose the effect of the power of God in our lives. There may be times in our lives when we have been given the privilege of God using us in unusual and even miraculous ways that will never come again. In these times, and hopefully at all times we are caused to confess in awe, "Truly Thou art the Son of God."

What constitutes a real need? When does there come a time to heed
The needs of our own soul?
When one well loved whose life we shared, one who for us really cared
When they are taken, we feel less than whole.
But our Father God who has compassion, in time like that can teach a lesson
That I need to learn.
He is father-like to me, and tends my hurts so carefully
It is natural to Him to turn.
Through events that happen which I can't control, He uses them to cultivate in my soul
A spirit of trust and faith.
And when the grief and sadness pass, and we are given a peace that lasts
We experience God's daily grace.
Often following those times when one's spirit is tender, God uses us personally that we
might render
Assistance to others in need.
He may not use some miraculous event, for it is for times like this we are sent
To bring blessing in Jesus' name.
God's grace to us we can pass along, to those who wonder why life seems wrong
And couldn't rise above it until we came.
Then we understand that it was for this hour, the Holy Spirit uses us and does empower
Us to act on God's behalf.
The compassion of Christ He gives us is sufficient, to fill gaps in another's life that is
deficient
And we can help them to grasp
That God is there in the bad times and good, and their hurt and sorrows are understood
By those who have been there too.
So, we trust the Lord to lead and guide, that others may find one in whom they can confide
Who will help bear the burdens, till this is through.

We won't feed five thousand men and walk on water, but by the power and grace of our heavenly Father
We can fulfill His will for us.
I know Him and trust Him - He is the Son of God, and by His grace I know Him as Lord
For everything in life - in God I trust.

"Father God, the needs of this day are different from yesterday. This morning I am rejoicing over a young woman who has professed to be saved. Others too have been attending these meetings and there is evident interest in salvation on the part of others. Would it not bring much glory to Thee Father, and to the Lord Jesus, if others were saved. We are not worthy of this but the Lord Jesus is, and I pray that others may confess Him as Savior and Lord. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 14:18. *"He said, 'bring them hither to Me.'"*

WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

[vs.1-13]

Whatever you have is valuable to Him:
For John, it was the voice of the prophet.
He warned and entreated men to turn from their sin,
His call to them all was, "Repent."
But when sin is condemned, men resent those who speak;
And will try to find some way to get out.
They silenced the voice when John's life Herod took.
But his message still sounds with a shout.

[vs.14-21]

What do you have for the Master to use?
Is there a need you alone can fulfill?
Five loaves and two fish, an opportunity to seize;
A young boy gives - and the multitude's filled.
The Lord gladly took what he willingly offered,
And used it to the glory of God.
When we give back to God, what He's made to prosper,
Then there's no doubting that He is my Lord.

[vs.22-36]

When our faith that seems strong, when we walk on the land,
It is tested in the valley and sea;
That is when in full confidence we stretch out our hand,
And He acts quickly to rescue me.
God is willing to use us, though our effort seems weak,
And the cost may not seem to be much.
To give what we have and His honor to seek -
He makes large things real, from small, with His touch.

"Father, I pray that the little things I have to give, may in some way be used for Thy glory. May they be blessed by Thee and a help to others as we seek to meet needs and serve our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MATTHEW 15

Matthew 15:1-20

OPPOSITION CONTINUES

v.1. A group of Pharisees deliberately come to oppose the Lord

v.2. There is a stated difference between them. The Pharisees held ceremonial washing to be of great importance. This idea came from an old tradition of a demon sitting on their hands at night and then moving to sit on their food and making it dangerous. They had added to the law of God a tradition of the elders.

v.3. The Lord directly answers the Pharisees and vindicate His disciple ("ye also") by charging them for breaking the law of God.

v.4-9. He illustrates them breaking God's commandment by using a mystic word "Corban" that they said meant it is a gift to God. Therefore, they do not need to use their means to meet the needs of their parents.

Lesson: Traditions of men may cause a break in one's relationship with God.

Lesson: It is possible to appear to honor God in words and one's heart be far away from God.

v.10-11. Now the Lord calls the multitude and condemns external religion and affirms the importance of a person's heart being right with God.

Lesson: The things that come from our essential being can defile us – what to eat or what not to eat; what to wear or what not to wear; what to do or what not to do – these things are trivialities.

Lesson: If we think observing rules that deal only with the physical make us spiritual, we have missed the whole point of our Christianity.

v.12-20. The disciples apparently were concerned because the Pharisees were offended. The Lord allows no excuse for error no matter who commits it. The systems of men will not stand the test of God's judgment. The whole idea of man's religion is in opposition to God's revealed will. If there is spiritual life, there will be spiritual purity. We respond in love to Christ because He is our King and we honor and obey His word – not man's traditions.

Lesson: We must be careful lest traditions bind us and harm us to the extent that warmth and love are not in evidence when we worship and serve our Lord

Lesson: Religious practices can actually separate us from God – even the Lord's Supper done as a tradition can bar communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson: Cultivate inward spirituality and it will eliminate the externals that negatively affect our worship of the Lord.

v.21-31. The Lord turns His back on those who opposed Him and goes to a region long under the curse of God. The woman was considered an outcast by the Jews but was willing to act in faith. The Lord Jesus extends the benefits of His kingdom to those we may overlook. In the feeding of 4000 event he word "basket" has a larger meaning here than the personal "basket" of chapter 14.

Lesson: The blessings of the kingdom of God reach to all who are willing to believe in Christ.

Lesson: We must not overlook those we may think are not worthy of salvation.

Matthew 15:29-39.

1. The Center of all attraction – Jesus; yet there is no limit to the many others who may be brought to Him [v.30].
2. The Cures of Jesus; lame, blind, dumb [Isa.38:5-6; 43:7; 41:1; Ps.51:15]. Then why should any hang back and fear to come?
3. The Care for others [v.20]. Who have you brought?
4. The Compassion of Jesus [v.32]. He heals the body, then feeds it [Pro.19:23].
5. The Confusion of the disciples [v.33]. They had forgotten [14:17]. Do we ever forget mercies; yet they had perfect faith with them [v.34].
6. The Command of Jesus: "sit down" – no hurry; "on the ground" – humility.
7. The Commission of Jesus [v.36].
8. The Compensation of Jesus [v.37].

MATTHEW 15

FROM THE HEART

The Lord Jesus was again preached in Capernaum when the teachers of the law came to pass their judgment on His teaching. These people were considered those of authority when it came to the interpretation of the law and what the Old Testament scriptures meant doctrinally. For many years there had been added to the law of God, traditions that were made by men like themselves. These were not actually written for the most part until 200 years later when they became known as the Mishnah. But these Jewish leaders considered them to be part of the law. One of the problems with traditions is their source is men. The Source of the law is God. Opinions of men vary. Traditions have as their objective outward appearances that hopefully clarify questions by those who want habits and forms. Traditions may have a local and temporary value but their source is not in God. The commandments of God when acted upon personally begin in the heart and soul of a person. The will of God is expressed. The presentation of His will to a person now has to be responded to. An outward grudging response is not what keeping the commands of God means. The purpose is that one's heart is convicted and moved to change what is wrong in that attitude to what God desires. That change is done gladly because faith toward God is real. Instead of resentment but still conforming to the form, there is the joy of fellowship with God. The Lord Jesus Christ could see right through the criticisms the Jewish leaders made that were based on the traditions of their own making.

The law of God made adult children responsible for their parents' welfare when they were older. It was, and still is, only right that we take steps to meet the needs of those in our family. When people ignore their parents and leave them impoverished, while at the same time they go through the form of giving to God, they are breaking the commandment of God to honor their father and mother. To excuse themselves by saying they are giving to God, reduces that giving to a self-centered form and tradition, rather than doing the will of God. The truth of God is found in the inward resources of the heart, not in the outward forms of the hands.

We are constantly absorbing information and impressions. The practice of taking in or being exposed to what is around isn't where our great problem comes from. What we do with what we take in is where the difficulties arise. We have an inward filter in our mind as to what is right and wrong. There is a law of God written on our hearts. Some food we take in is good for us. Some will harm us physically. We hear sounds constantly. Some are beneficial to us and other words and sounds will defile us if we choose to act upon the suggestive sounds that assail us. Our sight is constantly scanning the world around us. This cannot be helped. But not everything we see has to be considered or focused upon. The inward heart immediately filters what we see and hear and can reject or absorb things as the heart reacts to the commands of God, rather than the traditions of men. The actual uncleanness that adversely affects one's life and spirit, comes from what the heart of a person, the soul that is the real "me," is willing to accept or reject. A bit of dirt on the hands when one eats isn't what makes us unclean before God. That is just a lack of normal hygiene. The moral dirt that seeks to claim the attention of the soul is what defiles.

It was with great interest I noticed the Lord Jesus going to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to connect with a Gentile woman He knew who had a great need. To her, the need of her suffering daughter was greater than any need of her own. Her daughter was suffering terribly from demon-possession. There was a lesson there for the disciples to learn. God can, and sometimes does, make an exception to His own rules for "man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart." The woman and her need were not a mystery to the Lord. She crossed the cultural barriers and came to Him as her Lord. In her heart, not just her posture, she took a place lower than a slave. The heart-felt need she had was greater than her own position. There is great insight into one's soul when the urgent situations of life strike home to us.

In these times of emergency, it comes out into the open what we are really like inside. The humbling of pride, the genuine desire of the heart, the awareness of our own inability and need, the act of repentance - all open the door to blessing from God because they all are evidence of real faith. Sometimes faith is tested by God to see if we are real in ourselves. Other times the reality of faith needs no prompting. The genuineness of our faith instantly responds to the Object of our faith - the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people are amazed at the ability and willingness of the Lord Jesus to meet the needs of the helpless. Others who know the Lord personally, have faith in Him to do whatever the outcome may be because they have learned of Him and know His meekness and lowliness. I know the Lord has compassion on the needy and He expects me to have compassion of them also. I know He is not willing that any perish but wants them to come to the knowledge of the truth - and He wants me to preach the truth. I know He wants to use us who believe, to further the work of the kingdom of God. I also know I am limited as to what I can accomplish. I know He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. So, I learned that what I cannot see, He does see. What I cannot do, He is fully able to do. When I am limited by my humanity, and sometimes by my stubbornness, God is able to open my understanding to see people as He does. The immediate testimony of faith by the Gentile woman would have opened the minds of disciples to the fact that God's interests are not limited to only a few. His message of salvation is to all people who believe on Him with their heart.

Again, I watched in my mind the Lord Jesus going up a mountain and the needy and hurting people following Him. Some brought the needy to Him who could not come by themselves. They were laid before the Lord who alone could heal them. We are constrained to bring people to the Lord in our day. The Lord can do for them what we can never do. To present them to the Lord through the Gospel puts them in a position for His blessing. By the power of the Lord over sickness and darkness, by His ability to create food for the body and soul, the Lord Jesus met the needs of the people then and is able to meet the needs of people now. The deepest needs of the hearts and souls of people are met by the limitless and gracious power of God. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The empty void is there unable to be filled by frail, mortal men.
Forms, traditions, religious activities all leave their hopes undone.
To try and find their hopes and longings truly fulfilled escapes
Their reaching hands - it is not until the heart is reached hope takes
Root and then the soul is warmed by grace and love that finds
A place within the deepest recesses of one's longing mind
And turns them from the hopeless spinning wheel of circumstances
Until one realizes that way beyond the smugness of form and careless glances
The Lord Himself waits in patience that does not, and will not act
Until repentance of wrong ideas and traditions are gone and real faith is a fact.

Then when all that enters is no longer spurious ideas unsustainable -
And what men thought they could do and get for themselves is unattainable -
The envy, anger and resentment at other's joy and firmly planted hope
Seeks to break loose against those are free in Christ to bear His yoke.

While they struggle in vain to make themselves acceptable to God -
Seeking to make it happen by their attendance to the letter of the Word,
Rather than by the humbling of the pride and actions of grace in the heart.
They have to go back to where God wanted them at the start -
So in child-like acceptance of God's wondrous and redeeming grace -
They give to Him their heart and in their lives the preeminent place.

Oh what a blessing it is to be able to walk with the Lord in faith and trust -
Knowing that we have trusted Him for salvation, and He has accepted us
In His Beloved Son who we now know and in whom we find our daily life source -
We are not walking independently and arrogantly on a downward course.
But we are following Him and He shares with us the principles of living in His kingdom.
From time to time He gives us the privilege to live them out and teach them.
No longer are those practices just fake and false forms to be seen of men.
They are part of our life and being, finding their root in a warm heart within.
Our joy now is to really know the commandments and desires of the Lord are also ours.
His life and ours are entwined and His truth and grace now our life empowers.

"Father, my hope and prayer is that I will never regress to forms and outward traditions that take the place of obedience and fellowship from the heart. I fear it is possible for me to become satisfied with forms as I get older. Preserve me from the hardness of traditions without grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 15:31. *"Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel."*

MEETING NEEDS.

[vs.1-20]

When they are right, they are valuable; when they are wrong, they are dangerous.
When they have been practiced for years, they are still not laws.
When they have added rich meaning to life, still they are not elevated to being sacred.
When they help us understand God's laws, they do not become laws themselves.

Traditions of men are not the commandments of God.
Traditions of men are not always good.
Traditions of men are not divinely inspired.
Traditions of men must be tested and tried.

[vs.21-31]

Nagging persistence: again, and again the desire is expressed.
Compassion is needed: when satisfaction is beyond reach.
Sensitivity longs for the healing touch of concern and consideration.
Helpless to meet a need or expectation leads to desperation.

Desperation because of prejudice, and you feel so alone.
Desperation because of inconvenience when you can't get home.
Desperation because of need that is impossible to fill.
Desperation because of difference, yet Jesus is able still.

[vs.32-39]

Hunger returns because by its very nature, it is never satisfied.
Body, soul and spirit have needs that must be continually met.
Young, middle-aged and old all need what can only be supplied by others.
All of us, in almost every way have to look elsewhere for provision.

In the wilderness journey of God's people in the past;
He made full provision that for forty years did last.
In times of despair and personal need today;
He still, in all His faithfulness, gives us full provision that stays.

"O God of all ages and Giver of every good and perfect gift: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I honor Thee now for all the ways of communicating Thy truth to me that Thou hast used over these many years. I am so very thankful for all the provision Thou hast made to meet my every need. Amen."

MATTHEW 16

Matthew 16:1-5

The King and religious rulers

PHARISEES: the ritualists and traditionalists who believed in God; in the work of the Holy Spirit; in angels; in the resurrection – the fundamentalists, but they hid all of this under rituals and traditions making them burdens. The Lord's last reply to these people was a rebuke for hypocrisy.

SADDUCEES: they did not believe in spirits, angels, the resurrection or the supernatural. Religion was simply an ethical code. They were the cultured and wealthy people – the "correct" people of that day. Strangely the high priest was a Sadducee.

These two groups were united against Jesus: The Lord did away the Pharisees' traditions and insisted on the spiritual things which the Sadducees denied. They wanted a sign from heaven, ignoring the signs which He did on earth. He told them of the colors of the sky and criticized them for asking a sign from Him and ignoring the ones all around them. He describes them as evil (wicked) and adulterous (spiritual adultery) in the way the prophets used the words. They would have to wait for a sign of Jonah. This condemned the Pharisees, the sign of Jonah was to Nineveh not to the Jews, and condemned the Sadducees who did not believe in the supernatural.

Lesson: Some people are in a hopeless condition because they rejected the King.

Matthew 16:6-12

The leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees is corrupt and corrupting. It is a destructive doctrine they were teaching. This doctrine disintegrates and passes on the process of disintegration. The Pharisees' leaven is still repeated today by people who impose commands on others. The Sadducees teaching of naturalism is a cultic system of beliefs similar to much of what is going on now. The disciples missed the point He was making because they were occupied with only the material matters. They forgot who they following and this showed their lack of faith.

Matthew 16:13-20

The Lord knew the answer before He asked the question. Everyone knew there was something supernatural about Him and the variety of opinions they had only ranked Him among the prophets. Then He narrows the circle to those who had been with Him. Peter's confession is the heart of this passage. "Thou art the Christ," is a Jewish believer's response. They had been looking for the Messiah for generations. Peter is saying the Lord is more than John the Baptist, Jeremiah and all of the great prophets. Peter continues, "The Son of the Living God." The Son of man is truly the Son of God – the King.

The Lord's response: 1st – Peter is blessed because the Father in heaven revealed Christ to Him. He is not rewarded, but blessed with divine illumination. This was revealed through Christ Himself who came to reveal the Father. This truth never left Peter for the rest of His life. 2nd – "Thou art Peter" (petros), a piece of rock, a fragment. He was going to build His Church on "petra" – essential rock. The word "rock" is used of God, never of man in the Bible. Peter was a piece of that rock foundation.

"My Church": He is the Commander of a great called out group of people, a constructive force of this age teaching the Kingdom and holding the keys to interpret and administer God's will. The Church also holds up moral standards to the world. The Church is to be the standards of ethics. The Church teaches the moral standards of life and teaches the will of God.

Matthew 16:21-28

The King unveils the Cross to His disciples. He casts off the Hebrew nation officially and figuratively. He tells His disciples the program of coming events. He tells of His passion and victory. The "must" is important.

MATTHEW 16

OPPOSITION - RECOGNITION

In His journey the Lord had come to Magdan, the home of Mary out of who He had cast seven demons. The opposition followed Him there only this time it was unusual. The Pharisees and Sadducees were united against the Lord Jesus Christ. Pharisees believed in the authority of the Old Testament scriptures. Sadducees only accepted the five books of Moses as scripture. Pharisees were careful in following the rules and traditions that had been added to the scriptures. Sadducees did not believe in life after death. It is not uncommon today when the Gospel is preached, for groups of people, some religious and some not, to unite against the Christian Gospel. The status quo of a society or a community seems to be more important to many people than the redemptive truth of salvation from sin.

The Lord had healed people, raised the dead, fed thousands of people miraculously and yet those religious people indicated they thought it was slight of hand or some evil power. They now wanted the Lord Jesus to

do some miracle in the sky. They may have thought the sky was beyond His physical reach. People who need miracles to have proof of who the Lord Jesus is, will never be convinced of His power and deity. That is a form of humanism that will not accept God's truth by faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Most people we encounter now want some kind of extra-biblical proof before they will accept Christ as their own Savior from sin.

Such false teaching as the Pharisees and Sadducees had taught the people was like a permeating form of evil spreading like yeast that doesn't appear big at first but soon leads people far astray. It will produce a misunderstanding of God, of the law, of the Word of God. It can even deceive people when it comes to sin and its consequences. For people to think they can escape the results of sin because they consider themselves basically "good people," is a terrible perversion of what the Bible teaches. "There is none good, no not one." Blind leaders leading blind people result in both having a tragic end. Some, perhaps many, consider the problem of sin, fairly insignificant because it is common to all people. Any doctrine, any teaching with its basis on the ideas of men rather than the revealed will of God is to be avoided. There are those who are followers and learners of Christ, who need to have assurance that what He was in the past, the Lord Jesus still is now. He was in the past, is now, and always will be in the future, the Eternal Son of the Eternal God.

When the Lord Jesus and His disciples got to Caesarea Philippi, He asked them plainly who people thought He was. They knew what people were saying. He was giving them opportunity to clearly say what they believed about Him. This was like an examination following the many lessons they had learned. "Who do you say that I am?" The test of being for Christ, and having genuine faith in Him personally, has to be plainly and clearly stated. There can be no middle ground. The glad recognition of Him was well stated. "Thou art the Christ (the Sent One), the Son of the Living God." The Sent One was taught in the Old Testament to be the One God would send to be the Savior and coming King. The Jews of Jesus' day thought "The Christ" would be a political leader who would free them from the power of their enemies, particularly the Romans.

Peter's confession went beyond that when he declared Him to be the "Son of the Living God." He knew the Lord Jesus' true identity. The Father had revealed this to Peter. This was not what had been taught by the rabbis. Peter was a stone now built on the bedrock of the Lord Himself. He knows now he is a part of a work the Lord Jesus was going to do. This introduction to the fact of a church going to be built must have given those disciples a little glimpse ahead as to what was going to be the result of the Lord Jesus Christ's work on earth. We may not understand the significance of all we are a part of, but as members of His body, the church, we can understand this - we are involved in a work that cannot and will not fail or be destroyed. The Church is established firmly on the bedrock of divine truths and Divine Persons. It will never fail. The Lord Jesus knew that people at that time were looking for the Christ to set them free politically. He came to set them free spiritually. He didn't want people to mistake His coming as that of a mere military leader. He came to set people free indeed. The kind of freedom that comes when one is alive spiritually, is received by faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

That led to the Lord explaining the way redemption would really take place. The teaching of the death, burial and resurrection of Him as the Savior of sinners was new to them and they could not grasp the meaning of those words at that time. The time periods of history were not understood by the disciples then, but they soon would understand. If the Lord had not come to seek and to save individuals, there would be no hope for humanity at all. The whole problem of sin had to be dealt with once and for all before there could be any hope for the promised reign of the King on the throne of David.

We cannot avoid the temptations to keep ourselves away from suffering. But to follow the Lord means we cannot escape the consequences of teaching and preaching the truth. To hear the truth, to tell the truth and to live out the truth has a cost that we must be willing to pay. Identifying with Christ means real commitment to Him. It means that there will be a sacrifice to make that we cannot avoid. To be a disciple means we are willing in all aspects of our lives to follow Him. At the time we may seek to avoid this, but the real purpose in life is to live for Christ. That is what makes life worth living. The future shines bright and glorious.

They're there again with smiles less than genuine -
Asking for what He has already give; they want another sign.
They lay their traps with words and demands to suit their subtle cause -
If only they would listen to His words they would understand because
His words explain His actions, the actions are for a reason -
The Lord is opening the door to a kingdom, in no way inciting treason.
But for some people they could only see the present, then as now.
They are not willing to accept what God says, and they don't intend to bow
To the authority of Him who is Lord, no matter what will be the cost.

Those who refuse to yield their will to Him will be forever lost.

What happened then is going on now, the Lord is building a church.
Those who want to be a part of the building can be so when they search
For the Lord with all their heart; then they will be found of Him.
Those who come as little children, He is waiting to welcome them.
In the building not made with hands, each stone is one that is living.
Every one is made to fit with the others, each by the Master's hand fitting
To be what He intends as each living stone is given a place.
Each one is marked and known by Him as a trophy of His grace.
To build that church, a cost was paid that goes way beyond description.
The death, the burial, the resurrection of Christ is the cost of our redemption.

When one is willing to follow the Lord there is a price we have to pay.
There is the denial of self and anything that hinders us from taking up the cross each day.
Our life is really without much meaning until we lose it for His name's sake.
When that happens in reality, we will realize the worth of the cross we take.
The Lord Jesus goes ahead of us, so as we follow Him, we are not alone.
Anything we lose for Him will be recompensed when we get to our heavenly home.
There is nothing in this lifetime that we can call our own that is of more value than our
soul.
To give ourselves for the glory of the Lord alone is when we finally sense we are whole.
So now in this life lived for the Lord each day, and our identification with Him is real.
The is not a wasted life we will have to look back to, when His glory is finally revealed.

"Father, in spite of opposition and a few difficulties on occasion, this life Thou hast called me to is all and more than I could ever have expected or deserved. I thank Thee for allowing me to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Matthew 16:15. *"He saith unto them, 'But whom say ye that I am?'"*

WHO IS HE?

Who is He? The Sign from heaven,
Came here to earth from the Father given;
That sinners all might be forgiven.
After three days and nights - from the grave He is risen.
He was the Sign to His generation.

Who is He? What do men say?
"He is a prophet who has come this way."
Elijah, John, Jeremiah or from some ancient day,
A prophet of old made from our same clay.
They couldn't see past themselves.

Who is He? "Who do you say I am?"
And Peter answers for all of them:
"Thou art the Christ who from heaven came,
The Son of God, the great I AM."
His eyes were opened by the Father.

Who is He? The Solid Rock:
The gates of hell have never shook;
The Rock on which the Church is built.
And never will, for He who flesh took,
Is the Son of the Living God.

Who is He? He is the Lord alone,
Who came to earth from His heavenly throne?
While here on earth, for sins He atoned,
And now for us, who His Lordship own,
He is our Lord and Savior.

"O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" I thank Thee for revealing Him to me. Thanks for giving me the spiritual eyesight to understand who the Savior is. I know Him and appreciate the fellowship I am allowed to have with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit who dwells in me. Amen."

MATTHEW 17

TRANSFIGURATION, v.1-13

- Holy Mount [2Pe.1:18]: Peter learned the meaning and value of what he saw in his latter years. The Lord's face and clothes were like the sun. His presence and power relating to His Coming were seen by a select few and they never forgot what they saw. There was a clear contrast between disciple and non-disciples as mentioned in Mk.8:34. Some things are only for those who are committed to the Lord.
- Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets) looked forward to the coming Kingdom. Before that could happen there had to be the death burial and resurrection. The three disciples (representative men) were dazed and overwhelmed leading to Peter's rash suggestion which would lower the Lord to the level of men. In the quiet that followed there came the Voice of God. John (Elias) had come and they had seen a prophetic vision of the Son of Man in His kingdom.
- The order of the Transfiguration: In the life and mission of Jesus – (1) innocence (without sin in His birth and childhood) (2) holiness (sinless in the face of sin and temptation in His manhood); the glory of His perfect humanity is proof of His essential, true, victorious humanity (3)perfected glory (the second coming means our bodies of humiliation will be conformed to the body of His glory); this is seen in the Transfiguration. In view of the coming Kingdom – (1) before the throne comes the cross (2) after the cross His ascension and glory. In its message to us – (1) Jesus is perfected humanity (2) suffering comes before glory (3) only the Lord Jesus, "My Son," can bring in the Kingdom after humbling Himself. Then comes death, resurrection, ascension and glorification (coronation).

PERFECT KING IN HIS IMPERFECT KINGDOM, v.14-21

- "Faithless and perverse": when faith is lost everything becomes distorted and twisted in thinking, feeling and actions. In prayer and fasting comes effective service. A father pleads for his son. He is powerless without faith. To live on the basis of what is seen is not faith. This is the lament of the Lord Jesus Christ as He takes the measure of this age. The Only Begotten Son of the Heavenly Father meets the only begotten (same word) son of an earthly father. The latter was demon-possessed and way beyond the powers of the help of men. The Son of God from heaven came down to earth to liberate what helpless men could not. In this day we still have the demon-possessed sons of men, and we still have the power of the Son of God from heaven.
- The King calls for the son to be brought to Him. He came past all those who were incompetent and unable to help. We must never try to bring the Lord Jesus down to the level of which we are able to understand divine mysteries. Prayer and fasting is always appropriate in the face of urgent need.

CONSCIOUS OF THE CROSS, v.22-27

- The Lord takes them back to where their faith had weakened and faltered – when He told them of His coming death and resurrection. In preparing for the betrayal He still told them again of His coming death, burial and resurrection on the third day. The disciples were sorry because they never got past the Cross even though He spoke of His resurrection. Either they didn't listen to Him or they thought the third day was a figure of speech. They were still unbelieving.
- Paying the temple tax (redemption money) was an annual payment imposed improperly on the people by the authorities. This tribute was for strangers not sons. The Lord was reminding Peter that he had just recently called the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Living God. So, He would not stumble others, He put Himself in the place of submission. Even in a faithless and perverse generation, He expects us, in confidence, to bring others to Him. The miracle demonstrates Christ's omniscience as He impresses Peter once again with who He really is.

MATTHEW 17

THE SON OF MAN - JESUS ONLY

An experience happened a week later three disciples never forgot even in their old age. They saw what the Lord looks like in glory. The transfiguration of the Lord left an indelible impression on them. John said, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Peter wrote, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory..." There was a lasting impact on those men as they saw "the brightness of His glory." I was impressed with the visual evidence of glory that was seen on that mountain in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. His face shone as the sun. That was not a reflected glory. That was glory from within Himself. The evidence of holiness and absolute purity was actually a visible feature. The very clothing of the Lord was not able to obscure the light that emanated from the Lord as He was visibly changed before the watching disciples. There was visible recognition as to who He was, but there was visible change as well. This gave to me a little understanding of what those in glory are like. "We shall see Him and be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

The limitations of personal recognition are also removed. The watching disciples knew both Moses and Elijah. The lives of those two men were separated by more than five hundred years and yet they knew each other and knew of the Lord's imminent death on the cross. The watching disciples must have been amazed they not only knew these two men, but were able to see them at one time - and then they were gone. This little view of coming glory gives us a little foreknowledge of the future. There is a physical glory that is seen and yet recognition of individual persons is there. There is an interaction between people who lived in different times in their lives on earth. There is personal communication with the Lord Jesus. Events going on in the world are of interest by those who have gone to heaven. The communication between those who have passed on is understandable by all who are involved. The activities and work of God is the theme of their interest. We do not have to fear when we are confronted by such holy things. There are times when things should not be spoken of as well as when they should be spoken of. There is an appropriateness about the things of God that we need to maintain now.

A time will come when there will be a far greater understanding of the kingdom of God than we have now. As I watched that mountain event, I could understand a number of lessons that would have been learned by those disciples as well as us today. The future is not lived in some vague ethereal state without form or reason. There is an on-going work of God in which the saints in heaven are aware of and are interested in. It would seem that they are also participants in some way because those two men were there on that mountain for a brief time in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether their role was to encourage Him, get instructions from Him to take back and tell others, or what exactly they were there to do I am not sure. But I know the journey from heaven to the mount of transfiguration had significant purposes. As for me, it gave some insight into the life of those who have already passed into heaven to be with Christ, "Which is very far better."

The man with an uncontrollable son who was possessed with a demon may have known the disciples had healed people before. The disciples had to learn it is Christ that heals by His own power. Our faith is not to be in our own faith or perceived ability to meet the needs of the moment, but faith in the God of power. When God is with us and using us, much can be done. When there are obstacles and problems that seem too great for us, we must turn from the object to God Himself. There is a great need of faith in any work for God we are called to do.

Again, the Lord Jesus told His disciples what was going to happen in the near future. He was going to be crucified, buried and rise again the third day. This time there was a different reaction. Now they responded as normal people who have to face a coming tragedy. This time they were filled with grief at that which was going to happen. As they were made aware of the things that were going to take place, they must have wondered what the Lord meant about being raised again. The physical death they could understand because it is taking place all the time. No one is exempt from that. The resurrection of Christ seemed not to be understood. They had seen Jesus raise other people from the dead but who would raise Him. There are things we believe that we cannot fully understand. That isn't a real problem. What is important is that we believe what God says and go forward in confidence, even though we may not know what is coming next. God knows, and we have faith in Him and that is good enough for me. The events of this week ahead are unknown to me but God knows each activity and the result. My responsibility is to go forward in faith.

When it came to the subject of the taxes paid by the subjects to those in authority, Peter had yet to grasp the fact that Jesus is the King. The Lord knew Peter's limitations so instead of telling him kings pay no taxes, He made provision for them both. God did His work and Peter had to go and do his. He had to go in faith and do what was normally never done - get the money from a fish's mouth.

When it is a glimpse of future glory - the object is to fix our eyes on Jesus only. When it is dealing with the present needs of other people - it is Jesus only. In our own personal needs and obligations, our response still focuses on - Jesus only.

"Father, may the objective of this day's activities be for the glory and honor of Jesus only. May Thy Word bring blessing to others as we speak of salvation through Jesus only. In His name, Amen."

Another mountain yet to climb, other lessons yet to learn.
Another experience to share with Him, other events till we can earn
The privilege of being entrusted with holy things heretofore unknown,
Some glimpse of heaven and what it's like in transfiguration thus is shown.

Another sight of the Lord Himself, His glory is for a moment revealed.
Another view of those men of faith, getting insight to what was concealed.

Hearing voices before unheard, seeing faces with real recognition.
Knowing the subject they are talking about; not wanting to hear of crucifixion.

Another voice heard once again declaring delight in His Beloved Son.
Another testimony right from heaven establishing the uniqueness of this Holy One.

No wonder there is fear and awe, this place is like being up in heaven.
How to make this known was clear, after the resurrection, tell this vision.

Another needy person comes to the Son of Man in faith.
Another broken-hearted parent with grief etched on his face.
Others cannot help, their focus is in the wrong place.
Jesus only can meet that need with compassion and His grace.

Another lesson learned; faith is to be placed in Jesus only.
Another point to be made, God expects us to be holy.
Not looking at our own faith to see if we can meet the need.
Putting our faith in the Son of Man and to Him alone pay heed.

Another look ahead into the future as the Son of Man speaks to His own.
Another reminder of the redemptive work that by Him must be done.
Jesus only is able to accomplish that for He alone is sinless.
The result of that cross-work is that with salvation He can bless us.

Another challenge to the Lord that fault-finding people try to find.
Another test of my faith as I take all this information into my mind.
The Son of Man is Lord of all, the Eternal God, the King of kings.
It is through Jesus only and His grace, the water of life does to me spring.

"Father God, I think I am learning some new lessons and being retested on some old ones during this series of Gospel meetings. I am reminded of Thy grace and strength that becomes evident in my weakness. Sometimes I feel like water on the ground. If that is the case, would You please accept this poured out water as an offering of gratitude to Thee like David did. There are times when my inability and weakness really scare me. Help me Father, to put my trust wholly in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 17:8. *"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."*

JESUS ONLY.

Jesus only, could please the Father.
He alone knew the full demands
Of a Righteous God who is supremely Holy,
Who has given to men His clear commands.
In His lofty, holy service,
Never once did Jesus fail
To bring His Father joy and pleasure;
Even though in the flesh He's veiled.

Jesus only, the Mighty Healer,
Conquered sin - He did the devil defeat.
Not a casual act for selfish honor,
But by fasting and prayer complete.
Not by slight of hand or trickery,
But by faith true - and fullest trust.
In our smallest act of service,
Prayer and fasting are a must.

So the freedom of God's own children,
Came to us from God's Son who pleased
His Father fully - without pressure -
We too now in Him are freed.
Yet as strangers, still we live -
Here where the Father knows is best.
And the tribute, we pay as strangers;
As children, we in our Father rest.

“O heavenly Father: I want to fix my eyes on Jesus, and not be distracted by all that is going on around me. All of the fuss in the world and in daily living is so temporary, but Jesus Christ is the same, ‘yesterday, today, and forever.’ Amen.”

MATTHEW 18

THE KING TEACHES HIS OWN

The first half of the chapter the Lord Jesus is teaching the subject of GREATNESS

The second half of the chapter the Lord Jesus is teaching the subject of FORGIVENESS

HUMILITY, v.1-6

- The contrast: between their ideas and those of the King
- The action: a child is the example. Inside we are all able to be humble as a child is.
- The answer: if we are like a child, we will receive a child with a child-like heart. Anyone who would stumble a child is of more value out of the way completely, than to be a stumbling block to a child.

VALUES, v.7-14

- The warning: the one who would stumble others, becomes a stumbling block to himself. If we destroy a child in any way, we destroy ourselves.
- The instruction:
Do not despise the imperfection of a child – the imperfect child (or person) yields to instruction and accepts correction.
Do not despise the simplicity of a child - simplicity expresses itself freely, willingly and naturally; simplicity is without guile.
Do not despise the submissiveness of a child – flexibility is a child-like characteristic that helps them adapt to the issues of life.

DISCIPLINE, v.15-20

- The problem: the one who sins has in fact sinned against himself and harmed himself and is lost to our fellowship. The purpose in our heart is to gain him back.
- The method:
Personal effort – as an individual, help him realize the problem of sin
Shared effort – with one or two others, we seek to help him to be contrite for sin
Church effort – the church as a whole helps on to realize the seriousness of sin bringing conviction and consciousness of sin. The church has authority – it binds and looses; it sets the moral standards; the church methods – binds to make us conscious of our need and conscious of the grace of God

FORGIVENESS, v.21-35

- The mistake: Peter thought he was being especially spiritual when he spoke about forgiveness seven times. Most people would have thought after the third time they were able to demand what they wanted.
- The answer: forgiveness is to be completely and from the heart without any strings attached.

MATTHEW 18

CHILDREN AND BROTHERS

The lessons of the kingdom continued to be taught by the Lord to His disciples because kingdom living is very different from the normally accepted way of life. A child in the middle of the group was the example the Lord Jesus used to illustrate a major point. Simplicity and a trusting spirit are fundamental characteristics in the kingdom of heaven. Children can enter that kingdom in childlike faith in Christ. Adults have to come in the same way. The children are not a nuisance to the Lord. He was more than glad to recognize publicly the value of a child and all those who are small in men's eyes who live among us. There are those independent moments when a child goes out to do his or her thing. But there is also the trusting glance back from time to time to make sure a parent or one who cares for them is in sight. They want to be a part of the life of the parents but they also are attracted to those around who are the same size. In the kingdom we confidently trust in the presence and power of the Lord to keep us safe and to enable us to reach out to others like ourselves.

Children will often sense danger and will not turn to just anyone, but to one they know well and have experienced their care and concern. Any one who would try to mislead or misdirect a child is an enemy. The ones who love and protect that child in the family of God are those who know the value and potential of that spiritual child. God Himself is the Supreme Protector and Defender of those who know and trust Him. An angel has been sent to watch over the welfare of those very important people. Those who are little among

us, the children, need to know they are an integral part of not only our family unit, but also our church unit. When they are converted and come into the family of God, they need, and deserve, the best we can give them in the way of protection, guidance and the personal attention of being disciplined by a caring person.

There are lessons to learn when it comes to brothers and sisters in the kingdom of heaven. When one who is a fellow believer wanders away, they need to be found and returned to the fold. In the same way we were brought as lost sinners to be saved, we need to go after those who have left the safety of the Lord's people and have gone out to try the things the world has to offer that attract them. New believers from sheltered Christian homes who have professed to be saved when they were young, will think they can tamper with sin and not be seriously affected by it. Even though they seem to be hopeless cases, as far as restoration is concerned God is able to use us to bring others back.

When it comes to facing up to sin, the principle is to deal with each problem in as small a way as possible. One to one is where a fault issue between people can often be concluded. By far the majority of things will need to go no further. The practice to follow that which the Lord gave is very effective. One or two witnesses may need to confront the person who adamantly refuses to listen. When a matter has to be taken to the church it becomes a serious matter indeed. What may have started as an insignificant problem, can become great simply because of the attitude of pride or stubbornness. Agreeing together indicates a harmony is restored. The word "symphony" is associated with this solution to a difficulty. There are things we agree to avoid. There is also agreement as to what we accept and what we appreciate. In all of these there is restored and maintained a harmony and symphony that centers on the name and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After dealing with a matter, forgiveness is expected to be the result. God expects us to forgive those who sin against us without any expectation that the offender will necessarily stop the action against us that he takes. A demanding, unmerciful person place him or herself in a very dangerous position. God is a forgiving God but He passes judgment on those who do not forgive others. The debt we owe to God for His forgiveness is so far greater than what others owe us, that there is no comparison. The illustration is that when one has been forgiven a great deal, it is expected that they will be pitiful towards those who owe us a little. Pride, arrogance and a self-centered attitude will be taken into account by our heavenly Father. When these things raise their ugly heads, God steps in and will judge that person with severity of true and absolute justice.

The lesson to be learned by us is to remember what God has done for me before I make demands on others. Any action I take towards those who have sinned against me should be done in the light of the grace that has been shown to me. When that is done by honest evaluation, I will proceed no further in my demands but in a forgiving spirit, move on in harmony and fellowship with my brother or sister. Christ-likeness is very practical in its outworking in daily life.

I look with good cheer and hope on the face of a child,
And realize why the Lord chose them to teach me that all the while
I am here in this world of sin there is a way He expects me to be:
Uncomplicated, genuine and trusting that people around can see
There is a difference in kingdom living from that of the world and its ways.
There is a trusting faith in the Lord that is revealed in what I say -
And also in what I do, for it is my Father I want to please.
The little child may wander away, but then comes their Father's hand to squeeze.

What would cause one of them to stumble would be carelessness on my part.
There may be things I think I can do that would hinder them at the start
Of a new life being lived for the Lord when opinions and attitudes are formed.
Much of what I do in daily life they would consider to be the norm.
But when I stop to consider if my attitudes and actions are done in faith -
Then I can be assured that the little ones in Christ are safe.
So, if they go astray, I won't leave them to wander on -
Until I go to seek them and bring them back to the safety of the home.

When there are problems between brothers that threaten to divide -
It is important that what caused the difficulty, we will no longer hide.
With a gracious attitude and a sincere desire to reach out to him and bless -
There can be a quick solution when any sin between us we confess.
Then forgiveness is able to take place no matter how it is received.
The results may not be fully realized but I know when I believe
That God knows my heart and my motives, then I leave the results with Him.
I can go on happy in my soul, knowing I am no longer harboring sin.

"O God my Father, the children attending these meetings seem to be listening very well. Some of them want to know how to be saved. Please grant to Thy servant the ability to know the best way to reach them with the Gospel message in a personal way. And Father, when the time comes that I have to truly forgive someone, help me to remember how much Thou hast forgiven me. Then give me the courage to reach across man-made barriers with grace and faith. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 18:4. *"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

KINGDOM LIVING – NOW!

Large as life - full of self importance;
Comparing to see who gets the big job.
Looking for glory and glamour and greatness;
But "no," a humble child is set there before.
Not just a child, but a child who is little -
With fear: intimidated by those who are big.
Full of trust, knowing the love of Jesus;
Silently being a living testimony of grace.
Quiet in humility, trusting in inadequacy, loving in appreciation -
KINGDOM LIVING!

Straying, lost, helpless and so terribly alone -
Far away - "let him go - he's not the right material."
"He getting his desserts for what he has done;"
"What he sows, he reaps, that is scriptural."
But "no" - he is the Father's little one.
Leave those that are safe, secure and well-fed;
Go after the straying, make search, look and find -
Find your poor brother - listen, speak - hear what's not said.
Bring him back to the fold, tend him, his hurts bind.
KINGDOM LIVING!

Hurtful words; accusations false, told far and wide -
Reputation in jeopardy; "standing for truth" - with clenched fist.
The danger is real - to retaliate, justify, defend what is mine.
But self in any form is sinful - why use it to defend righteousness?
Wait in silence - someday he will come - when he does;
Forgive him! But it has happened, again and again!
The rumor spreads and has traveled coast to coast -
Forgive him! Bitterness takes all, gives nothing to gain.
And joy is freedom, contentment great gain, forgiveness gives peace.
KINGDOM LIVING!

"How Christ-like it is Father, to trust like a child, go after the straying and forgive the hurtful. I want to be like my Lord in all of these areas where I live in danger of being like my old self. I want it to be really true - "for me to live is Christ." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MATTHEW 19

A review at the second dividing point in Matthew: 1:1- 4:6, The Genealogy of the King; 4:7 – 11:27, The King and His kingdom; 11:28 – 16:16, The Master and His disciples; 16:17 – 28:15, The Church and the Cross; 28:16 – 20, The Gospel and the world.

Chapters 4 – 18. "He departed into Galilee."

Chapters 19 – 28. "He departed from Galilee." Christ turns to the multitudes from instructing His disciples.

THE KING IN HIS COMPASSION AND ABILITY, v.1-2

Christ deals with disabilities.

v.1-2. The sick came to Him in their need.

THE KING STATING THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE, v.3-12

Christ clarifies the ethical standards of marriage.

v.3-12. The critical came to trap Him in His talk.

- He goes back beyond the opinions of the local teachers and Moses to "the beginning" and the fundamental principle of marriage,
- He states the marriage relationship goes beyond that of parents and their children.

- He clearly states God's intention for marriage.
- He clarifies the bond of marriage and the one sin that breaks that bond.
- He does not contradict or condemn a celibate life, but clearly names those classes to which it applies: those born to celibacy; those who are made celibate; those who choose celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God.
- He forbids us building rules to be observed by all men. We have the underlying principles of celibacy given.

THE KING AND HIS VIEW OF CHILDREN, v.13-15

Christ displays His love for children.

v.13-15. The concerned who came moved by natural affection.

- Perhaps the disciples thought of children as a problem because their Master was living the celibate life.
- He powerfully corrects the wrong philosophy of those who discount the value of children.
- The parents who brought their children to Him were showing their confidence in Him. There are unbelieving parents today who want their children to be right with God.
- Children are not beneath His dignity or the quality of His purity. Children are not outside the area of His interests.
- This is one occasion the Lord was angry ("filled with indignation"). To think His disciples thought He was not willing to welcome a child, was offensive to Him.
- He blessed the children.

THE KING AND A SEEKER, v.16-22

Christ sends light into the soul of the seeker.

v.16-22. One came with an inquiry and a need for help.

- The seeker connected eternal life with goodness.
- The seeker knew Christ was good, and a Person more righteous than he.
- The King turns the light of the law (10 commandments) on, and external light showed him to appear righteous.
- Then the King turns the light of His righteousness on the inner man, and the seeker is shown to be a self-centered young man.

From Matthew 19:23 – 20:16, the Lord turns back to His disciples to teach them in light of what happened with the rich young ruler.

THE KING AND THE RICHES OF MEN, v.23-24

- He pities the rich even though He loves them as He does every man.
- Wealth means power, and power creates pride rather than "poor in spirit" which God blesses.
- It is very difficult for a rich man to be "poor in spirit", but it is not impossible with God.
- To learn absolute submission is impossible for every one in our own strength. The Lord has provided for this great need by giving the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment.

THE KING AND THE HEARTS OF MEN, v.25-26

- The disciples probably understood the meaning of the Lord's words to them after the young man left. How necessary it is to be poor in spirit and be free from the desire to have possessions for selfish reasons.
- We all would like to be rich if we could, but if it prevents us from entering the kingdom, it is a great evil.
- Who can be saved then? No man by his own will, "but with God all things are possible."
- With God, even rich people can be saved. With men indicates man's methods of entering the kingdom. The Lord does not use the word to men. With God links us to God alone for salvation.

THE KING AND HIS FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS, v.27-30

- Peter's question contrasting himself and others with the rich young man, was an honest question in view of the coming kingdom.
- The Lord gives a definite answer about rewards. With a word of authority ("verily"), He tells them of thrones of administration overseeing the affairs of His coming kingdom.
- The King is looking ahead to a coming day and giving them incentive. Whoever sacrifices for Him, will gain far more than they have sacrificed.

- A warning is given as He refers to "the last and the first." Precedence in the kingdom, and rewards does not depend on time spent on the length of our service, or the amount of publicity of our service.

MATTHEW 19

COMING AND GOING

In the journey of the Lord Jesus, He came to Judea and again the large numbers of people with problems came to Him there. It seems to me it was the same then as it is now in places where God is working. There will be those who try to sidetrack the main issues of life with controversial subjects of a minor nature. It seems like divorce and remarriage is one that was brought up in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ the same as it is today. There was no question regarding what He meant in relation to marriage.

"Any cause" divorce was not to be done. God's intention is for a man and woman who marry, to remain married. When God joins two people, He does not intend for them to separate. Sexual immorality breaks the physical bond between one man and one woman and adulterates the seed of their union. In that case the Lord Jesus Christ allowed for the exception, and divorce was permitted, not sanctioned and not insisted on. Promiscuity was forbidden and the commitment to the institution of marriage that God had ordained was to be maintained.

There was given by the Lord an alternative to marriage. God allowed people to be celibate. God does not insist that people be married. There are those born without the need of the physical union and the companionship of marriage. Others because of an accident or some kind of incident are not able to meet the physical expectations of marriage. They too can remain in this condition without sinning. An unusual group is mentioned as an exception to God's intention of marriage. Those are people who have a higher obligation to the kingdom of heaven than they are able to give to another person. The expectations of marriage cannot be met because they have wholly committed themselves to the service of the Lord.

The great crowds came to Him in their need of healing. The Pharisees came in their jealousy trying to create a reason to condemn Him. Others brought their children. I watched the Lord in His gracious way receive the children and I could see the value He placed on every individual. The disciples had to learn how God looks on people and not look at them in the same way society does. It was of great interest to me that He did not just greet them but He put His hands on them. Human touch has a lot of meaning to children the same as it does older people. The interest we show in people needs to be consistent and genuine. A child often remembers in later life the concern of an adult that was shown to them in early life. The attitude and interest of a Sunday School teacher sticks in their mind, even if they forget the lessons that we taught. We must look on children with the same expectation we do on those who are older. The Lord made it plain to us that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Perhaps all of those who have died since conception and before birth may find their full growth and potential for God in the future. To many people today there are unwanted children they actually do away with before they are born. Others are abandoned because the responsibility of child-raising would interfere with the life-style the parents have chosen. The Lord Jesus unhesitatingly identified Himself with those children publicly so we can know how He looks upon them and so we will take action to include them in the work of the Gospel we are involved in.

As He was going on from there, a man came to Him with an interest in eternal life. This is the first mention of eternal life in the New Testament. The man was thinking of eternal life as righteousness granted by the works he could do. The Lord gave him the criteria for righteousness - the perfect keeping of the law. Eternal life, entering the kingdom of heaven and being saved are all used with the same meaning in Matthew, Mark and Luke. John's Gospel uses the words, "eternal life," frequently as the explanation of the gift of salvation.

It was important to the Lord that the young man understand what is good. God alone is good. All true goodness comes from Him. What people consider good is a comparison of one person's behavior with that of other people. The high standard of the law was stated by the Lord to the young man who thought the external evidence was what he needed. Keeping the commandments is an expression of faith in God, not in one's own ability to merit salvation. The goal of eternal life was hindered by this man's wealth and unwillingness to commit himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. Coveting is as much a part of the condemnation of the law as any other part of it. His sadness was an evidence of his greater love of his material possessions than for eternal life. Temporal things have a great attraction for those who do not put their faith in the Living God. It is really an impossibility for anyone who loves their possessions more than the Lord, to ever be saved from the consequences of their sin. Those who choose to follow Christ will realize in the future, more than in the present, the value of making that choice. God will honor that now and reward it in the future.

Commitments once made; some people choose to ignore.
The Word of God challenges them to hear once more,

The responsibility they have to the vows they have made.
They cannot walk away from them without a high price to be paid.

To look on a child now and see them as God sees,
Gives an understanding of what is true worth and how God we can please.
The kingdom of heaven is made up of real people like these.
We need to hear from little voices, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

When people draw near with what seems an honest request,
We do well to consider what is the reason and how best
To respond to what seems like an earnest desire -
And tell them plainly what God and His Word does require.

Some genuinely don't know because they have never heard,
The Gospel explained and have never read His Word.
So it is up to us who know the Lord Jesus personally,
To carefully teach them the way of salvation faithfully.

The snares of this world and the deception of wealth,
Turns many away from the Holy Spirit who often has dealt
With them by bringing conviction of sin and their need
Of the Savior of sinners whose call they have failed to heed.

In the coming and going we experience every day
With people we meet as we travel this way -
We will have opportunities if we choose them to tell
Of how the Lord loves and called us, and He will do it for them as well.

"Father, today I again rejoice over the fact that another one we have been praying for has accepted the Lord Jesus as his Savior. The on-going Gospel activity will hopefully reach others. Please make it plain to me what Thy mind is for me this day and each day from now to the end of this series of Gospel meetings. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 19:22. *"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."*

HE WENT AWAY.

Young and vigorous -

He stands out among the crowd: clear-eyed in his prime of life. Full of the promise of days ahead filled with meaningful living and ambitions to be challenged – yet something inside tells him all is not well. Conscience speaks.

Rich and successful –

Others look on with envy at one who has what they want but can never get. His name is known and mentioned in the highest circles. Life can hardly get any better with all one hopes for, claimed – yet deep inside an emptiness still remains. Discontentment speaks.

Polite and respectful –

He knows how to approach those who are older. His words ooze with sounds of respect, and deference as he approaches the well-known Teacher-Healer. His manners are good, his words quite acceptable – yet deep inside something is wrong. Hypocrisy speaks.

Dignified and honorable –

Heads turn as the well-clothed man walks with measured steps; quite aware that heads are turning and eyes are slanted his way. Upper-class with pedigree and station in life that is well-known – yet inside he hears a convicting voice. Uncertainty speaks.

Religious and thoughtful –

He has tried all the traditions and laws. Outwardly all looks good. People can use him for an example. His devotion to the form and "the school-master" is well documented. But thoughts of the future disturb – eternal life is lacking. Eternity speaks.

Convicted and sorrowful –

He comes to the right Person – he hears the right things. The true verdict of his life is given. There is a lack *in you* that cannot be fixed *by you*. “Go and sell...come and follow Me,” and he knows inside what he needs – and goes away sorrowful. The Master speaks.

“O Righteous and Holy God: how grieving it must be to Thee, when one who should know better, chooses to lose what is forever, for things destined for the fire. Please give me the wisdom and courage to ‘Go...Sell...And follow Him,- always. Amen.”

MATTHEW 20

THE KING AND OPPORTUNITIES HE GIVES, 20:1-16

- Some didn't have the same opportunity as others. No one hired them. The Lord created the opportunity at the last hour.
- The standard of opportunity is our commitment to use the opportunity.
- Some people will speak to thousands about the Lord and others will only speak to their own children. The faithful use of opportunities by a mother in the hills, miles from anyone else, will not be unnoticed by the Lord of the harvest.
- The Lord is the One who makes us fit for service. Any unfitness of our own doing will render all the activity useless.
- We are warned against being proud of anything we have done in the past. Because we have greater opportunities does not mean we are entitled to greater reward. Simply use any opportunity with consecrated labor and the Lord of the harvest will reward your faithfulness.

MATTHEW 20:17-34

Key verse: 28. The King serving

Those surrounding the King in the last days of His public ministry: The Mind of the Master; the perplexity of the disciples; the Master's attitude towards the needs of the people.

THE MIND OF THE KING, v.17-19

- He knew what was before Him at the hands of men: there was no speculation or questioning if it would happen; there was accuracy in the details; there was a calm knowledge of things ahead.
- He knew what was ahead of Him was by the determined counsel of God: suffering; resurrection on the third day; He always declared the fact of the resurrection when He told of His death; there was a clear vision of the coming darkness and the coming light beyond the darkness. He knew of the suffering and pain and also of the triumph.
- He took His disciples apart to give details: He was getting them ready for the pathway before them, He was filling their minds so they could make sense of what happened even though they could not understand now.
- They later remembered and moved ahead with His work after Pentecost.

THE MIND OF THE KINGDOM, v.20-28

- The disciples still believed He was coming into His kingdom then.
- They obviously had faith in Him to ask for positions in the kingdom.
- They were devoted to Him. They thought they could go all the way with Him. Peter made a blunder, but it was by one obviously devoted to his Lord.
- They had faith in Christ personally but were still self-seeking. The desire for power and precedence was then and has not gone away now.
- The Lord was patient: He allowed them the fellowship of His sufferings. The power, precedence and place is given those for whom it has been prepared. It is not done in an arbitrary fashion. God prepares a man for the office, not the office for the man. The one qualification is willingness to others.

THE MIND OF THE KINGDOM REVEALED TO THE MULTITUDE, v.29-34

- There was an act, either of faith or hope shown by two blind men.
- The mind of the crowd was they thought He was too lofty to respond to two blind beggars.
- The crowd had a wrong idea about the kingdom.
- The King stops all movement, His and the multitude, and acts to meet the needs of the two men because of His compassion. This is the mind of the kingdom
- He corrects their false ideas of the kingdom; He corrects their false idea of dignity; He corrects their false idea of place; He corrects their false idea of power as it pertains to the kingdom of God.

MATTHEW 20

UP TO JERUSALEM

The training time continued as the Lord Jesus explained more kingdom principles to His disciples. Most of us try to balance value on the basis of effort expended. To many the worth of a person is measured by how much they have accumulated as a result of the labor they have put forth over the years. Many will scorn a person who has been given an inheritance not having to work for what they possess. The Lord Jesus taught them that the sovereign graciousness of the Lord does not have anything to do with us earning His grace and generosity. Those who are poor and outcasts have an equal worth in God's reckoning as those who seek to earn their own way into the kingdom of heaven. Many people cannot understand grace for some reason. When we esteem ourselves higher than others for any reason, grace seems unfair. The grumblers and complainers don't have a proper knowledge of the God of all grace. "God is no respecter of persons." Religious people still stumble over the riches of God's grace. Independent people also have a hard time admitting to their need of anything from anybody - including God. Self-satisfied people do not want anything to disturb the false peace they have built around themselves and by themselves.

We need to be reminded ourselves, and those we seek to help come into the kingdom, that we must come to God without anything of ourselves to merit His grace and favor. Those who are saved by God's grace all come to God valued by Him alone, not themselves or others.

As I followed in my mind the journey of Jesus, He left the far side of Jordan and started the ascent from the depths of the Jordan Valley to heights of the city of gold. On the way He told them a third time of the things that were going to happen to Him there. Now, instead of refusing to believe it could happen like when they heard of it the first time, or the great grief they had when He told them the second time - this time we read of no response on the part of the disciples. Perhaps by now they were resigned to the fact that the crucifixion was going to take place. Now on the way up to Jerusalem maybe they were thinking the kingdom of which they were now a part, would come into the public then - after His resurrection. The fact of the resurrection of Christ wasn't really understood until after it had happened. Zebedee's wife came to the Lord thinking that He would take over the rule of the nation then. Her request was a testimony that she was confident He was the Christ. It is kind of natural for a mother to want her sons to be in a place of authority or at least, recognition. The fact of the kingdom was believed. The principles, practices and time were still not understood.

Humility is not usually associated with the leadership of a kingdom. The Lord used this incident as a "teaching moment" to teach all the disciples a fundamental principle. He used Himself as an example they could all recognize. He was serving them, not they serving Him. He was meeting the needs of all who came to Him - the poor, the sick, the sorrowing - He met their needs. Then He applied the greatest possible benefit. He came to give "His life as a ransom for many." The supreme act of leadership is to give one's life for others.

Service has a price. We usually would rather be served than serve. We are more inclined to take the high place than the low. We rather like it when people look up to us instead of ignoring or looking down on us. But in the kingdom of heaven, the way up is down. The way to win is to lose. The way to get is to give. The way to live is to die. And the way to lead is to serve.

The final time Jesus passed through Jericho, there was a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus the Lord saved as He came into the city and two blind men received their sight and followed Him, on the way out of Jericho. The grace and mercy of the Lord was made very evident there even though it was a city under a curse. On the way up to Jerusalem, the sovereignty, the sacrifice, the service, the grace, the mercy and the compassion of the Lord Jesus were all demonstrated to those who followed Him. As we go onward in our way to the city of God, kingdom characteristics should easily be evident in those of us who learn of Him and follow Him.

On the upward climb to our heavenly home,
There are choices to be made and things to be done,
That disciples of the Lord can do in this kingdom work.
And the length or shortness of the tasks we dare not to shirk,
Because our Sovereign Master has equipped us to ably serve,
And until the harvest is all brought in, we are not to leave.
That harvest is precious to Him and it should be to us.
The Gospel message of life and hope has been given to us in trust.

There will be complicating factors that arise before we are through.
In some life-issues we will hardly know what to do.

Many people pressing into the kingdom have baggage they bare,
And the best we can do to help them is to let them know we care.
Trying to help them solve the many difficulties they are in,
Doesn't excuse them from the consequences of their past life of sin.
They need someone who is willing to come alongside,
And open the scriptures and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide.

The ones who exalt themselves God says will be abased.
Serving in the kingdom doesn't start at the top but at the base.
The Lord's personal testimony of His sacrifice is the key
As to what has value in the kingdom and for eternity.
To be sitting beside the greatest Servant of all,
Means we will be ready to act as we wait for His beck and call.
When a person is in need, and that need He leads us to know;
It is up to us, the grace and mercy of God to that person we must show.

When on the way "up to Jerusalem," our celestial home above,
It is expected that we show our reality by the way we express love
As a characteristic of disciples who love and follow the Lord.
Seeing God working through us to bless others is a great reward.
This begins with compassion from within - the result of our gratitude
To the Lord for His grace and goodness to us - this will be our attitude.
What we do is done out of our appreciation for the ransom price He paid.
And the Person we want to honor is the One to whom our surrender we made.

"Father, the compassion of the Savior as He went up to Jerusalem is a challenge to me to be compassionate and to "let my light so shine before men that they will glorify the Father in heaven." May I not avoid or ignore the need of compassion so many people have. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 20:12. *"Saying, 'These have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us which have borne the burden and heat of the day.'"*

COMPARISONS.

What gives a job worth? Is it the length of time;
Or how hot or how cold the day?
Does it mean that each laborer does exactly the same?
Or is worth what the Master will say?

The amount of reward is to many, important;
They measure their worth by their money.
But people labor hard, and are not very fortunate;
They survive - as for coin - have not any.

It can't be my thoughts - or my final word,
That gives value to work that is done.
The Master alone, decides a day's worth,
And we came when He called us to come.

For me to compare the things that I do,
With the others who work in God's field;
Makes my opinion or results I may show;
More important than what the crop yields.

After all, who cares who gets all the credit;
It is the harvest that is the Master's concern.
To compare my time spent isn't really the point,
It's what the Master can bring to His home.

Even to compare a high place in heaven,
With those who are my brethren too;
Seems to be full of pride to desire a position,
Where people will think more highly of you.

The One who lives there knows what is what;
And leaves the place-filling to His Father.
So, to make comparisons is really a fault;
About where we will sit, you don't need to bother.

What is really the point of all of these lines,
Is each one of us lives life before God.
I must do what He wants, and also my friends -
I will live each day by the power of His Word.

“Father in heaven: in spite of myself, I sometimes make comparisons. Help me to honestly over-come this tendency of making judgments of the work or worth of other people. I must always value all labor and result in light of what the Lord Jesus did for me. Thank you for Your patience, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MATTHEW 21

THE LAST WEEK

THE KING ENTERS JERUSALEM, v.1-11 (The King rejects Israel)

1.7 Preparation for the entrance

- He acted deliberately with as specific purpose
- He acted on His own initiative to create enthusiasm
- He acted with knowledge: Matthew’s account focuses on the prophecy of Zech. 9:9; He sent disciples for the animals; He knew the frame of mind of the people; He knew their expectations
- He acted with authority: He used the words, “the Lord” as His right to take the animals. He who made the prophecy and arranges all things, now fulfills the prophecy

8-11 Actual entry into the city: two things were the point of this entry into Jerusalem

- The official entry of the King: He had entered quietly before and had spoken kingly words and acted in kingly power. This time the Lord displays His kingship. He also displays His meekness as the prophecy said He would. He came in mercy, not judgment.
- The actual entry of the King: kings never rode on beasts of burden, so a mob of common people showing signs of loyalty and rejoicing didn’t disturb the Roman government. There was no army threatening; only happy people singing about a King. Rome was unconcerned. Yet, of all parades in the Roman Empire, this is the one known and recorded by common people everywhere. This entry stirred the city. The word “stirred” comes from the one from which we get “seismic.” His coming stirred the city like an earthquake.

THE KING CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE, v.12-17

- He cleansed the temple when He began His ministry. At this time the King came deliberately to get the nation’s attention again as their King.
- As One who is meek, He passed by poverty, needed social reform and every other problem to get to the root problem. “Judgment must begin at the house of God.” When the temple (spiritual things) is wrong, everything is wrong.
- He didn’t just casually and slowly deal with the problem, He “cast out” and “overthrew” the money changers tables and the sellers of animals.
- The verses He quotes are Isa.56:7, the prophet of vision and hope; and Jer.7:11, the prophet of vision and tears. The house of prayer had become a den of thieves. He is saying that for Jerusalem to be right, the temple must be right. For a short time the temple was restored. By the time the temple was back to business as usual and its shameful state of business, the veil was rent in two from top to bottom.
- In the middle of all that goes on now, we still believe in a King who can and will overthrow evil and cast it all out.
- The priests heard the children singing and were angry at child-voices praising God. The children were proclaiming and praising the King, their Messiah.
- An uproar in Jerusalem; Galileans shouting; money-changers cast out and children singing – all this was by the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

THE KING AND PRAYING IN FAITH, v.18-22

- Unbelievers say even today, this was an act of injustice.”
- Christ was acting in a way not consistent to His character
- Christ did not come to execute judgment but to show mercy
- The fig tree: the usual time of figs is June; this happened in April. There was a “first ripe fig before summer” [Isa.28]; the close link between Isaiah’s prophecy and this miracle is obvious. “First fruit” comes before the foliage. Leaves on the tree indicate there should have been fruit. There was no injustice in this act as the tree was not fulfilling its function.
- The effect on the disciples wasn’t that it happened but how fast it happened. They agreed with what happened. There was no personal vindictiveness.

- The serious charge some make that this action was not in harmony with the methods and message of Jesus needs to be addressed. At the beginning of His ministry the Lord read from Isa.61:1 but never read the last part of the text. “The day of vengeance.” Now He is coming to Jerusalem to finish the verse. The nation did not respond to His appeal and intercession as the Proprietor of the vineyard. Now as King, He comes to pronounce judgment.
- He was coming back into Jerusalem hungry after a night in Bethany perhaps on the Mt. of Olives or in Gethsemane considering and praying about the coming cross- work as the One “despised and rejected of men.” This is Isa.28 being fulfilled. If men won’t listen to a patient presentation of grace “line upon line, precept upon precept” – then God is compelled to act in judgment. The fig tree dies as the nation dies. He expresses spiritual hunger by His physical hunger.
- Lack of faith: the nation was founded on the faith of Abraham. Now they had lost their faith. He is bringing His disciples who are going to bring God’s will to the world, back to the fundamental principles of faith.
- We learn: because Christ is truly God, mercy turns to judgment when men refuse it. Men are responsible for what they do with Jesus. Christ came to deal with sin; not just to pity men who sin. To refuse God’s mercy and grace is to fall under God’s judgment. The other side also is true: when we walk by faith, obstacles are removed. Men and women of faith, by the power of God are able to fulfill what God intends of us as workers together with Him. If we fail in what God calls us to do in His ministry, He will deal with us in judgment.

LEADERS CHALLENGE JESUS’ AUTHORITY, v.23-27

- The forces against Him were unbelief, worldliness, rationalism and intellectual dishonesty.
- The challenge of unbelief: what authority did He have and who gave Him that authority. He had cleansed the temple and now was teaching in the temple. This was an official group whose authority had probably not been questioned. The Lord did not question their authority. His presence and teaching in the temple were without their sanction. He had not asked their permission and they were seeking a way to arrest Him and end His mission.
- His answer to them: His question took them back to the last revelation from God the nation had received through John the Baptist. Readiness to receive a new revelation depends on the attitude toward the previous one. If John was from heaven, they had their answer because John was His herald. John discontinued his ministry when Jesus’ began. What did you do with the last light you received?
- The implication: from heaven – they ought to obey Him; from men – the multitude would no longer obey them. He ignored their answer of blindness and dishonesty. They had seen the revival going on around them – publicans and harlots changed. If they were blind to evidence of John’s ministry, they would be blind to evidences of His ministry.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS, v.28-32

- 1st son: “I will not,” he said but repented. This is the genuine repentance of sorrow as one realizes his mistake. He went to work in the vineyard as his father desired.
- 2nd son: “I sir,” indicating “you can count on me” in contrast to the 1st son, and chooses not to go.
- He used this parable to compare the rulers and repentant sinners. They both heard and react – and a verdict had been passed. The Lord on the temple being challenged, takes the place of the throne of judgment; welcoming repentant sinners and casting out those who were disobedient to God’s command.

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED TENANTS, v.33-46

- Every provision was made by the landowner (God) to produce fruit from His vineyard (Israel). He gave tenants (Jewish leaders) all they needed for the work before them. He was looking for justice and righteousness and they failed. The failure of the vineyard was charged to them.
- Christ was compassionate toward the multitudes who should have been cared for by leaders who were responsible for them.
- Standing before Him (God) and the whole multitude (Israel) were the tenants (shepherds) who should have been working to bring forth fruit. Instead they beat, bruised and cast out the servants (prophets and faithful priests) because they were working the vineyard for themselves. Then came the son (Jesus) and they killed Him because they wanted what belonged to God. He will give the vineyard to others (Gentiles).
- The Lord Jesus made them state the verdict and pass the sentence on themselves. They had to sentence their own sin. They knew He was speaking about them. They knew He knew they had come to arrest Him. They knew He knew they came to challenge His authority and He made them

say they were wretched sinners. They made their own confession of claiming they were in charge of Israel, not God.

- False authority always cares for itself and enslaves people to their rule, not righteousness, truth and just judgment.
- He is the Stone the experts rejected: ideally people will build on it; many will trip on it and others will have it fall on them and there is not healing then. His is the voice of eternity and the stupidity of the experts condemned them.

MATTHEW 21

THY KING

The whole city waits for the multitudes to come for the feast. From all over the nation comes the sound of travelers moving toward the center of their worship. The temple is there. The forms are there. The priesthood is there - and the businessmen wait for this good season to buy and sell. As all of this is going on, I saw in my mind through the scriptures that tell all of His-story; the Lord Jesus and those with Him finish their long journey up the Jericho road and then He stops at the Mount of Olives. In our journey through life with the Lord, there are times to press ahead and times when we are to wait for the opportune moment. There are words of scripture to consider, not just the task at hand. We must do God's work in God's way, at God's time. There was a deliberate pause for a specific purpose as the Lord took the initiative to do God's revealed will. There was just one word that made the owners of the two animals willing to release them. That was the word, "Lord." The authority of the Lord is essential in any activity for the kingdom we are engaged in.

As the King enters the city of Jerusalem the whole city was stirred. His coming in the display of His kingship was prophesied long before. Now, His coming stirred the city like an earthquake. This was no threatening army; only a throng of happy, singing, common people. The impact of the Lord's people when there is joyous fellowship is a powerful testimony to a community. We should never underestimate the value of unity to a common cause when we unite to do God's will. When the King's presence in the midst of His people is felt, there is a special time of mercy that turns people around to consider, and perhaps, seek the Lord.

Even though there was a lot wrong going on in the temple, the Lord Jesus Christ still identified it as God's house. He came to get the attention of the nation and He quickly got it. The deliberate fulfilling of the scripture took place right before the eyes of the nation. In order for the nation to be right and restored to God, the temple, the house of prayer had to be right. By the time the temple had reverted to the "business as usual" condition, the veil of the temple had been rent from the top to the bottom and the way to God was opened to "whosoever will may come."

We know God's will for us. It is written for us by the same Holy Spirit who gave the written Word for them in those days. It is important for us to remember that the church of God belongs to God, not to us. Sometimes there are things that must be dealt with right away. The public testimony of an assembly of God's people needs to be maintained according to the written scriptures of truth. When the priests heard the singing of the children, they were displeased. May we always have the delight of hearing children's voices singing praise to God. There is something very special about them singing, "Yes, Jesus loves me!" that is missed when it is sung by adults.

When the unfruitful tree was empty, the Lord stopped it from producing fruit forever. The lessons He taught by this act of condemnation are clear. When people are not fulfilling the function God intends, He has the sovereign right to remove them. That is not an act of vindictiveness. It is a typical act of an owner towards an unfruitful tree. Israel was not bringing any fruit for God and they were rejecting the only One who was, the Lord Jesus Christ. When people will not listen to the presentation of God's grace, then He acts in judgment. The fig tree died as the nation died. The foundation of Israel was the living faith of Abraham. The nation had lost their faith. But the disciples and those who followed them were going into the world and bring back the fundamentals of faith in God and His Word. Mercy turns to judgment when it is refused. When we walk by faith, obstacles are removed and we are able to do what God intends and bring it to completion. If we fail to do what God calls us to do, He may deal with us in judgment.

When the Lord Jesus entered the temple, He was challenged by those who resented the obvious authority He had which the priests and elders did not have. Their authority had probably never been questioned. Remarkably Jesus didn't question it then. He just never asked for their permission to enter the temple and teach. They were looking for an excuse to arrest Him. His answer to them was to take them back to the last obvious revelation from God they recognized. That was the message to the nation from John the Baptist. They knew He was implying they should obey Him because John did. When light is given, it is with the view that we believe and act on that light. If they were blind to John's message, they would be blind to His

message. God had made provision for fruit to be produced from the nation of Israel but they failed. We also have all we need to fulfill God's expectations from us. The rulers indicated they were acting for God, but they didn't do what the Father had said. Repentance on the part of the one son in the parable would mean they would be welcomed by the Father in spite of their original resistance.

The parable of the tenants was easy for them to understand. God, the landowner in the story, had the tenants, the Jews, who should have brought spiritual fruit to Him. But instead they had killed the prophets, and now that God's Son had come, they were laying their plans to kill Him. The priests and the Pharisees knew the Lord was speaking to them. They thought they were in charge instead of God. When people reject their king, they actually condemn themselves. False authority cares for itself and enslaves other people to their rules. The experts rejected the Stone God had intended them to build on. They will ultimately be crushed by His rule and reign when He is recognized as the King Eternal.

From the "house of figs" to the "Mount of Olives,"
The King makes His way to the city.
On an ass's colt the long-expected King rides,
Shouts of triumph in His ears, tears flowing from His eyes with pity -
For He can see ahead into the days of the future -
And He knows the heart of each person.
This day they are joining voices with others like themselves -
A week later they will join together to curse Him.

At the house of prayer, they are not bowing their knees
Nor their hearts in sincere supplication.
Instead this place has become a den of thieves -
Their animals and money making it a place of desecration.
Now the children's voices are raised in child-like praise -
Followed by a lesson given and seen about faith.
Whether sons or tenants, the King has come to David's city -
The King who has come is the King of all grace.

For us to think we can say one thing and do another -
Is like a serious mistake made long ago.
It is foolish for us to make gain from holy things -
Thinking the motive behind it God does not know.
The One who was King then, is still the King today -
His authority is in no way diminished.
No matter what people think they have hidden away -
His authority will continue when all others are finished.

People still think they can get away with sin -
And no one is really any the wiser.
They have ignored the fact they may miss the punishment of law -
Not realizing there an authority that is much higher.
God is not willing that any should perish -
But that all should come to repentance and live.
To by-pass this opportunity to connect with the King -
Means they will miss the mercy He is now willing to give.

"Holy God, be merciful to those who are coming to the meeting tonight and please move them by Thy Spirit to come to the Savior. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 21:16. *"And said unto Him, 'Hearest thou what these say?' And Jesus saith unto them, 'Yea; have ye never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?'"*

CONNECTIONS.

Two together – tied in the same place;
One small – one larger – connected.
Even animals learn from each other.
Comforted with familiar smells and sounds –
Quiet contentment – until the cords are untied.
Then the highest possible usefulness –
The King wants to use you –
Both of you are to go together –
One will carry the load – the other learn – from the King.

Dignity in meekness – control with strength of character.
The King sits – in honor and humility at the same time.
The crowd watches, wonders, worships as scripture is fulfilled.
Impromptu carpets laid before Him by an adoring crowd.
Voices raised from those in front and behind – “Hosanna!”
The King weeps – the crowd rejoices – why the difference?
He knows – He sees the future – the crowd only the present.
But for this brief moment, a connection is made.
And the rocks wait to speak if the connection is broken.

A praying place – worship is supposed to ascend to God.
But the sound of business – and its stench – is loud and smelly.
The loud murmurings of the pious with their little boxes fastened –
The loud shouts of the hucksters, blend in a cacophony of noise.
Worship that goes no higher than the ceiling – connects with
Business, to fill their pockets in the name of God.
A form that could be used if true – the right place –
But wrong - from deceitful, covetous hearts that only nod to God.
A bad connection – broken by the sound of falling furniture – and the Word of God.

A word spoken to a tree – listeners wondering and questioning.
The tree withering and dying – and doubters wonder at “prayer-power.”
Authority questioned – where is this connection?
How does a word – a statement spoken – get such power?
Faith – not in self but in a Person, who has authority –
Belief without question – makes a connection that joins questions and answers.
The doubters watch and question and live – scratching their heads.
The believers ask, believe, go to sleep in contentment and confidence.
Knowing the higher connection of simple faith with a prayer-answering God.

A family connected by nature’s ties – father and two sons.
Responsibility is a family matter – father knows best – “go...work.”
A rebellious answer – the sound of stomping feet going in the distance;
But cooling temper and familial connection – quiet feet go to the vineyard to work.
A fawning answer – smooth sounds of false obedience;
Good words – respectable attitude – all fake – untrue – unreal.
Sounds of connection – but underlying actions of disobedience.
What makes the connection? Words or actions? Father knows –
An obedient son *does* the will of his Father – and is connected.

“O God, who is near to the child who calls in the Lord’s name: I have learned with gratitude, the blessings that accompany the connection between heavenly Father and this earthly son. I am unworthy of the least but Thou hast given the best. Thank You. I praise and worship Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MATTHEW 22

This chapter divides into (1) The parable of the wedding feast, v.1-14; (2) The King and taxes, v.15-22; (3) the King and the resurrection, v.23-33; (4) the King and the commandment, v.34-40; (5) the King questions the religious leaders, v.41-45.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST, v.1-14

The 1st Invitation

- The King: God is on His throne and His kingdom will endure forever. A person’s character living in a harmonious relationship with God is evident in those who are loyal to the King. In the model prayer the Lord prays things will be the same here as in heaven.
- The Feast: The King had betrothed Israel to Himself to represent Him in the world. The chief priests had no doubt as the parable unfolded, He was applying these parables to them. He was teaching them they owe allegiance to God and that He was sent from God (the second parable). To refuse the Son was to refuse God.

- The Invitation: the first call went out to those who were under His authority; who should understand and respond to it positively. Even though the Lord and His disciples had spent three years inviting them to come, they would not come.

The 2nd Invitation

- The Cost: oxen and fatlings are killed, a costly feast, is the message the second group of servants give to those same people.
- The Response: the indifferent ones turned to their “own” interests. The kingdom of God, interests of other people or the glory of God, was not in their area of interest. They went back to their own self-centered lives, seeking for personal riches and comfort without regard for the kingdom of God and the benefit of others. The rebellious turned on the messengers, abused them and killed some. This happened in the early days of preaching the Gospel in the times of the book of Acts. The King sent the armies of Cyrus and Israel felt the sword of righteous wrath.

The 3rd Invitation

- The Scope: all inclusive. This invitation is not confined to a certain group of people. Character is not minimized with these people as this point was made at the end of the parable by the man without a wedding garment who was condemned. The language indicates it was a deliberate act on the man’s part. The point of the 3rd invitation reminds us of the necessity realizing His kingship and obeying Him and recognizing His authority.

THE KING AND TAXES, v.15-22

- The Pharisees and Herodians: the Pharisees were anti-Rome and the Herodians were pro-Rome. Uniting of the opposition to trap the Lord Jesus regarding taxes is more serious than open opposition. These men were disciples of the Pharisees who did not know the Lord saw right through their deceit. Their flattery never moved Him in the least. Praise is a more serious problem than open opposition.
- If it was lawful to pay taxes according to their idea, He would have sided with Rome and His claim to be the Messiah would have been rejected by the Jews.
- If He said not to pay taxes, the Romans would have arrested Him. The Herodians favored Rome so between both groups they thought they had the Lord Jesus in a trap.
- He did not bring out a penny Himself, because that would have meant His acceptance of Roman authority over Him. He had them produce the coin themselves showing that because they were using Roman coins, they had submitted themselves to Caesar. When you pay taxes, and you must, remember your first allegiance is to a Higher King and a greater throne. The kingdom of God is supreme.

THE KING AND THE RESURRECTION, v.23-33

The Sadducees were rationalists who denied angels, spirits and the resurrection. They had a religion without anything or anyone supernatural. This is probably one of the most popular religions of our day.

- The Lord answered a foolish question without calling the Sadducees hypocrites like He called the Pharisees. This seemed to indicate they really had a difficulty regarding the resurrection.
- The Lord answered their question by stating their ignorance of the scripture and the power of God. He quietly answers their question in a dignified way with one sentence.
- The Lord goes right to the real problem – the Sadducees philosophy relating to the resurrection. They said, “Moses said...” The Lord said, “Spoken unto you by God...” There is no difficulty about the resurrection when we have the right understanding of God. God’s essential power is He is able to give life. These men were alive because of God. The Lord went right to the problem of rationalism which degrades the concept of God and the worth of man.

THE KING AND THE COMMANDMENT, v.34-40

- The lawyer’s question was really, “What principle makes any commandment great?” The Pharisees had made 600 laws and made points of one being more important than others.
- The Lord’s answer went outside of the individual commands, and went to two passages in scripture – one in Deut. and one in Lev. The first one is the great one because all others come from this one. The second one comes out of the first, and the two are the strength of all the rest. The principle in law is love.

THE KING QUESTIONS THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, v.41-45

The Sadducees were silenced, the lawyer had gone, but the Pharisees were still there when Jesus asked them two questions.

- The Messiah: He asked the first question in such a way that there was only one answer possible. This prophecy was according to the expectations of the nation – David's Son would be the Christ.
- The Lord: the quotation from Ps.110 which (1) He said David wrote; (2) he wrote it by the Spirit; (3) he wrote it about the Messiah. How could one's Lord be also his Son? Their silence reveals their conception of the Christ was wrong.
- The religious leaders came to ask Him about their politics. They expected a Messiah who would lead an army and free the Jews. He told them they didn't know the Messiah because He is more than just in David's line – He is David's Lord. His dominion is eternal and why, when you know Him, there is no difficulty about those who have died. The resurrection solves that problem. Christ is absolutely supreme and His lordship is established forever.

MATTHEW 22

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

In my journey with Jesus, it was impressed on me that even though the cross was just there before Him, He faithfully focused His attention on lost souls. The priests, Pharisees and Sadducees all came to find fault, but with wisdom, grace and honesty, He spoke with them. They were lost souls. Again, He explained the kingdom of heaven and what it was like. Even before the work of Calvary, He sent servants to call those privileged people to enter the kingdom. Thirty years of living among them and over three years of public teaching - still they doubted Him and would not enter the kingdom. Then in the same parable, He sent others, those who were called after Calvary to call them but they would not come. People like Stephen, Paul and others who called people to enter were killed and driven away. Finally, Rome sent Titus and Jerusalem was burned in AD 70. The call is going on today out on the highways of the world for people to come and enter the kingdom of heaven.

There are those all over the world that seem to be responding to the invitation. But there is a mixture. Some are bad and others are good. That is a reference to the fact that some who claim to be in the kingdom of heaven are not real. They say they are ready for heaven but have never been born again. They are not saved. They want to come on their own terms and clothe themselves in their own righteousness. Some will claim to be saved by God's grace and their own good works and law keeping. Others say they do the best they can and go to church. But without the garment of salvation and being clothed with the righteousness of Christ alone, they are going to be lost forever. It should stir our hearts to reach people with God's truth but also to be sure the message of salvation is presented clearly so the listeners know what is truly needed to enter the kingdom of heaven.

I noticed the Pharisees left His presence and gathered among themselves to plan a way to make the teaching of the Lord seem inconsistent to both the religious people and the political leaders of the day. They sent a group composed of both religious representatives and secular representatives. The flattering words of introduction were not lost to the Lord Jesus who knew their motivation and their own nature. In a very simple statement, He exposed their hypocrisy and plainly said that we are obligated to both the rulers of the world and to the God of heaven. It is not a matter of those in the kingdom of heaven being immune to, or above, the laws of the nation where we live. "The powers that be are ordained of God."

At the same time when we are in God's kingdom, we are to live by the moral and spiritual standards God expects of His own children, no matter what the laws of men allow. Anyone who abides by the expectations of kingdom living, will easily meet the requirements of a legitimate government. When the Lord asked them for a coin, they showed that by using the currency of Rome they were submitting themselves to Roman rule. He, on the other hand, did not acknowledge Roman rule over His authority. Our allegiance is to the Lord Jesus Christ as the King Supreme. Even when paying our taxes, we need to remember where our ultimate allegiance lies.

A third time on the same day another group came to the Lord seeking to entangle Him in some way by their deceptive means. The Sadducees came with a foolish question, but the Lord didn't call them hypocrites like He did the Pharisees. Perhaps they had sincere doubts about their rejection of anything supernatural. They had seen the miracles of the Lord and had heard His teaching so it could be they were questioning their own doctrine. The Lord gave them a very dignified one sentence answer to their question after stating their ignorance of the scripture. He also gave them a clear explanation of God who is the source of all power and life, and is the God of living people in the future. He corrected their false teaching in this simple statement that was given in a very inoffensive way. There is no difficulty about the resurrection when we think rightly about God.

Immediately the Pharisees had an expert in the law ask what principle makes any one commandment greater than others. The Pharisees had made hundreds of laws of their own and to them some were more

important than others. The Lord Jesus answered them without directing them to any one law, by taking them to the ultimate principle of the law which is love. This first is to love God supremely and from that come all the others including the second one that was stated. These two make all other laws have a reason behind them - love for God first, and love for others second.

Now the silent Sadducees and the lawyer who disappeared opened the way for the Lord to get right to the point. They had been wanting answers. Now the Lord Jesus asked them a question. The first question, "What think ye of Christ?" had only one answer. The prophecy was plain - David's son would be the Christ. So the Lord quoted David's psalm and answered His second question, "Whose son is he?" How could one's Lord be one's son? Their silence revealed their misconception of the Messiah. They expected their Messiah to lead an army to free the Jews. Now they are told plainly they didn't know the Christ because He is much more than David's seed. He is David's Lord and we know His kingdom is eternal. When we understand that, there is no difficulty in knowing about those who have died. The resurrection of Christ takes care of that problem and makes clear the fact that His kingdom is established forever. The Lord Jesus Christ is supreme and His lordship will never come to an end. So, the question, "What think ye of Christ?" is answered for them and for us. He is the King Eternal. He is the Supreme Lord of the universe. His dominion is forever. We who know Him and love Him are in that eternal kingdom because He is our Savior and our Lord.

Who is the One who prepared the feast -
Whose invitation went out in the past?
The greatest of all kings is treated as least -
Those who refuse His invitation are forever lost.

Who is this King who gave instructions to them
To pay their taxes to a lesser king?
His authority extends over all nations and men -
And His glories make all the courts of heaven ring.

Who is the Teacher who takes the time
To answer a foolish question wisely?
His teaching was enforced by many signs -
And His answers were always timely.

Who is this Judge who defines the whole law
Within a single sentence or two?
His judgments are not based on what people saw -
But He judges what is within one and is true.

Who is this Messiah, the answer to men's hope
Who walked here in true humility?
He is the Lord over every nation's throne -
Who will put all enemies someday at His feet!

Who is this One I call my Savior and Lord?
He is the Almighty Son of God!
When He speaks, I will obey His Word;
And in worship, His name and honor will laud.

"Father in heaven, I seek to honor the Lord Jesus Christ here this morning as I consider Him. I think of Christ as my Savior. I want to honor Him as my Lord and my God. I love Him who loved me and gave Himself for me. I want my worship and praise to be acceptable and real to Thee. In His holy name, Amen."

Matthew 22:17. *"Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"*

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WHAT THINK YE?

An invitation has come from a king, whose well-beloved son -
Is about to take a bride, and establish his own home.
You have been invited, and now, the time has come -
Get up! Get ready! Prepare yourself to join the happy throng.

Surely you will not despise or ignore such a great request -
You know the king's provided; everything is the best.
The garment has been provided - put on the wedding dress -
The invitation from the king is not some foolish jest.

WHAT THINK YE?

Is it right for a heavenly person to pay an earthly toll?
Are we who here should have been removed from evil here below -
To pay for things we think are wrong, by the taxes that we owe?
After all, wouldn't it be better to protest, and tell the tax-man, "No?"

I drive on roads that Caesar built, and live on Caesar's land.
I daily find some benefits that come from Caesar's hand.
I live in peace because he runs the law's controlling band.
So, shall I pay my taxes, or burden other men?

WHAT THINK YE?

The greatest law of all God gave, is written down to see -
The clear design that God intends to govern you and me.
The love for one another, and God, is so all will be -
Able to live their lives together with God in harmony.

Then comes the question, "Who is Christ, whose son really is our Lord?
Is He just the son of David, a king who men adored?
Or are the proofs all now in place, that Jesus Christ is God?
What do you say - who is He? Is He by you ignored?"

What I do with the invitation, is governed by what I think.
The King of kings has called to me, intending me to bring -
To Him, and even Caesar, with willing heart, what's His;
For He is Christ, the Son of God - obedience He does expect.

"God, my heavenly Father: I have learned when You say to "Come", that You mean me to come without questioning. I have learned that "The powers that be, are ordained by God" and I am obligated to obey them. I have learned by experience and the scriptures of truth, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. What I need now to learn is to never take any of this for granted, or to think any of these is unimportant. Amen."

MATTHEW 23

The Lord warns the multitudes against the false teachers, scribes and Pharisees who take the place of Moses' authority. He charges His disciples not to be called "Rabbi," "father," "master," or guides.

JESUS WARNS AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, v.1-12

- Traditions, interpretations and applications were more important to the scribes and Pharisees than God's law. They told others to obey laws they didn't obey. They only obeyed the rules that made them look good which is hypocrisy. They knew the scriptures but didn't live by them. Position was more important to them than loyalty to God. They believed greatness came from outward service.
- Their Failure: they seated themselves in this leadership position. In this "place" they added all kinds of technicalities. They put burdens on others they wouldn't move a finger to lift. The Pharisees were not true to their own ethical teaching.
- Their Motives: the Pharisees made wider borders on their garments to put their phylacteries on and make them conspicuous. These boxes carried prayers in them so they would seem to be praying without ceasing. They prayed on street corners to be seen of men. All these things: their interpretation of the law; their desire for positions of authority; the salutations in the market place; the recognition of the crowd – this was their reward. They would have nothing more. There was no recognition from God, no obedience – only condemnation.
- The Warning: with the crowd of people there watching and listening to His warning to the Pharisees, He turns to His disciples and warns them. (1) AUTHORITY – don't be called "Rabbi". You cannot claim final authority in your teaching. (2) REGENERATION – don't call any man "Father". You cannot claim to give spiritual life to any human being. (3) DIRECTION – don't be called "Master". You are not the final word to any other soul. Only the Word of God is. False religion is on a person. A true work of God is in a person.
- The Standard: the standard of truth is the life of God in the soul of man by the new birth. God is the final authority. God alone is the One who can guide us each and every day. He alone gives life apart from ordinances of men. He alone can guide us. He alone can reveal truth.

JESUS CONDEMNS THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, v.13-36

- Religious leaders were the most powerful and respected leaders. These leaders were attracted to Phariseism, not to God. A religion of deeds puts pressure on people to surpass other people. Outward obedience at the expense of inward life is Phariseism.
- At the beginning of the Lord's public ministry, He told His disciples their righteousness had to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter the kingdom of heaven [Mat.5:20]. Now at the end of His ministry He declares the lack of inner righteousness and character that is essential in the kingdom. Compare the Beatitudes with the Woes...

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven --- Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites... ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men. Inward humility vs outward arrogance... not letting others enter the kingdom of heaven and not entering yourselves. [v.14]

Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted --- Woe to those who compass sea and land to make a proselyte...make him twofold more a son of hell. After suffering-comfort vs after pride – pain, unrest and remorse... converting people away from God to be like yourselves. [v.15]

Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth --- Woe to blind guides. Moral power under control vs immoral profaning of holy things... blindly leading God's people to follow man-made traditions instead of God's Word. [v.16-22]

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness --- Woe against those who tithe the littlest things and leave important things undone. Spiritual health vs spiritual disease... involving yourselves in every last detail and ignoring what is really important – justice, mercy and faith. [v.23-24]

Blessed are the merciful --- Woe to those who are full of extortion and excess inside. Mercy vs extortion... keeping up appearances while your private world is corrupt [v.25-26]; acting spiritual to cover up sin [v.27-28]

Blessed are the pure in heart --- Woe to those outwardly beautiful. Purity of heart vs uncleanness of inner life... pretending to have learned from past history, but present behavior shows you have learned nothing. [v.29-36]

These were people who looked to the past and boasted of their relationship to Abraham and prophets of the past. The Lord Jesus says, "All right, be true to your boast. Reject the sins of your fathers who killed the prophets, you are doing the same as they did and intend to do more." They were acting as the offspring of those who killed the Lord's people and Satan who is out to kill and to destroy. Hell is the consequence of the sins one sows. Abel was the first slain by one who wanted his own way. Zechariah was the last mentioned as an example of the man of God who was killed by those who claimed to be God's people.

JESUS GRIEVES OVER JERUSALEM, v.37-39

- The Jews would not be gathered unto Him. This is the fundamental issue of sin – human will set against God's will. He is telling them if they would have come to Him, the coming judgment would not overcome them. He is speaking to them as God Himself. He wanted to bless them – "I would... ye would not."
- He cleansed the house at the beginning of His ministry. He cleansed it again at the end. Now the house is left desolate because the Master of the house will be absent. God will not be there.
- The King does not excuse any who continues in sin and will not come to Him. He will not take that person to heaven. Nothing that defiles will enter heaven in spite of grace. God Himself pronounces doom – with tears. But the doom will come. What God says will be done.

MATTHEW 23

REPROOFS

In Jerusalem the multitudes gathered to hear the Lord Jesus speak. The whole city would have been aware He was there and wanted to hear how the Messiah would go about bringing the kingdom back to Israel. Roman rule that kept them subservient grated on them so much that there had been attempts at insurrection. Instead of hearing Him speak against those they considered oppressors, they heard warnings and reproofs against their own leadership. Inconsistency is a common leadership problem that those who are supposed to follow them can pick up on quite easily. When those who lead insist you do what they say, but what they do and say are quite different, people will reject their leadership. The expectation is that those who lead will lead us by example, not just by their words of authority.

Another reason why people will not respect the leadership of some is because of their insistence on man-made forms that have been designed. Some may have been passed on for generations and others may be newly imposed burdens. Legalism is the result of man-made laws that have burdensome demands based on opinions. Sometimes it is for outward appearance. Other times those who impose those legal demands will teach that these are necessary for salvation. This idea is found in the "Jesus plus..." religions. It can also be

found where people add man's ideas of proofs of salvation being external instead of new life within. A new creation has an inward change that expresses itself outwardly rather than just outward changes without a new nature.

Hypocrisy has as its motivation the desire for people to see what one would consider evidence of their own piety and spirituality. The impression one makes is important to those who practice this. The desire to be highly regarded by man is more important to them than what God thinks. Visual testimony only has weight when it is consistent with reality that comes from a genuine desire within to please God. To know the scriptures and teach them to others as truth but not practice them is hypocrisy. Position is more important to those who do that than loyalty to God. We must be true to our own ethical teaching.

The motives behind our practices are what really are important. Interpretations of the scripture must be consistent with the context and with God's intention throughout the Word of God. The desire for a position of authority has to be consistent with the responsibilities God expects us to fulfill according to His will. Recognition from God is what is important - not the recognition from the people as one who is popular.

Flattering titles given and received are not what establishes one's leadership. Because one is given the title "Rabbi" or teacher, does not mean that person is the final authority on divine things. Reject that title. When one is called "father" does not mean that person is able to give spiritual life to others. Regeneration comes only from the Spirit of God. Reject that title. The word "Master" is reserved for the Lord Jesus Christ. He has the final word to the soul's need that people have. Reject that title. Only the Word of God can meet that person's need. False religion is imposed on a person. God alone gives the new birth, has the final authority, consistently guides us into His truth and gives power to the new life.

As I listened to the woes the Lord pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees, the contrast between them and the Beatitudes the Lord gave at the beginning of His public ministry stood out. There was the contrast of inward humility and their outward arrogance. There was the contrast of comfort after suffering with pain after pride. The meek are contrasted with blind guides, their moral power under control with the immoral profaning of holy things. Spiritual health is contrasted with spiritual disease; mercy with extortion and purity of heart with uncleanness of life. These people were boasting of their heritage but were acting as those in the past who killed the prophets and the Lord's people. Hell is the destination of those who sow sin. Abel was the first example and Zechariah the last example of people who were killed by those who claimed to be God's people and brought their sacrifices they thought made them acceptable. The consequences of their attitudes and actions will come upon those who go against God and His people.

The grief of the Lord Jesus over Jerusalem is a touching reminder of how God looks upon those He loves and who choose to reject Him. When the human will, is set against God's will, it does not bring pleasure to God to remove His protection from them. He wants to bless them - "I would... ye would not." He cleansed the house at the beginning of His ministry and again at the end of His ministry. Now the house is left desolate because God has moved out. He is no longer there. He does not excuse them from the consequences of continuing in sin. Those who reject Him will not be in heaven. They will not defile heaven with their sin. God is a God of grace, but grace spurned will give way to coming judgment and doom.

When warnings are given there is always a reason.
It may be from dangers that happen in the changing of seasons.
Storms about to fall give opportunity to change
From a place of danger to where one can be safe.
When it comes to changes from truth to the opinions of men -
There is a far greater danger to people then when
It is only weather - this one is really potentially bad -
Because the outcome of false teaching, leaves people forever sad.

When position is more important than loyalty
To God and His Word, most people can see
There is a personal agenda one has in mind.
Sometimes it is burdens imposed on others to bind
With a list of "dos and don'ts" that are grievous to bear.
So those who claim authority want all the rest to be aware -
They believe they are in authority, not a willing servant,
Whose role is meeting needs by being observant.

The true teacher is the Lord, we don't demand that position.
And a father is known by his powers of observation
And willingness and ability to meet the needs of spiritual children -

Who are struggling in their lives when things overwhelm them.
The real Master is the Lord who gives us direction -
And is able to confirm a work with words of affection.
God alone is the guide who in grace and truth shows the way
For us to live effective lives for the Lord every day.

“Father, in Thy Word I see warnings that relate to the work we are presently engaged in. If I am to speak some words of guidance and reproof, I pray this will be made very plain to me and that I may be given words of wisdom and a spirit of grace to do so under the direction of the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Matthew 23:11,12. *“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

THE SERVANT.

We have choices to make that are given so plain;
That affects every action of life.
One, God says, leads to ultimate gain -
The other will likely bring to us strife.

When I think service for God, is first in my day,
It is not wise to tell all that I do.
To make sure that others know all that I say,
God makes sure that I'll be brought low.

God is the One who knows all that's inside,
Though I advertise all that I've done.
To set myself up means it's a work of my pride,
And God determines to bring me way down.

When a man or a woman does service for others -
God looks with delight upon them.
The person who truly loves his sisters and brothers,
Will end up as a leader of men.

I must remember, all of my life,
What God has determined for me.
One who is humbled, He wants to up lift.
One self-exalted, by Him humbled will be.

“O Father God, who knows all of my inner life including ambition, attitudes, and thoughts: I need help to make sure I do not mislead anyone, misrepresent myself, or mistakenly advertise my work. I do want to give all glory to Thee for anything that is done, but there are times when I wonder if I am involved in self-exaltation. Please keep me looking only unto Thee in all times and for all reasons. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Matthew 24:2. *“And Jesus said unto them, ‘See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”*

WHAT DO I SEE?

What do you see, looking into the past?
Just ancient history, or lessons that last?
Events that occurred, whose shadows are cast -
Over things that are happening to me.

I see faithful men who from God, things had learned -
I learn from many others who God's truth did spurn -
I learn right now in the pages I turn
That God knows what is happening to me.

What do I see, looking around in this present?
Much seems so successful, beautiful and pleasant.
With all that men have, why miss full contentment -
Am I worth what is what is happening to me?

I have so much, people look on with envy.
I am so blessed with my wife and my family.
I am enjoying the ways that God is willing to use me.

Is God honored by what's happening to me?

When I open the Bible, I see into the future.
God's truth and God's warnings are true.
Darkness on earth deepens, events start to show.
I praise God it's not going to happen to me.

I see around earth, many troublesome signs -
Wars, unrest, evil, lies - most men's eyes blind.
But beyond the mudslide of morals - there shines -
The Son - God knows what is happening to me.

“O God of all ages: past, present and future is all one to Thee. Thank You for making clear to me through the Holy Scriptures of truth the way Thou hast over the years of the past and present, made plain what is expected of men. I look ahead and see the dark clouds advancing, but I am content knowing I am secure in Thy hands and in the path of Thy will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MATTHEW 24

WARNINGS

It was after the reproofs of the religious leaders as the Lord Jesus was walking toward the mount of Olives, that the disciples called His attention to the glories of the temple and all the buildings surrounding it. It must have been impressive and a point of national pride - and even religious pride. At least it was to the people He had just left off speaking to. Now the Lord gives His disciples a look into the future - and what a tragic look it is! The stones of the temple were all going to be pried apart to get the gold melted from the flames that were going to destroy the buildings. There was nothing but a heap of rubble a few years later. So, the disciples asked when the kingdom would really come and the old age be passed. God does not give us all the information we may wish for regarding our future. It would be too distracting and disconcerting for us. We would focus on the future rather than on what He wants to do in and through us at this present time. No doubt if we knew all that was going to befall this world in the time of tribulation, we would be so distraught we wouldn't be able to present the Gospel of God's grace with the joy and enthusiasm it deserves.

I was able to follow along with the disciples as I read the word of God. The Lord gave a brief overview of things that will happen and that lead up to His return in glory to take the throne of David and rule in righteousness. There will be religious confusion that will turn many away from the truth of God revealed in the scriptures. The increase of national and international confusion will be a sign in relation to the end times. The 20th century was the bloodiest 100 years in the history of the world and it is getting increasingly worse today. Civil wars are going on in many countries and international conflicts seem to be promoted by anarchists and terrorists. The prophets had foretold of famines that would come and they are in many places today. There are millions of people who live from hand to mouth in this world. The changing of weather patterns, over-grazing of animals in parts of the world that were once self-sustaining make it necessary for many to depend on outside help in many nations. There are new strains of viruses that are immune to the antibiotics that used to help preserve life. Shortage of food stocks, increasing forms of diseases like AIDS and STDs that follow the moral decay of humans are taking their toll on humanity. There is no questioning the fact that earthquakes are increasing and the devastation that follows is astounding. The impact of the tsunamis that have followed recent earthquakes has affected the world. Millions of tons of debris are floating in the ocean as a result of earthquakes but the Lord said this is only the beginning of the awful things that are coming.

Any that are identified with the Lord will begin to experience opposition that will lead to persecution. The ties that used to bind people together will be broken as the storm of human iniquity gets rapidly worse. Those who seemed like they were true and committed to the Lord and His Gospel will turn away from Him because of the pressure to conform to the way of the world. Political opposition under the deceptive reign of the antichrist will be costly to the economy of the world and the lives of those that believe the Gospel of the kingdom. We can see foreshadowing of this now in many places in the world today. The Gospel has spread world-wide. Places that were closed to it have opened in recent years and places where there has been liberty to proclaim the Gospel for generations are now starting to regulate that freedom because of pressure from those who reject its truth.

As the age draws to a close there are warnings given as to the rapidity of anti-God and anti-Christ sentiment. In less than a day changes can come over which we have no control. The time will come when people have to flee to survive. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

The Lord Jesus gave a overview, not only of the start and course of the days leading up to the tribulation but of the tribulation itself. The time when Jerusalem was destroyed must have made the early believers think the kingdom reign of Christ was at hand. Down through the centuries there have been times when the Lord's people were sure this was the time of the return of the Lord. The devastation, the loss of thousands of lives, the uncertainty, the false messiahs all have disturbed the Lord's people in various times and places. But we really need to remember the Lord did not give us a time when He would come. Rather He gave warnings for us to be ready at all times.

Vigilance in the things of God is expected from His servants. His intention for us is that we will be busy and engaged in the work of the kingdom when He comes. His expectation is that the people of God be active and ready. The challenge to us today is not to set dates in expectation of His return, but to be busy about the Father's business with diligence. This is no time for us to be relaxing and thinking the season of sowing, watering and reaping of the Gospel harvest is over. We have responsibilities that have been given to us that we dare not leave undone. There are eternal issues at stake. There are eternal souls that need salvation and there is work in the kingdom of God we need to be doing. The consequences of our actions have the eternal life or eternal death of men, women and children in view.

When dark clouds arise in distant skies
We wonder when they are going to reach here.
Not all are weather warnings, which is no surprise -
Some bring a much deeper and darker fear.
The darkness of unrest among nations -
Has a way of spreading far abroad.
When there is fear and unrest in the population -
Sometimes they may stop to think about God.

Coming events have a way of casting shadows
Ahead of their actual arrival.
There are those whose occupation is predicting tornadoes -
And they warn people to flee for survival.
In a similar way when people turn away from God
And do not heed the warnings that are given;
They will face the consequences of warnings ignored -
And miss out on the blessings of heaven.

Warnings may be given relating to one's health -
To doctors' advice it is wise to pay heed.
Other warnings are made that affect one's wealth -
And the results when we give way to our greed.
Wisely we consider that "one's life does not consist
Of the abundance of the things he possesses."
It is not foolish when the Spirit-strivings we don't resist
And we receive the truth of God's Word that can bless us.

Times are going to get worse in the near future -
To the warnings of coming judgment, we must listen.
Those who are saved have been given a new nature -
And the future before us seems to actually glisten.
But those who will go into great tribulation
Will find not relief for their souls.
Those of us who possess God's salvation
Need to diligently fulfill our God-given roles.

"Father God, I can see the darkness of war, famines, pestilence and all the evils that go with them are covering the world. People fear the future but they don't fear Thee. May Thy servant find some people today with an ear to hear. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MATTHEW 25

BE WATCHFUL

The disciples were learning from the Lord truths from the kingdom of heaven and how things were going to unfold in time to come. The Coming of the Lord does not only include the rapture of the Church at the end of the day of grace when the Lord Jesus has claimed a bride from the nations of the whole world, but it also includes His revelation to the world when He comes in His glory to reign as the Kings of kings. The time of His Coming is unknown. The length of time is not predicted nor implied. The signs give an indication of the promise of His return and should help keep us alert and watching. The way we spend our time is important.

Sleeping because of boredom or what we consider a delay is not right. Anticipation of His return is what keeps a person in a state of readiness. Making sure nothing has to be done and our lives are in order is part of being watchful in view of His return. There may be weariness because of labor but we must still be watching. The time may seem long and we don't understand fully the waiting time, but we must still be watchful. The years may seem to drag on of our inactivity because of the aging process, but we still need to be watching. Being ready and watchful is motivated by our appreciation and love for the Bridegroom we are waiting for. Those suffering saints through the years were wanting to see the Lord come before they died but still, they were watchful and the word "Maranatha" was never far from their lips. The day is coming because the promise of God is sure.

Another lesson the Lord gave His disciples as I watched and listened, was that the waiting and watching times are to be filled with useful action for Him and the building up of His kingdom. It is not enough for us to be ready and watching ourselves. God's intention is that we use whatever God has given us wisely and for His glory. He knows each one of us and His expectations of us are not unrealistic. The talents were His in the first place and He has given them to us to use. We are not our own, we have been bought with the price of the precious blood of Christ. Our ability determines the responsibility. "To whom much has been given, much is required."

Talents were first measured weights of about 75 pounds. Later they became coins that were valued and used for monetary exchange. Now talent has to do with natural ability to fulfill some role. That may differ from person to person. God has left us here as citizens of His kingdom to produce benefits for His kingdom. In the Gospel activity, one plants, another waters, according to his or her talents. In the body of Christ there are gifts given that are actually people themselves - evangelists, pastors and teachers. In the assembly of believers in an area where God has established a testimony to His name, there is a variety of gifts used along with natural talents to do the work of the Lord. We were never intended to be idle while we watch for His coming. Each person is known by Him and God will never demand from a person that which he or she is not able to do.

Being watchful does not mean we only watch for His return. It also involves watching for ways to serve Him acceptably. Basically, our service for God means we serve people. The "bags of gold" are not what we are to multiply. The value of the souls of men and women goes way beyond what the world would term valuable. The prayer of a new believer; the first hymn of praise sung from the heart of a redeemed soul; the light of understanding when one gets something from the word of God for the first time are all talents that are added to what has been given us.

There is another reason for watchfulness. The final part of the Lord Coming means a gathering of nations will take place. There are now, and there will be during the time of tribulation, those who show the kindness of God to those who are in need and will seek to meet those needs. The needs may be physical, emotional and spiritual. The same will take place when the Jews again will be hunted and tormented in the future as they have been in the past.

We cannot meet every need, but when we are watching out for those the Lord brings us in contact with, we cannot walk away as if we have no responsibility to them. There are lasting consequences to an unmerciful attitude toward those who are undergoing persecution. During the tribulation, survival will be the greatest need of the Jewish people when the antichrist turns on them and seeks to annihilate them. The judgment of the nations is not explained in detail but there is no doubt about the Lord's commitment to the nation of Israel as His earthly people. All nations that have sought to oppose and defeat Israel will find that the King of kings is not only on their side, but was from that nation when He was found in fashion as a man on earth. The Word of God is plain that there is eternal punishment for those who are opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ and His people, and eternal life for those who love, obey and serve Him. "Eternal" is the word used for both destinies. There is no suggestion of the weakening of the consequences of rejection, or of the blessing of the righteous.

It is highest wisdom to pay attention when the Lord speaks to His own.
His words have weighty messages as He spoke of things to come.
To be watchful and ready as this age draws to a close
Means there are consequences to every action that I choose.

There is a tendency to settle down comfortably as we wait
For the Lord to come and call us thinking there is a lot of time yet
To fulfill the work God gave us, but we need to stop and think
The Lord could come today and we'd be changed faster than a blink.

Watching and waiting also means we keep things up to date.
Not leaving things undone, not willing to procrastinate.
What we do as to the Lord should be done with responsibility.
And the on-going work we are called to, be done enthusiastically.

God has given to us what we need to finish all the tasks.
If we take opportunity, as a moment we must grasp
In faith we invest our time and talents where they find the best use.
And with care and conviction do our best where God alone does choose.

Faithful service will be rewarded, faithlessness will mean loss.
There are consequences to face if we neglect to pay the cost
Of living for the Lord in spite of what others may do.
The value of the talents given will be accounted for when we are through.

In a day that's yet to come all the nations will be gathered.
The Jewish people will come together from where they've all been scattered.
There on His throne of justice the Lord will judge the nations.
Blessing will be given to some, and to others - condemnation.

"Heavenly Father, for some reason I am tired today. Would it be alright if I took awhile to rest even though there is a meeting tonight? Would some of the thoughts come into my mind from Thee make the message relevant to those who attend? I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 25:13. *"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."*

THE SON OF MAN COMETH.

v.1-13. WAITING

Invitation is given: *"went forth"* – the day long-awaited is near
Occupation is right: *"to meet the bridegroom"* - the Bridegroom is coming
Preparation is overlooked: *"no oil"* – five wise and five foolish
Anticipation is waning: *"slumbered and slept"* – couldn't tell the difference
Separation is real: *"the door was shut"* – I know you not

v.14-30. WORKING

Relationship: his own servants
Stewardship: delivered unto them his goods
Hardship: faithful over a few things
Fellowship: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord

v.31-48. WARNING

Son of Man in His glory: all before Him versus Him before them
King on His throne: seated in power versus hung in humiliation
Lord with His brethren: identifying with them versus despised and rejected
Judge in His authority: dispensing justice versus falsely accused

"O Father in heaven: what a difference there will be when the Lord returns compared to what He endured when He was here before. I am thankful that He was willing to come before that I might be saved. I bow in praise even now, reminded of the fact that He could call us today. I am ready! Amen."

THE ARRIVAL. Matthew 25:40. *"And the King shall answer them and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'"*

He went away from Olivet, with very few to see -
Eleven men there watched Him rise to His home.
From death's cold bond forevermore He's free -
His sacrificial work here on earth was now done.

He left behind here, a promise He had made,
"I'm coming back to take you home with Me."
From then until now all God's people have prayed,
With eyes lifted in full expectancy.

False voices rise and false claims many hear,
That they are the "person" and know the time.
As things continue to grow worse, it is clear,
Those people are blind leaders of the blind.

For those who are waiting the arrival of Him,
He has given to us talents to use.
It is incumbent upon me to wisely use them
In ways He allows me to choose.

A time in the future will bring completely to light,
All I have done for Him alone in my life.
May all I have labored for be good in His sight,
And may the way I have labored be right.

For at His arrival to claim what is His,
Everything will be put in plain view.
Each action and thought will be shown what it is,
And its worth and its cost He will show.

We anxiously wait for the King when He comes,
To receive from us what He first gave.
To see Him honored and receiving His own,
We will all say, "He is mighty to save!"

"Father God: what glory awaits Thy Son when He comes. What honors He will receive from the faithful of the ages. What joy will fill each waiting heart when the King is finally acknowledged for who He is and what is rightfully His. Awaiting His arrival, I am your anticipating son, Amen."

MATTHEW 26

ONE DARK NIGHT

The final sermon had been given. Explanation of this kingdom of heaven had been given covering many subjects. Principles, practices and prophecies that related to the disciples - and us had been taught. During the last week the religious leaders of the Jews and members of the Sanhedrin were exposed as to who they were. The Lord Jesus told His disciples again of the imminent betrayal and His death. Now the Jewish leaders took action to have the Lord Jesus Christ killed and no doubt hoped they would again be able to reclaim their position of prestige and authority. We can be sure there will be opposition whenever God is working. The successes of the Gospel invading the world that Satan claims for himself, stirs a resentment in the heart of those who obey not the Gospel. We are told plainly to resist the devil and he will flee. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." There are people who will want what is right and will be willing to identify themselves with the Lord.

One such person was in Bethany when the Lord Jesus and the disciples were in the house of a man who was healed of leprosy. The alabaster box of ointment has significant meaning. The white alabaster that usually has dark lines through it is a good representation of a believer who, though evidence of sin is in his life at times, has been made righteous and is able to contain within him or her, the precious ointment of worship that is so valuable to the Lord. When such a blessing is given from us to the Lord, it has an effect of all those who are around. The air would have been permeated with the odor of the ointment.

When the disciples called it a waste, the Lord Jesus quickly corrected them by giving insight into what is really important. I must never lose sight of the value of that which is given to God alone. She had heard His words and believed them. She had given her best as a gift from her heart. She didn't have to say a word in order for her appreciation, gratitude and love for the Lord to be seen.

In great contrast to the devotion of the woman with the alabaster box of ointment, was the covetous, basically evil nature of Judas. The woman's cost for a box of ointment to anoint the Savior for His burying was a year's labor. Judas was willing to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Betrayal of the Savior for personal gain did not cease with Judas. Many would sell the Lord Jesus Christ even today if it would further their personal agendas and bring them financial gain. It happens in religious groups and churches when the emphasis is placed on the ideas of men rather than the Person of Christ.

The Passovers that were kept had the foreshadowing type of Christ in view. Now "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us." We now keep the feast of remembrance of a finished work and the One in whose body He was bearing our sins on the cross. We have that in emblem in the bread of the Lord's Supper. His life, typified in the cup indicates eternal life has come to us through Christ giving His life for us. So now all Passovers are finished even though Jewish people all over the world still go back to the deliverance from Egypt as a special holiday. Judas had dipped his bread into the same bowl as the Lord Jesus did and then left on his mission of betrayal.

The Lord initiated a new remembrance meal that night of which we partake weekly on the first day of the week. It includes bread as the testament of His body in which He bore our sins. The cup is a reminder of the cost of making peace through the blood of His cross. The testimony of His life given - actually poured out - is a vivid reminder that One has died for our sins. His blood has cleansed us from the sins that separated us from a holy God. It may be that the disciples didn't realize the significance of that new feast at that time. But after the Lord ascended to heaven, they would appreciate the kindness of God in giving them that physical, visible reminder of His Person and His cross-work that has brought "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." That night would never be forgotten by those who attended that last Passover and first Lord's Supper. After their voices were silent following the final hymn they sang, the Lord Jesus again told them what was going to happen. Peter boldly proclaimed his allegiance to the Lord and was warned by the Lord how he would respond to the offenses that would come. It is not uncommon for us to be bold when we are in a safe place or setting, but when under pressure to conform to what is going on around us, we fail.

It seemed like there was a difference when the Lord and His disciples got to the Garden of Gethsemane. Anticipating the coming sufferings that were about to begin, the face of the Lord must have reflected the sorrow of soul He had within. The sighs of personal grief were kept as private as possible. He allowed Peter, James and John to see some of that as they moved further into the garden. Then He went further yet, in His position and in His personal prayer with His Father. The humanity of the Savior revealed in that scene helps us who go through times of personal grief and heaviness of heart, to remember our Lord went there before us. He experienced and understands the waves of hurt and need that seem to overwhelm one.

His assurance of the all-hearing and all-knowing Father in His time of trouble assures us that from the loneliness of abandonment to the valley of the shadow of death, He is there. The sleeping disciples wouldn't have known until later all that transpired in that garden. When the Spirit of God directed Matthew to write these words, it must have given him a sense of wonder about all that transpired there while he slept with the other disciples in that very place. We may not realize until much later the significance of a prayer meeting in a place where we have prayed for years with other people. Maybe sometimes we have even slept ourselves. But the Lord is wide awake and involved in intercession with the Father on our behalf. Even when we don't know what to pray, the Holy Spirit is there interceding on our behalf and entering fully into the urgency of our unspoken words.

In the eye of my mind, I could see the Savior rise off the ground and for a last time come to the sleeping disciples to announce to them that coming through the trees was Judas and others. This was the opening scene of the greatest event to ever take place in the world. The deceptive kiss, the powerless soldiers, the great band of people that filled the garden to take one person seems so unreal. Even Peter, probably aiming for a man's head and cutting off his ear, seems so carefully planned. The final public healing of the servant's ear would have been talked about in many conversations that would follow. When Jesus told the whole great group of people that the scriptures foretold this, the disciples fled the scene realizing He truly was going to be taken, and He was not going to restore the nation of Israel at that time. Perhaps Judas too thought the Lord was going to act in power and deliver Himself and the nation from the occupying Roman army and government. He may have thought he would have a place of authority in that kingdom.

We do not know the reason or the outcome of every event that happens in our lives, but we know this much, we owe our loyalty and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. His kingdom and authority are supreme. We do have to be subject to those who lead in the nation but only to the extent that our allegiance to our Lord is not compromised. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Our basic stewardship is to the Lord Himself, His kingdom, His truth and His Word. We have a part to play in the fulfillment of scripture when we obey those truths that are written in them.

Peter's denial is in a way understandable. He felt strong in himself earlier. Now he learns his weakness. His earlier perceived strength was fleshly. Now his weakness is fleshly. As he listened to the exchange of words between the false witnesses, the priest and elders, and then the high priest and Jesus, in fear he denied Him again. He remembered that Jesus had told him exactly what would happen before the rooster would crow in the morning. Any time we think we are strong in ourselves; we are at the weakest point in ourselves and the Lord will bring us down in weakness. His strength through us is made operational and real when we are weak in ourselves and know it. God's grace is often most obvious and real through those we least expect to see accomplishing anything, let alone great things for the Lord.

In that one week and one dark night, much was done that affects us today. The practice of Christian worship was made plain by the gratitude of one woman. It must come from the heart and isn't dependent on our words. Warnings of the consequences of deception and greed was indelibly impressed so greatly that the

phrase "30 pieces of silver" is used to describe betrayal even by those who are not Christians. The weekly practice of the Lord's Supper has been carried out since that time and goes on in a similar way all over the world as believers get together to remember the Savior and to proclaim publicly His death for us on the cross. The value and practice of earnest prayer has been exemplified by the Lord for our learning. The dignity of quiet submission was there for everyone to learn from. We may be falsely accused and persecuted, but a few choice words and silence are more appropriate than a loud defense. The same holds true when a fellow believer fails and need to be restored. A simple look and a reminder of the Savior's love, mercy and forgiveness may be what is needed more than a lengthy lecture. As I thought on all of these things I was led to worship, not with a lot of words but with a bowed and humbled heart.

The testimony is there for all to read.
Her worship with the alabaster box was worship indeed.
No words were needed from her lips to know,
That the worship from her heart was not just to show
Others how pious and grateful to the Lord she was.
She had listened and learned from Him - her gift was because
She knew He was going to die and be buried as He said.
Her gift was to show Him she believed on Him before He was dead.

The Passover and Lord's Supper in the upper room,
Were the reasons why the Lord had His disciples to come
To that place so they would learn the Passovers were permanently done.
There was a new covenant now based on God's sacrificial Lamb.
Bread now was to testify of the Body of Christ.
It was the end of the Passovers the Lamb need not die twice.
The cup was a reminder of His life that was given.
Only those with His eternal life imparted will be in heaven.

The prayers in the garden with strong crying and tears,
Touches our hearts when we have our fears.
He also knew pain and suffering and grief.
Prayers to the Father also gives to us relief -
And we are able because of that to face difficult things
That arise in our lives - we need the strength and comfort prayer brings.
He knows the end of the matter far better than us.
Prayer in faith is one way we express our sincere trust.

When failure comes as it so often does,
We find ourselves trying to deny the cause
Was our desire to escape the testimony of our faith,
Because of the unbelievers who are in that place.
There will be regrets, often a lot of remorse and tears,
When we face the fact that we denied the One whose name we bear.
Repentance may be painful with the hot tears of grief -
But the Lord's look and acknowledgment of guilt brings to us relief.

"Gracious heavenly Father, this morning I am caught up in the events of this chapter and the impact that a few hours have in all of history. May I never think that anything that Thou dost allow to happen in my life is of no importance. I do not want to worry about the small things. I just want to do what is Thy mind in them. And when it comes to what I may consider big things, help me to not ever try to act independently of Thee in any way. Please keep me from cutting off someone's ear or denying Thee before others. If and when that happens, please give me the grace and faith to correct that wrong as soon as possible. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 26:2. *"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."*

Matthew 26:32. *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."*

"YE KNOW".
I never will fully understand -
It defies my explanation.
But His full commitment to the Father's will
Gave Him the motivation.

Christ came from heaven in love to men;
He came to seek and save.
Salvation's cost far beyond all ken,
Was His life - He willingly gave.

The priests and the judge, the thieves and the crowd,
Were all people just like me.
All around the cross with voices crying loud,
His perfect holiness they could not see.

To review the words describing His passion,
Moves my memory once again.
It is my great delight, in His appointed fashion,
To worship Him, bringing honor to His name.

Father, the words that came on my bed,
I cannot seem to recall them now.
But You heard them, before they left my head,
And though forgotten - makes my heart to bow.

As I go today to worship my Lord -
May my heart be soft and warm.
May the thoughts I have be put into words,
As we give glory and exalt His name.

I am not interested today in just words to say,
But in this way, my love to express.
Sometimes it seems when I come this way -
It suits, Lord, and says it best.

“My rhymes, Lord, are not to draw attention to me, but to help me think new thoughts in new ways. I know You understand all that I mean and why it is important to Thee to hear a simple son say, ‘Thanks Father, I do love You.’ In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MATTHEW 27

THIS JUST PERSON

As I read the on-going account of Jesus' journey, I saw the Lord Jesus Christ with bruised face and religious spit testifying to the Jews rejection of Him, led, bound to Pilate. The counsel of the Jews was a death sentence. They were not able to carry that out so they took Him to the Gentile governor to have this accomplished.

Judas in the meantime, realized the Lord Jesus was not going to deliver Himself and take kingship over the nation at that time. Judas' scheming plans did not work the way he had intended and his name is preserved in infamy from that day until this. The prophecies of Zechariah and Jeremiah were fulfilled by the actions of that self-centered, covetous man. There is no way to carry out the will and work of God by self-seeking attempts at finding a place for ourselves that we may become rich and famous before men. God is determined to put the proud man down, and to raise the humble man up. Judas' betrayal, his death, burial and doom are recorded as a testimony to those who do not have a right estimation of Jesus. The warning is there for all to learn from.

As the Lord Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor, His testimony was brief and easy to understand. "He witnessed a good confession before Pontus Pilate." He was not here to bring about an insurrection but to establish a kingdom of truth and righteousness beginning with His own people. Pilate knew the underlying envy the religious leaders bore against Jesus. He also knew the innocence of the Lord Jesus. He knew the results the Jewish leaders wanted - Jesus' death. His wife also knew this and was moved to warn Pilate of the mistake he was making. We are called upon to make decisions ourselves that seriously affect other people. It is not wise to act arbitrarily or out of a desire to appease the leading people if they are using you to achieve their own ends. In decision making we need to get the facts clear in our minds. Consider carefully what is behind the cause of the event. Do not be pressured by those who have a personal agenda they are seeking to use you to fulfill. Amidst the challenges, charges and pressures there is the truth of the matter. It is our obligation to seek out that truth and defend it.

When Pilate finally evaded the truth, to content the people, he condemned Jesus to die. The abuse of the soldiers and the vicious attacks on Him physically seems to be that of a cowardly pack of dogs like was prophesied in the Old Testament scriptures. The attitude of the population seems so unfair and unreal, one is caused to wonder if Satan had not released a horde of demons to try and have the Lord Jesus Christ die before He went to the cross to make atonement for our sins. It seems like they went so much farther than would have been the usual practice. We know the scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a

tree." The fullness of the redemptive work of Christ had to be done on the tree so we would be separated from the consequences of our sins and would live for God out of appreciation and the power of a new nature living through us and producing a whole new life.

There never was a question as to the innocence of the Lord Jesus in Pilate's mind. Even the religious leaders had to manipulate the laws to try and find an excuse for their own actions. The strange fickleness and mockery of the people and the soldiers seem to be the mindless movement of peer pressure. Once the reproaches, the mockery, the cruelty got started, it seemed to take on a mind of its own. The whole scene was one of the bloodthirsty people directed to only one of the three crucified people. The thieves on either side were not made the object of the derision and animosity of the people. We wonder at that until we stop to consider the presence of perfection among wide-scale imperfection; morality among immorality; honesty where lies and deception rule; truth against falsehood; holiness contrasted with ungodliness. The only way people could deal with the One who came from heaven was to get rid of Him. In spite of all the ways they tried to get a response from Him that would make Him say or do something they could accuse Him of, there was nothing. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." The insults, the rejection, the humiliation, the pain and the suffering did not in any way turn Him from His purpose of "suffering the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

The darkness that covered the land for three hours was a testimony to everyone that something was happening to Jesus that was beyond anything natural. Such darkness brought fear to those who had come to watch Him die. They fled into the darkness perhaps realizing there was something happening at Golgotha that was stirring the heart of God. Then when loud cries from the Lord Jesus Christ came out of the darkness one after another including the loud, "It is finished!" there would have been that deep terror in the souls of all, that accompanies guilt. The great destructive earthquake would have sent terrified people into the streets crying out in fear. When the rocks around them were breaking they must have thought the end was here.

The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus would have started out as just another crucifixion to the soldiers. But as the crowd grew and the momentum of rejection had gathered, they had entered into it themselves. When the darkness came followed three hours later by the earthquake, they all, including the centurion, came to the same conclusion. "Truly this was the Son of God!" Even from my place of reading the words, though not being there, I am greatly impacted by the fact that "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me!" To me this whole event is very personal. This goes way beyond being a historical event to being the great redeeming act of God's grace that I might escape the punishment of my sins and be accepted by a holy God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for me - in my place, when He died on the cross. I am accepted in the Beloved Son.

There is no way to truly describe all that happened there because it was so profound in scope. The actions of God from way before creation, had this day and work in view. The illustrations, types and shadows in the Old Testament had this work in view. The psalms that were sung hundreds of years before, described this event. Now looking back from where I am today, that moment in His-story stands out above all other events as the one that changed the whole universe. It changes people from within when they take time to consider what happened that day that made it possible for sinful people to not only come to God, but be made "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The burial of Jesus was remarkable also because the scriptures had foretold how He would be buried by the rich. Joseph stands out from among the Sanhedrin, and Nicodemus too as they take Jesus' body and carefully take it to the rich man's tomb and bury it as befits the One who is the Supreme Ruler of the kingdom of heaven. The watching ladies sitting by would have been grieving and Mary would be waiting to see Him rise from the dead as He said He would. In one way we too are waiting and watching to see what happens next. The Lord had told them He was going to rise again on the third day. He told us He was coming again on an unknown day. Perhaps this is the day He will come. So I watch and wait.

It was no doubt a fearful thing to those priests and Pharisees when the earthquake happened and the veil in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom before their eyes. How they would have reacted is not recorded except that now they were aware that what the Lord said actually happened. The priests and Pharisees, even Pilate, had learned that when God works, all other authority is powerless to change the course of events.

As I considered the journey of Jesus to this most pivotal moment in history, I am again made to think of the saving power of "This just Man." There has taken place all that is necessary for justice to be done as far as a holy God is concerned. A sinless, just Man had died in the place of a sinful unjust man. The gift of eternal life has been given to me by the One who had eternal life and was able to give it to me. Acceptance with God is now a fact and I am not cowering in fear in view of meeting God. There is an anticipation as I think of the future and all it holds. "Abba Father" is not an arrogant approach to a righteous God but is the wonderful privilege of one who has become an adopted son of God. This whole event on that day of all days has brought blessing to me that is so far beyond what I deserve that I cannot describe it. Not all of the songs and hymns written about that day and events can describe what that means to me. Many have, and many will try to express the blessings that came from the Savior that day, and we will all fail to do so. I guess the best I can say it is, "I love Thee, Lord Jesus. I truly do!"

What could I say about that day that hasn't been said before?
How can I express the thoughts of my heart from the words I have in store?
The best I can do at this moment at least is to place myself at each event -
And in that way perhaps can personalize that it was for me He was sent.

When He was bound and led to the priests, those bonds should have been on me.
The bands that held Him were powerless to Him, but needed that I might be free.
The betrayal of Judas was awful, but I wonder what I would have done
If someone had offered me money to deny or betray God the Son.

The silence that made Pilate uneasy was so His innocence would be known.
And at the same time the reproaches laid on Him were reproaches I should have borne.
He was just and everyone knew it, I was unjust so for me He did take
The reproaches, the blasphemy and humiliation for this guilty sinner's sake.

The perfections of His Person were obvious, what can be done to One so innocent?
Pilate with a word condemned Him, though doubtless with a guilty conscience.
Condemnation was pronounced on me because the wages of sin is death.
But I am legally freed because the Lord Jesus has given me His kind of life.

The cross and the suffering and the pain would have been mine forever in hell.
What the Lord Jesus endured on that tree only God Himself can tell.
But I know He bore my sins there, now the punishment for me is gone.
The grace of God has accomplished redemption, the atoning work is done.

I stand by to watch in my mind, the whole scene, the darkness, the quake.
And I am overwhelmed by the cost and the judgment the Lord Jesus for me did take.
My heart is like water within me, I can't find words to express what I mean
As I go over the account that is written and as the writer describes that scene.

But there does arise within me a gratefulness I cannot express.
The best I can do is trust the Lord knows my heart wants to bless
Him with all that is in me and with holiness I honor Him -
Who without spot and blemish in Him, took full responsibility for my sin.

Now I, like that centurion and his men, say, "Truly Jesus is the Son of God."
He is my Savior from sin, I want daily to honor Him as Lord.
By God's grace shown and given to me, I want to faithfully give to Him
All that can glorify and honor His name even as each new day begins.

"Thanks be unto God, for His unspeakable gift" - those words I mean from my heart.
"The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" - this is a good place to start.
"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross..." - this I really mean.
"He made peace through the blood of His cross" - I testify I have peace with Him.

"O Gracious Loving Father, what can I say to Thee this morning except, "Thanks", from the bottom of my heart. There is no way I can adequately thank Thee for what Thy grace has brought to me. Please accept the unspoken thoughts as well as the words, as tokens of my appreciation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Matthew 27:1. "When the morning was come..."

CHANGES.

The sun came up as their hearts got darker.
Judas looked inside - saw he was condemned.
Priests and soldiers - even the governor;

Showed what was inside, standing before the God-Man.

They would've thought they were all in control
Not understanding who the Christ really was.
That morning of choice when they opened their souls,
They rejected the Savior - the only One who can save.

27:45. "There was darkness over all the land..."
The work of His word from the day of creation,
Had daily done just what the Creator had planned.
As darkness descended over people and nations,
It became very clear - Jesus was more than a man.

In three hours of darkness - truly supernatural;
The silence was deafening as sin's offering was made.
The cry from the Savior, on the cross so forsaken,
Makes clear to faith's eye, He, my debt fully paid.

27:62. "Now the next day..."
The victory over sin, by His death was complete -
By the Sinless One dying, sin's power now is gone.
Both the soldiers and nature to us clearly do state;
The One who has died was both Savior and God.

On the day following, some frail, mortal men -
Made to others a demand it was impossible to keep.
To try to stop "Life" is like trying to stop rain -
The seal had no power; as for soldiers - they shake.

28:1. "As it began to dawn..."
At the first of the week, before the sun rose,
Came heavenly messengers bringing good news.
He who is Savior is not, as supposed
Still dead in the grave; people must choose.

Am I now truly willing to believe Him by faith?
Am I now truly willing for a living Savior to live?
Yes, for my Lord - Savior, I will in this place,
Tell those around, "Jesus lives and He saves."

"O God and Father, the Source of Life and all blessings that flow to Thy children: I praise Thee today for the truth of the Gospel. The Good News still brings a thrill to my soul whenever I think of the eternal life I have in Christ. My I never hesitate to make myself available to tell others of the joy and peace I have found in the crucified, buried and risen Christ. Amen."

Matthew 28:7. *"And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you."*

A NEW BEGINNING.

The silence of the sign of the prophet Jonah comes to an end.
The silence of the new dawn is broken by the sound of women's feet.
The silence of the quiet, is broken by a stone-breaking earthquake.
The silence of heaven ends as angels descend to do the God's bidding.
The silence of the grave is broken by the sound of the moving stone.
The silence of motionless, fearful men, takes the place of idle chatter.

The sound of women's voices, "Who will move the stone?"
The sound of the angel's voice, "Fear not ye...He is not here...He is risen!"
The sound of running feet and joyful voices lifted to praise.
The sound of Jesus' voice, "All hail...go tell My brethren..."
The sound of lying words, "Say ye...His disciples...stole Him away..."
The sound of authority heard world-wide, "Go ye...teach...baptize..."

The greatest possible authority - "ALL POWER is given unto Me..."
The largest number of people - "Teach ALL NATIONS..."
The fullest act of responsibility - "Observe ALL THINGS..."
The most blessed words of assurance - "I am with you ALWAYS."
Obeying these words, means life lived to the full.

Lives changed by the power of the Gospel we tell.

“How far-reaching and impacting are the truths of the Gospel, Father. I have experienced and I have seen how real and lasting is the result of those that repent and believe the Gospel. May I never tire of passing on its full reality to those of this world. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MATTHEW 28

COME AND SEE - GO AND TELL

An earthquake in the dark must have awakened a sleeping city. The holiday weekend was over. The city-stirring events of recent days were past. The religious and government leaders must have breathed a sign of relief that the carpenter of Nazareth was dead and buried. Things could go back to normal. But now another great earthquake! And brilliant light in the darkness out by the tomb as the angel came! God wanted men to see the Lord had risen on the third day as He said. Men had to see - and believe. The powerful angel easily moved the stone back and sitting on it lit up the whole area. No wonder the soldiers trembled and fell as paralyzed dead men. Fear has a way of bringing people down before God. The Lord was gone - risen as He said! Now the way was opened for the eyes of faith to claim for themselves what the Lord Jesus Christ had said.

Early rising women had started for the tomb already. The great earthquake didn't stop them in their desire to anoint the body of the Lord. The Object of their heart's affection had a more powerful attraction than any obstacles that would normally stop their quest. Faith when it has free reign, does not see obstacles. It sees the Object of its attraction. Faith in Christ is not hindered by human limitations but has its trust in God alone. The women were able to take in the whole scene at the tomb very quickly. The stone was moved. The keepers were lying helpless on the ground. The light of God's messenger made it possible to see inside the open tomb. The words of the angel were easily understood. The tongue of the angel was the language they knew. The message he gave was clear, "Come and see - Go and tell." Proof of His resurrection is the empty tomb. The world needs to know Jesus is alive.

There is joy in unshakable faith that doubters and skeptics never experience. The catching of the breath when faith's object is revealed; the widening of the eyes at the realization of a fact; the physical response to the actions of faith isn't proof but it accompanies the reality of faith when it is done. Believing God opens vistas in life that changes everything. We can see positive results from negative experiences. We can see hope when despair is all around. We can see signs of life when all others see is death that makes them afraid of the future. The fear and great joy the women experienced as they went to spread the news of the resurrected Christ is understandable. There is a certain kind of fear that is linked with anticipation. It is the fear associated with excitement when great things are happening. Faith and joy have a way of being together because faith produces the joy before the event happens. Faith is sure of the blessing of the outcome of an event. It moves the person to act without hesitation in view of a positive assurance of the outcome.

As I watched through faith's eyes, I saw the Sabbaths were all past. A new day dawned bringing hope and looking forward not backward. The first day of the week, the Lord's Day, was the day of resurrection. The Lord Jesus Christ was alive and was seen of many of His disciples in Jerusalem and all the way to a mountain in Galilee. The women met Jesus on the way to tell the disciples. Even though the keepers of the watch told the truth of the events at the tomb, the leaders tried to spin the whole thing and silence the soldiers with money. The vain attempts to deny the resurrection still go on today, but the testimony of people of faith who are members of His kingdom still is being sounded out around the world - and people are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first day of the week is also a day of remembrance. The Lord Jesus told His disciples to hold the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him and to make that supper a public proclamation of His death. They faithfully did that when they gathered on the first day of the week.

God also directed His servant John, to write the truths of the Revelation on the Lordly day. The first day of the week is therefore a day of revelation. The Risen Lord gave to John a powerful outline of events that are coming in the future. John saw Him today moving among the gathered companies of His people. He is in the midst of them as promised. We do not see Him visibly but in faith we unquestionably accept as fact that our risen Lord is with His people in Spirit.

That is why the first day of the week is also a day of responsibility. We give of our substance to him on that day of responsibility. The blessings He gives to us, promotes a response of proportionate giving to Him.

As I followed the writer, Matthew, concluding the book the Holy Spirit had used him to write, I saw a final gathering of the Lord Jesus with His disciples. In His final instructions to them before He ascended to heaven, we are again made aware of the Person and His authority, a little different than in Mark where the emphasis is on the preaching and its method. The fourfold message of Matthew's Gospel has to do with the King and His kingdom, the Master and His disciples, the Church and the cross and here at the end - the Gospel and the world. These people were sent under the highest possible authority to take the news of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to the world. They were to go, make disciples, baptize them and teach them to obey what they were taught. There was nothing obscure about this Great Commission. At their disposal was "all power" from the Lord Himself. They were to go to "all nations" with the Gospel. They were instructed to teach "all things" He commanded them. He had promised them He would be with them "al-ways."

The commission still is a valid mandate to His disciples today. We cannot excuse ourselves from the challenge of these plain instructions. The kingdom of heaven is still our responsibility. Fellow human beings still need the Gospel. Brothers and sisters in Christ still need to be taught to observe and do what He commanded us. This age of grace is not over yet. We have a charge to keep that was given to us by the Great King.

The Sabbaths were past but perhaps they didn't know it.
A new day had dawned and they with joy, began to show it.
In faith they went forward not knowing they would grow it -
As a result of the resurrection of their Lord.

The women came first at the first glimmer of light.
The angel was there on the stone with garments so bright.
The stone rolled away was a glorious sight -
As a fact of the resurrection of their Lord.

Others came too as the news began to spread.
John and Peter ran - Peter went into the tomb ahead.
It began to be noised abroad, "Jesus is risen from the dead."
Fear and joy at the resurrection of their Lord.

It was hard to believe, but the soldiers on watch knew.
The Pharisees and priests were aware if the resurrection was true
They would not be heeded and their leadership was through -
If it was true - the resurrection of the Lord.

The disciples gathered together and the risen Lord met with them.
They knew by the nail prints and wounds it was really Him.
Things changed forever as He commissioned them then -
To tell the world of the resurrection of the Lord.

It is going on now here and right up to this very day.
The message of the truth of the Gospel is here to permanently stay.
People are trusting in Him no matter what opposers say
We believe in the resurrection of our Lord.

I dare not be silent, others must know the truth.
People need the Savior; they all need the new birth.
The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is of greatest worth -
We are justified by the resurrection of our Lord.

Let the nations rejoice there is great blessing in the future.
Let every believer in Christ, their faith in Him still nurture.
Let every repentant sinner come and be given a new nature -
Because we believe in the resurrection of our Lord.

"Holy Father, how it gives me joy just to think these thoughts and write these words. What blessing it is to my soul to be assured of my salvation because of the risen Savior. How my heart is warmed in devotion to Thee for such grace as brought salvation, such power that raised Him from the dead, such hope that because He lives, we shall live also. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Amen."

