

Daily God Walk
Life of Christ

Ministry
Book - 7

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International Version (NIV). All other translations
used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

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Day One

Too Much to Give Up

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good - except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

- Mark 10:18-23

This young man was enthusiastic about following Jesus. He had probably just heard a challenge from Jesus and he responded by running up to him, falling on his knees and crying out, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

This young man must have affected Jesus because Mark records, “Jesus looked at him and loved him.” Jesus loved him and he wanted what Jesus was offering; it looked like a perfect match. There was just one catch.

There was something in his life which meant more to him than the life Jesus was offering.

We are challenged today to ask ourselves this question: Do I want eternal life strongly enough to give up wealth, family, position, and friends? Think on it.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to surrender all to you and walk humbly before you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We are challenged to ask ourselves this question: Do I want eternal life strongly enough to give up wealth, family, position, and friends? Think on it.

Affirmation: I have chosen to follow Jesus whatever he cost. My walk of faith means more to me than anything on this earth, in fact, all my relationships with things of this world is based on my faith.

Reflection: Ask yourself if there is anything in your life that you would not give up to follow Jesus. Don't just think of temporal things like cars, house and fine things. Give some thought to your position at work, or within your sphere of influence. Are you willing to surrender that to follow Jesus? What about family? Just how far are you willing to go?

My Thoughts:

Day Two

Reward For Service

[Jesus] answered one of them, “Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” - Matthew 20:1-16

This parable begins with, “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard.” He found men waiting for someone to hire them so he hired them to work for a denarius, a regular days’ wage. These men were willing to work for that.

Later in the day, at three different times, he hired more men. The last time he hired men it was just one hour before the end of the day. He promised them all the same wage, but the ones hired first complained that they worked a long day and were only being paid the same as the ones who worked only an hour.

I don’t know about you but I too might complain. After all, I did work all day and some of those only worked one hour. That seems unfair, but each one agreed to work for the same wage. It was the masters’ money and he could be as generous as he wanted to be.

I have felt the same kind of envy as the early workers felt when I see someone with less experience than me who has stepped into a place of ministry better than my own. At times I have been a little jealous and envious, but the truth is that I have committed to serve God wherever he chooses.

To serve God well we must simply be faithful to what we have committed to do and he will be faithful to us.

Prayer: Lord, give me eyes for you alone and help me to simply serve you with and to not be envious of the position others hold. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: To serve God well we must simply be faithful to what we have committed to do and he will be faithful to us

Affirmation: I am only jealous of others when I compare my own position to theirs. I am content when I am trusting God and his plan for my life rather than comparing myself to others. I will trust God and his plan for my life.

Reflection: Have you found yourself comparing your position to that of those who you feel are less deserving than yourself? What about the person who got the promotion you expected to get, or the person who received the gift, or award, you expected to get? Give some thought to this because it affects our level of contentment and peace.

My Thoughts:

Day Three

James and John Ask A Special Favor

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. - Mark 10:35-36

We have all had people ask us, "Will you do a favor for me?" What is the first thing that comes to our mind? Our first impulse is to say, "Sure." But usually before we say yes we'll say something like, "That depends on what it is." That was the situation Jesus faced.

Jesus loved his disciples and he would do anything for them, but he was also trying to teach them principles of the kingdom. Among those principles was the idea of not promoting oneself. Jesus knew that James and John would have prominent positions in the kingdom, but they still had some lessons to learn.

James and John were asking for prominent positions in the kingdom. They asked if one could sit on the right hand of Jesus and the other on his left hand side. They had not only missed the lessons on humility, but they still didn't understand that the kingdom was not one of earthly rule but it is a kingdom of heart rule.

Even today we sometimes forget some of these basic kingdom principles. We sometimes confuse a position in a religious institution with prominence in the kingdom of God. Those who are in authority must first learn to be under authority and it is hard to truly be under authority when we are seeking a position of authority.

Jesus told these men that they would indeed have a place in the kingdom, but they would get to that place by drinking the cup of the cross, just as Jesus had to do.

Prayer: Lord, help me to serve you well not seeking to promote myself; and grant me the grace of a humble spirit. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Each of us have a place in the kingdom, but we get to that place by drinking the cup of the cross, just as Jesus had to do.

Affirmation: I live to serve God and I will serve well whether that service promotes me to a position of trust and authority, or if it is just to do menial labor. It is all kingdom service.

Reflection: It is only human to desire a position of prominence and authority. Therein lies the problem. It is human and not divine. We must be careful that we do not confuse the drive of our ego with a driving passion for the kingdom.

My Thoughts:

Day Four

Bold Faith Produces Amazing Results

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.

Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight, your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When the people saw it, they also praised God. - Luke 18:35-43

This man was rewarded not only because he had faith, but because his faith gave him boldness to cry out to Jesus. It was his bold faith for healing that kept him crying out to Jesus even when the crowd was rebuking him and telling him to be quiet.

David was a young man who had come to God right out of the drug world. He was asking God for a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Others around him were receiving this gift from God, but he didn't seem to be getting anywhere with his prayer.

All at once in boldness he cried out, “God, I want the Holy Spirit and I want it now.” All at once his countenance changed and great peace overwhelmed him.

It was obvious God had honored his bold and desperate faith. Are you desperate enough to boldly approach him?

Prayer: Lord, grant me faith and boldness to declare my need. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Faith demands bold action. Faith hears the word and believes it, sees the opportunity and seizes it; boldly demanding validation.

Affirmation: I have heard and I believe. my belief has become faith and I boldly declare and demand my faith be validated.

Reflection: We don't know how long this man had been blind and begging, but it was long enough that he was desperate to be healed. He had heard of Jesus and believed he would heal and this faith drove him to desperately and boldly demand an audience with Jesus. What lessons can we learn from this story?

My Thoughts:

Day Five

Zacchaeus Meets Jesus

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. - Luke 19:1-6

Reading this passage I was taken back to Sunday School and the little song we used to sing about Zacchaeus. For those of you who may have heard the song when you were in Sunday School I give it to you and hope that it brings back memories :

Zacchaeus was a wee little man
And a wee little man was he
He climbed up in a sycamore tree
For the Lord he wanted to see
And as the Savior passed that way
He looked up in that tree
And He said, “Zacchaeus, you come down!
For I’m going to your house today
For I’m going to your house to stay”

In Luke’s record of this event he goes on to tell us that Zacchaeus was so moved that he said, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus replied, "Today salvation has come to this house." Do you remember the day that Jesus came to your house to stay?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for passing my way and I thank you for giving me the gift of salvation. Amen.

Message: When spiritual transformation comes to us our values change. We no longer hold dear temporal things and we gladly exchange them for things eternal.

Affirmation: I have welcomed Jesus into my life and I have surrendered all of my temporal possessions to him and his kingdom.

Reflection: It is interesting that as soon as transformation came to Zacchaeus he began to make amends. When salvation is fresh upon us we have such a sense of gratefulness that we are willing to give anything in gratitude for the gift we have received. Do you think that attitude is a sure sign of conversion? What if we haven't had that kind of an attitude change, are we still converted?

My Thoughts:

Day Six

Investing in the Kingdom

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. "Put this money to work" he said, "until I come back." - Luke 19:11-13

This parable is told to warn the people that they must be faithful with the gifts God gives them until he returns. You can read the whole story in Luke 19:11-27, but I'll just give you the basics. This wealthy man was about to embark upon a long trip and knowing he wouldn't be back for many months and perhaps years, he distributed a portion of his wealth among 10 of his servants instructing them to use it to make a profit so that when he returned his money will have earned him a tidy profit.

Some of the servants did well and were able to give their lord a nice profit and to reward them he gave them the governorship of portions of his kingdom. However, there was one servant who was fearful and hid the money so that he wouldn't lose any of it.

His master's response surprised him. "You knew, did you, that I am a hard man... why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest? Then he said to those standing by, 'take his [money] away from him and give it to the one who has ten [portions of money].'"

Hidden gifts bring no glory to the kingdom of God. God gives gifts for the purpose of advancing his kingdom. How have you been using your gifts?

Prayer: Help me Lord to be diligent in my service to you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Hidden gifts bring no glory to the kingdom of God. God gives gifts for the purpose of advancing his kingdom.

Affirmation: I use the gifts God has placed in my life for his purposes in advancing the kingdom.

Reflection: What do you think would have happened to the unfaithful servant if he had invested the money and lost it all? Can you identify with this servant? What is Jesus trying to tell us? Can you honestly say that you are using the gifts that God has invested in you to the best of your ability?

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Dinner With Simon The Leper

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of a very expensive perfume which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

- Matthew 25:6-7

The first thing that caught my attention about this passage is that Jesus appeared to be staying at the home of one called "Simon the Leper." That is a strange name for a person of that day. Lepers were outcasts and were not allowed to be around other people, but it seems that this person lived in the town and was accepted by the community.

Who could this person be? I did a little research and discovered that no one really knows, but many believe that he was a leper that Jesus had healed. Mark 1:40-42 records, "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. That man could very well be the Simon of this story.

Can you imagine the joy of this former leper being able to entertain the one who had healed him of his malady? We can imagine the talk around the table that evening. Simon would be telling what it was like before he met Jesus; his life was a mess, his friends had rejected him and he was an outcast. Then he met Jesus and everything changed.

Isn't that the story of most of us? Our life was a mess. We were feeling helpless and losing hope . Then we met Jesus. A light of hope came on inside us as we cried out, "If you are willing you can make me clean," and Jesus answered us, "I am willing, be clean." Hallelujah!

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for your saving, healing grace.

Message: The story of the leper is our story. Our life was a mess. We were feeling helpless and losing hope . Then we met Jesus. A light of hope came on inside us as we cried out, "If you are willing you can make me clean," and Jesus answered us, "I am willing, be clean."

Affirmation: I have been made whole through faith in Christ.

Reflection: Sometimes it seems as though Jesus was chiding the religious leaders. I mean, staying in the house of a former leper? Yet, there he was. What does this tell you about his concern about public opinion? What insight does this story give into the attitude of those whom he has cleansed?

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

The Fragrance of Worship

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany... Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. - John 12:1-3

This dinner is recorded in Matthew, Mark and John. Mark and Matthew record that this dinner took place in the house of one called Simon the Leper. All three of these books record a woman pouring an alabaster box of perfume over Jesus. Only John names the woman as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

Another place that Mary was mentioned was in Luke 10. Jesus was visiting their home and Martha was busy making preparations for the meal, but Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him teach.

Many believe that the cause of Mary's devotion to Jesus was that he had delivered her from demons and from a very sinful life. If that is true it confirms what Luke wrote of a similar incident in Luke 10, "Her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved much."

God honors the kind of worship that doesn't care what others think but comes straight from the heart. Mary's sacrifice was pure worship from the heart. God did not only sense the fragrance of the perfume but what was more he sensed the fragrance of worship in her sacrifice.

In Philippians 4:18 Paul referred to the sacrifice of his followers and said, “They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God.”

Our worship becomes a fragrant sacrifice before God.

Prayer: Lord, you have forgiven me much, and I love you much for that. I will never cease to worship you. Amen.

Message: God honors the kind of worship that doesn’t care what others think but comes straight from the heart.

Affirmation: I am not concerned what others think of my worship because it is to God and for God alone.

Reflection: In Philippians 4:18 Paul referred to the sacrifice of his followers and said, “They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God.” He was talking about the sacrifices others made for his ministry. How does sacrifice service for the man of God compare to the sacrifice of the very expensive perfume poured over the feet of Jesus?

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

Was It Benevolence or Greed?

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

“Leave her alone,” said Jesus, “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. – Mark 14:3-7

Mark records that, “Some of those present” objected to this waste of money, but John records in 12:4 that it was Judas Iscariot who was complaining. John further states, “He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”

Can you believe it? One of the chosen twelve was a thief! Why, that’s as bad as some televangelists who make weeping appeals for money to support their ministry when in fact they are most concerned about supporting their own lavish lifestyle. This disciple was driven by his own greed rather than the needs of the poor.

This woman was bringing a fragrant sacrifice of worship to her Lord. She is an example to us of the gratitude that should be in our heart for what God has done for us.

We would do well to examine our hearts concerning how we feel about giving to the kingdom. Is our concern really for the needy, or is it about what we would do with the money if we had it?

Prayer: Lord, help me give from a right heart. Amen.

Message: We would do well to examine our hearts concerning how we feel about giving to the kingdom. Is our concern really for the needy, or is it about what we would do with the money if we had it?

Affirmation: The test of how we would use our money if we became wealthy is to examine how we use the money we have.

Reflection: Judas was complaining about the way the money was spent because he was holding the purse. How does his attitude compare to the attitude some have showed relative to supporting the kingdom now, not a future date?

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

The Crowd Receives Their King

After Jesus had said this he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethpage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” tell him, “The Lord needs it.”

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

- Luke 19:28-38

This event is commonly called “the triumphal entry.” The people who had seen the miracles and heard his teaching were ready to make him their king. He would not receive a crown, except the crown of thorns, and his thrown would be a wooden cross.

He was born in an obscure village in a manger hidden from the world. Now in the same humble spirit he is

received by the people as their king. They didn't know the crown he would wear, or the throne he would be placed upon; they only knew that he had come in the name of the Lord. They were ready to receive him as king.

Prayer: Thank you king Jesus for being my Lord. Amen.

Message: The common people didn't know the crown he would wear, or the throne he would be placed upon; they only knew that he had come in the name of the Lord. They were ready to receive him as king.

Affirmation: I may not know what the future holds but I am committed to following Christ, my king.

Reflection: Only Jesus knew his true destination when he headed to Jerusalem. Why do you think the people who received him with such enthusiasm would reject him so vehemently in just a few days?

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

Don't Let the Stones Cry Out

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

- Luke 19:39-40

The crowd had just been throwing their cloaks before Jesus and crying out, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" We aren't certain what the people were thinking but it seems they thought Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to be made king. It is clear they saw him as the Messiah who had come to set them free.

The Pharisees did not see what the crowd saw. All they could see was the problem that would be caused with the Romans if the word got out that the people were accepting another king. Alarmed they cried out, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

This crowd was a mixture of people Jesus had affected in his ministry. There were undoubtedly people among them he had healed. There were those who had been demonized, but Jesus had delivered. His teaching made sense to them and they were ready to receive him as their anointed leader. Yes, they were worshipping him because he had radically affected their lives.

We're not sure just what Jesus meant by saying that if these kept quiet then the stones would cry out, but it is clear that these people were worshipping the one they loved. Perhaps he was saying that all of creation is destined to worship him and it should begin with those whose lives have been radically affected by his ministry.

If God has radically affected your life through your relationship with Jesus the Christ I would encourage you

loosen up just a bit and worship him with abandon as those did on the road to Jerusalem.

Prayer: Lord, I bow before you in adoration. May I always have a praise for you in my heart. Amen.

Message: All of creation is destined to worship him and it should begin with those whose lives have been radically affected by his ministry.

Affirmation: I worship him because he has radically affected my life and he alone is worthy to be worshipped.

Reflection: Have you wondered if the religious leaders had a valid point in fearing that Rome would respond in a bad way if they thought the Jews were crowning a new king? Are there any similarities between concern of governmental reprisals of that day and the concerns of some today?

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

Missed Opportunity

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." - Luke 19:41-44

As Jesus neared the city he could still hear the people heralding him as the king who had come to bring them peace, but he knew that those people were not the ones who had the power, or authority to receive or reject him. That power rested in the hands of the religious leader in Jerusalem, the capital of Judaism.

He was descending from the Mount of Olives into the city and knew the events which would take place over the next few days. He could see Jerusalem laid out before him and suddenly he began to weep as he said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace..." His heart was breaking, not because he knew they would reject him, but because he knew that in rejecting him they were rejecting God's plan to give them peace.

It never ceases to amaze me that people will see the grace of God displayed in others but because of their own prejudices and traditions they will not allow God to do in them what he is doing in others.

We must be careful that we do not allow the time of God's visitation to pass us by. How sad it would be to

look back over our lives and realize that the Lord came to lead us into a better way and we missed it.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the sensitivity to know when you are coming to bless me with your gifts. Amen.

Message: We must be careful that we do not allow the time of God's visitation to pass us by. How sad it would be to look back over our lives and realize that the Lord came to lead us into a better way and we missed it.

Affirmation: I am continually listening carefully for the voice of the Lord because I don't want to miss a time of visitation.

Reflection: There was sorrow in the heart of Jesus as he looked over Jerusalem and realized that they didn't know their hour of visitation had come. Why do you think they did not realize his purpose in coming? He preached the kingdom of God was at hand and did his best to present the principles for living in the kingdom. Why didn't they understand this?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

House of Prayer – Or Den of Thieves?

Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.” - Luke 19:45-46

Religion is a powerful thing. It goes to the core of who we are. Unfortunately, there are those who know that and who tend to take advantage of our commitment to the faith which guides us. Those are the ones who profit from faith of others.

That was what Jesus saw when he entered the temple. There were merchandisers there exchanging money and charging horrendous fees. Some were selling blemished and inferior animals for sacrifice at exorbitant prices. Jesus was angered by the blatant greed of these people who were taking advantage of the poor people who came to worship.

I can't help but think of the merchandising that takes place today in the name of the Lord. It seems the simpler the faith the easier it is for charlatans to take advantage of the faithful. People are promised blessings if they buy a certain cloth, or holy water from Israel. Some have even sold what they called slivers of wood from the actual cross of Jesus.

Not all merchandising is that blatant. In a place where I formerly lived I used to get a glossy advertisement from an area church about every 3 months. It would talk about the great programs and events and not even mention Jesus, God or heaven.

Jesus said, “My house will be a house of prayer.” Perhaps if we had more prayer in the house we would

have less need for glossy advertising and meaningless fundraisers.

Jesus said, "I will build my church." When we take it upon ourselves to do his job we come off seeming like a tinkling symbol or sounding brass. When we seek him to reveal his way of building the church he will build it through us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to seek your way and not to rely on my own ingenuity. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus said, "I will build my church." When we seek him to reveal his way of building the church he will build it through us.

Affirmation: I am purposed to seek God to use me in building his church and to reveal his way to me so that I will not do it my way.

Reflection: These few verses do not tell the whole story of what was taking place in the temple courts. They were selling inferior animals at exorbitant prices to be used as sacrifices. They were also cheating the people when they exchanged monies from other places. Can you see a parallel in any ministries today? Have you heard of any scams to get money from sincere believers?

My Thoughts:

*Worship Him As the
Children Worship Him*

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, ‘from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?’”

-Matthew 21:14-16

Jesus had just cleansed the temple of merchandisers and was now ministering to people in the temple area. The setting of this passage is quite extraordinary.

First there was the uproar of the merchandisers being thrown out of the temple, then there were the miracles of healing taking place, and finally there were children running around Jesus crying, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” It must have been like a three ring circus.

The priests and teachers were beside themselves. They came to Jesus and demanded that he settle things down. They asked, “Don’t you hear what the children are saying?” They were trying to accuse him of receiving worship from the people.

I have noticed that when God chooses to move among us he upsets those who have become comfortable with the status quo. God will challenge our theories and explode our traditions. Then he will use the weakest among us to make the point that he is still the Lord God.

I was standing at the back of the church one Sunday morning when I saw my granddaughter walking back and forth in front of me. I was about to tell her to go stand by her mother when I looked into her eyes. Her eyes had a lost look in them and I could see her lips moving as she praised God. I couldn't touch that.

Perhaps we should consider becoming as little children and upset convention by marching around crying, "Hosanna."

Prayer: Help me to value your favor above my traditions. Amen.

Message: When God chooses to move among us he upsets those who have become comfortable with the status quo. God will challenge our theories and explode our traditions. Then he will use the weakest among us to make the point that he is still the Lord God.

Affirmation: I have accepted the fact that my theories and traditions are no substitute for the genuine move of God. I choose to submit my weakness to him so that his strength can work in me.

Reflection: It is interesting that it was the children who were running around in the courts of the temple giving praise to God. Today we tend to shuffle the children off to another part of the building so the adults can worship God with propriety. Which do you think God prefers?

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

No Faith, No Fruit

Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again." Immediately the tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked. Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe you will receive whatsoever you ask for in prayer." - Matthew 21:18-22

In this incident Jesus gave us some insight into faith that few have recognized. It was morning and they were on their way to minister to the people again. Jesus was hungry, as the rest of his disciples probably were, but the tree he chooses to get figs from was barren. Quickly, without even having to think about it, he pronounced a curse on the tree.

This was no super spiritual event. There was no apparent reason the kingdom of God was advanced by the cursing of the fig tree. Yet we have the story here and Jesus uses it to teach faith.

Could he be telling us that the faith we have been given can be used for our own comfort as well as for works in the kingdom? Could he be telling us that we are given power to speak things into being that have very little to do with the kingdom?

We sometimes become so involved in the kingdom we forget that the promises of blessing and prosperity apply to us as individuals as well as to the corporate

body of the kingdom. God cares for our physical needs and he will supply all of our needs according to his riches in glory (Philippians 4:19).

Yes, he wants us to serve others, but he also wants us to have faith for our daily needs.

Prayer: Lord, grant me faith for the circumstances of life and to believe you for every blessing. Amen.

Message: God cares for our physical needs and he will supply all of our needs according to his riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). Yes, he wants us to serve others, but he also wants us to have faith for our daily needs.

Affirmation: I realize there are times when I become the answer to someone's prayer, but I also realize that there are times when others become the answer to my prayers. I will trust God for both.

Reflection: It is easy to fall into a pattern of believing God for "miracles" while worrying about our daily sustenance. Can you think of a time when you saw God miraculously provide when you knew you couldn't do it yourself?

My Thoughts:

Who Did the Right Thing?

What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Son, go and work today in the vineyard." "I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, "I will, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

- Matthew 21:28-31

Jesus had a motive for giving this parable. The religious leaders claimed to be protectors of the Father's will, but the words they spoke were not consistent with the attitude they projected. They spoke of the demands of the law, but they did not submit to the spirit of the law. Outwardly people say, "They are good sons of the kingdom," but inwardly they were filled with greed, ambition and jealousy.

Like the second son, they made verbal commitment to the Father's will, but in their heart they had their own agenda. The first son, like many today, at first chose to follow their own desires, but along the way realized their need to do the Father's will.

I have found that an overwhelming majority of people today believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, but they are living out their own agenda. They will say, "Yes, I believe that Jesus is the son of God," or they might even claim to be born again, but the test is not whether they say the right words but whether they do the will of the Father.

Speaking to those who were like the son who promised to do the Father's will but didn't fulfill their promise, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, the tax

collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him” (v31-32). Be sure your walk matches your talk.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to commit only to those things that I have the faith to perform. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Some will say, “I believe that Jesus is the son of God,” or they might even claim to be born again, but the test is not whether they say the right words but whether they do the will of the Father.

Affirmation: I must constantly be submitting my will to His will because I know just saying the right words is not good enough. I must follow those words with action and to do that I must submit my will.

Reflection: The thought for reflection today comes from the statement of Jesus that even the tax collectors (or sinners) and prostitutes will enter the kingdom before those who speak righteously but do not follow with righteous action.

My Thoughts:

The Rejected Son

“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read the Scriptures:’ The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” - Matthew 21:31-44

The Master did send his son, and those he had left to be guardians of his kingdom killed his son. Those responsible have paid a great price, but that is not the end of this story. Just as the vineyard was given to other tenants, so others have been given access to the kingdom of God. By God's grace we have been given the opportunity to accept the ones rejected by those he came to save.

Prayer: Thank you for allowing me to serve in your kingdom. Amen.

Message: The kingdom of God will be taken away from those who reject His Son and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who rejects the Son will be broken, but he who embraces him as Lord will be accepted into the kingdom.

Affirmation: I have listened to the messengers who presented the kingdom and I have embraced the Son of God. By God's grace I am now a member of his kingdom.

Reflection: Give some thought to the people in this story Jesus told who rejected the messengers of their boss and even the son of the vineyard owner. Why do you think they did that? Was it greed? Was it that they felt they knew what was best for the vineyard? Explore the different reasons people would display the attitude these people displayed.

My Thoughts:

Many Invited But Few Are Chosen

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

“But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes.’ The man was speechless.

“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are invited, but few are chosen.” – Matthew 22:1-

There are three groups of people in this story. The first are the ones who should be at the feast but refuse to come - those are the ones who reject Christ. The second are the ones who accept Christ and enter the feast. The third are those who pretend to accept, and join the banquet (or the church), but they aren't true believers. Let's be sure we're in the right group.

Prayer: Lord, grant me faith to wear the wedding garment. Amen.

Message: Those who reject God's plan and his Christ outright are bypassed; those who respond to God's call, yet do not submit to his lordship are put out; Only those who are clothed with His righteousness will be participants in the kingdom.

Affirmation: I have been clothed with God's righteousness through faith in Christ.

Reflection: The meaning of this parable is very clear. There are some who totally reject the message of the kingdom and Christ and they are the most obvious. Then there are those who accepted the idea of Christ, but for whatever reason they never submitted to him. Finally, there are those who hear, believe, embrace and are changed by God's grace.

My Thoughts:

Giving Homage to the Government

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap [Jesus] in his words... “Teacher,” they said, “... Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” But Jesus, knowing their evil intent said, “... Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

- Matthew 22:15-21

Paying taxes and civil obedience has long been a question among believers. Should we pay taxes when the government uses some of the taxes we pay to do things that violate our conscience? Should we obey laws that restrict our freedoms, particularly our freedom of religion? Should we submit to any earthly government when our true citizenship is in the kingdom of God?

These are all difficult questions to answer, but Jesus seems to give us a key to know what to do. Whose picture is on our money? Using the standard that Jesus established we would have to say we should pay taxes from the money which the government prints.

Another test is to ask ourselves, “Who provides the roads we travel on, the military which protects us, and who made the laws which protect our health and give us some measure of safety?”

As to our loyalty being to the kingdom of God, there is no question. God’s kingdom is eternal and of the Spirit, therefore, those things which are affected by eternity and the Spirit are to be submitted to God.

As long as our spirit man, the kingdom element in us, is housed in the body of flesh, and we live in the temporal realm ruled by the governments of men, we are subject to those governments.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to submit to the authorities in the realm of their rule, and to you in the kingdom realm. I ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Message: As long as our spirit man, the kingdom element in us, is housed in the body of flesh, and we live in the temporal realm ruled by the governments of men, we are subject to those governments.

Affirmation: My true citizenship is in the kingdom of God, but physically I am on this earth. Therefore in my flesh I will submit to the authority of earthly government, but in my Spirit I submit to God.

Reflection: Give some thought to the idea that we are responsible to support our government with the money it prints, and they are responsible to use that money righteously. If we don't cooperate then we are in the wrong. If they don't use the money righteously, then they are wrong and subject to God's discipline.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

Whose Wife Is She Anyway?

“At the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?” Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures of the power of God.” – Matthew 22:28-29

The Sadducees, a sect which did not believe in the resurrection, were trying to trap Jesus on a fine point of the law. The law taught that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children that would carry the deceased man’s name. The example the Sadducees were giving was that of a man who married a woman and died before she gave him a son. The man’s brother took her to wife, and he also died. This happened through all the seven brothers in this family.

The point being made by the Sadducees was that if this was true then there would be a lot of confusion after the resurrection. Instead of answering the question directly Jesus began by pointing out their ignorance of the Scriptures.

Jesus pointed out that life after the resurrection would not be like life as they knew it. “At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.” He continued, “But about the resurrection of the dead – have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Jesus was doing it again! He looked past the question to the core issue. He knew the real issue was that they did not believe in the resurrection, but he wasn’t going to deal with that; Jesus was going to the core of their

problem and that was being in right relationship with God while alive in the here and now.

It is easy for us to get off track by having discussions (read arguing) over non-essential beliefs when Jesus is really only concerned with how we live today. It is entirely possible to be correct in doctrine and wrong in spirit. Think about it.

Prayer: Help me to have a right spirit toward others in the kingdom with differing views. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: It is easy for us to get off track by having discussions (read arguing) over non essential beliefs when Jesus is really only concerned with how we live today. It is entirely possible to be correct in doctrine and wrong in spirit.

Affirmation: I have made it a purpose to not let doctrine and tradition rule my faith walk to the point that non essentials become my battleground.

Reflection: Can you see what Jesus was trying to do in this story? It was not about whose wife the woman would be but it was about the resurrection itself and Jesus addresses the true question. Can you see how important it is to stay with the real question and not be dragged into arguments over things which have little bearing on eternity.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

The Great Command

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” - Mark 12:28-31

There was nothing new revealed in these two commandments. The first about loving God with all of our being is a quote from Deuteronomy 6:4. The second is a quote from Leviticus 19:18. In Matthews’ record of this event he has Jesus concluding with, “All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:40).

Mark records the teacher who had asked Jesus the question responding with, “Well said... To love him with all your heart... and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

This man got it. In fact Jesus told him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” The truth is that when we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we will love our neighbor because loving our neighbor is actually living out our love for God.

We’ve heard people say, “I love God it’s people I can’t stand.” I believe I have said it a few times myself in moments of frustration. But can that be true? Can we truly love God with all of our being and not love people?

If God created man out of love and he created man in his own image, shouldn't we love as God loves? If we have truly been born again and the nature of Christ has been born in us, won't we love as God loves? Think about it.

Prayer: Help me to love others as you have loved me. Amen.

Message: When we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we will love our neighbor because loving our neighbor is actually living out our love for God.

Affirmation: I am born of God, born in love, now that love abides in me. I love God and I love my neighbor.

Reflection: Loving our neighbor isn't always easy, but a true test of whether love God with all our being is if we love our neighbor as ourselves. If we are created in God's image and the very essence of his being is love, then how can we be in him and not love others?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

She Gave All She Had

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." - Luke 21:1-4

I rarely read this passage without feeling the pangs of conviction. You may be different than me, but I don't know if I have ever given as this woman gave. To understand the value of her two coins we must look at what that meant to this widow woman.

First, she was a widow. In that day a widow, particularly an aged widow, had very little opportunity to earn enough even for food. Except for these two copper coins she was destitute. Her gift would be the same as if we had emptied our checking account, our savings, sold our boat, car, house, and all our possessions then gave that.

However, what that widow woman gave was more than that. When we have given all, we know that there are resources available to keep us from starving. If we work we know there will be a paycheck; if we are retired we know we'll get a social security check; if we are on assistance we know that we'll get food stamps. This poor widow had nothing to look forward to. She would get no social security and no food stamps, yet she gave her last two coins to God.

I'm not calling you to give that way, and maybe I'm just speaking out of my own conviction, but I don't think many of us can truthfully say that we have given

all. This widow woman gave her all, Jesus gave his all, and I asked myself, “Am I willing to give all?”

It's time to ask God to reveal to us what we are holding back for ourselves and to give us the courage to surrender our best to him. I'm not taking an offering, but maybe I should...

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to love you as the widow loved you and to give of myself as she gave herself. Amen.

Message: It's time to ask God to reveal to us what we are holding back for ourselves and to give us the courage to surrender our best to him.

Affirmation: I often ask God to give me the grace to surrender all to him. I am willing to give, God grant me the grace to give all that you would have me to give.

Reflection: I'm not sure Jesus is giving us this woman as the standard for all of us, but he is making the point that our giving is not measured by the amount we give but by what we have reserved for ourselves. Give some thought to how much of your resources are used to make you and your family comfortable and how much is used for others and the kingdom of God.

My Thoughts:

Who Are You Trying To Impress?

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.” - Matthew 23:1-4

If the time of Jesus’ ministry wasn’t short already this discourse would have made it short. He is plainly attacking the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and other religious leaders. He goes on to say, “Everything they do is done for men to see.”

Seven times he says, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!” and each time he points out another inconsistency in their lives. Look at a partial list:

- ❖ You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You will not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to (v13-14).
- ❖ You give a tithe of all, but you have neglected justice, mercy and faithfulness... You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel (v23-24).
- ❖ You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence (v25-26)

There was more, but you get the point. These men were more concerned about the way things looked than they were about the way things actually were.

When I look at this entire chapter, and it would be good for all of us to read it now and then, I see beyond the Pharisees. We have this example to help us examine

ourselves to see whether we are trying to impress men or God.

Gaining the favor man is a great price to pay for losing favor with God. As Jesus said we must do what our leaders say, but we are cautioned not to fall into the hypocrisy of trying to please men.

Prayer: Lord, help to always be aware that it is your favor which counts, not the favor of man. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Gaining the favor man is a great price to pay for losing favor with God. As Jesus said we must do what our leaders say, but we are cautioned not to fall into the hypocrisy of trying to please men.

Affirmation: It is more important to be in God's favor than to have the favor of man. Therefore, I choose to follow God regardless of the cost to my own popularity.

Reflection: Jesus strikes to the very core of legalism in this passage and in this whole chapter. Do you understand the difference between legalism and being consecration? In short a legalist is someone who sticks to the letter of the law in disregard to the spirit of the law. A person who has made a consecration realizes the spirit of the law and commits himself not only to the word but to the principle of the law.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

Becoming Sons of Light

Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” - John 12:35-36

In the previous verses Jesus had been teaching that judgment was coming on the world and the prince of this world would be driven out (v30-31). Then he said, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” John comments in verse 33 that Jesus was signifying the kind of death he would suffer; he would be lifted up onto the cross.

What Jesus said confused the crowd and they replied, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up;’ Who is this Son of Man?” (v34). The crowd who followed him was expecting him to establish an everlasting earthly kingdom.

Jesus was trying to warn them that the light which he was would not be there forever and that they needed to step into the light of truth while the truth was with them. He was instructing them to trust him as the light of truth and he promised those who trusted him would become sons of light.

The crowd was still questioning, wondering about what he was trying to tell them. If he was the light, and he was about to leave them, would they not be left in the dark? The answer to that dilemma is simply this; Jesus, as light to the world, was leaving, but the light would remain in the hearts of those who had been born into the family of light.

When Jesus spoke of becoming sons of light he was referring to those who would be born again. From the darkness of a decaying life to the glorious light of eternal hope. Those who believe have become the sons of light.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to continue in the light. Amen.

Message: When Jesus spoke of becoming sons of light he was referring to those who would be born again. From the darkness of a decaying life to the glorious light of eternal hope. Those who believe have become the sons of light.

Affirmation: I have believed and I have become a son of light. I know where I am going because the light of Christ within me shines out before me giving light to my path.

Reflection: The religious leaders were expecting a Christ who would live and reign with them forever, but they did not understand that the reign of Christ was in the hearts of men. That is why they did not understand that if Jesus was the light, and he was leaving, then how would the light still be with them? How would you explain that?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

Is Just Believing Enough?

At the same time many, even among the leaders, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. - John 12:42-43

I find this passage intriguing. There were actually those among the leaders who believed in Jesus, yet, because they loved their position they would not openly confess Him.

There are two sets of dynamic at play here. First there is the difficulty of the established institution to change. Then there is the individual fear of being rejected by the institution. The more rigid the institution the more difficult it is change and the more likely the institution will reject those who accept change or advocate change.

The dilemma faced by those leaders who believed in Jesus as the Christ was whether to embrace him in faith, or to maintain their position in the institution.

I have known many spiritual leaders in various denominations who secretly did not agree with their denomination, yet because of being afraid of rejection they never publicly took a stand. I suppose that is ok if we are talking about non-essential issues, but these leaders Jesus was instructing were faced with the choice of walking in the light of faith in Christ or continuing in darkness.

For most of us that would not be a hard choice to make, but for some it is very difficult. Tradition runs strong in some families and when one member breaks

with family tradition they are sometimes rejected by the family.

Change for some people may mean that life-long friends will be lost and others face societal rejection. No, it is not an easy thing to announce to the world that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord and the only way to heaven, but to receive his best we must be willing to make that choice.

Prayer: Grant me the strength to walk in the light. Amen.

Message: It is not an easy thing to announce to the world that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord and the only way to heaven, but to receive his best we must be willing to make that choice.

Affirmation: Faith often calls us to make hard choices. I have chosen to follow Christ and to declare it to the world.

Reflection: Religion demands conformity, faith inspires commitment. Give some thought to the difference between religion and faith. If the "private faith" of a person doesn't call him to take a public stand does he truly have faith?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

When Will These Things Be?

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" - Matthew 24:3

As Jesus and his disciples were walking away from the temple the disciples were commenting on the magnificent structures around them. Jesus responded by declaring, "Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.

It was at this point that the disciples began to ask Jesus about when that would be happening and what would be the sign of the end of the age. People have always been interested in the period that has been called "the end times" and the disciples were no different.

To answer them Jesus began to describe the way the world would be at the end of the age. He told them that others would come announcing that they were Christ; there would be wars and rumors of wars; nation will rise against nation; there will be famines and earthquakes.

When I read that list I realize that it could be describing just about any period of history. There have always been wars, famines and earthquakes. And, there have always been new religions and people declaring that they were the Christ. So why was he pointing this out?

Could it be that Jesus was trying to warn his followers not to be so concerned about the future that they neglected to fulfill their calling today? Perhaps he was saying that the end of the age will not be much different and that is why we must be ever alert.

There were other things Jesus said in this chapter, but he began this teaching by telling the disciples to always be prepared. We have seen all of these signs evident today and we must be in a state of readiness for the end of the age is near.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace of faithfulness to the end. Amen

Message: Jesus told his disciples that others would come announcing that they were Christ; there would be wars and rumors of wars; nation will rise against nation; there will be famines and earthquakes. We have seen all of these signs evident today and we must be in a state of readiness for the end of the age is near.

Affirmation: I live in a state of readiness for the end of the age and the coming of the Lord. I am not led astray by false Christs and I am not seduced into being lackadaisical in my walk.

Reflection: Was Jesus predicting end time events such as false christs, earthquakes, pestilence and famine as if it would be something new? Or maybe he was predicting those things would be in greater intensity, or perhaps he was saying continue being prepared regardless of what is happening.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

Be Prepared For Tough Times

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. - Matthew 24:9-13

This passage contains both a warning and a hope. The road would not be easy for those who would follow closely the things Jesus taught, but there was a promise to those who would be faithful to the end.

Disciples of Christ are being persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and even put to death in various places around the world today. We must be prepared for persecution.

However, persecution is not the greatest threat to the body of Christ for history has shown that persecution serves to fan the flames of revival. The greatest threat to the body of Christ today is the prevalence of wickedness in the world.

There has always been wickedness because sin is in the nature of man, but it is different today. In the past it was easy to tell who was a believer and who was not, but it is not as easy today. Many believers have fallen prey to situation ethics and morality based not in the word of God in the concept of personal rights.

Far too many believers have been deceived in the same manner Eve was deceived in the garden. If it looks good, and no one is hurt by it, and I become wiser, why shouldn't I do it?

God has called us to be beacons of light in a dark world and if we hide the light, or allow the light to become dimmed by sin, then the world will not see Christ in us. The final words of Christ in this passage is a challenge to us: He who stands firm to the end will be saved. In another place it is written, "When you have done all stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

Prayer: Lord, give me the strength to stand faithful. Amen.

Message: False prophets, money mongering preachers, easy access to wickedness, prosperity, and far too many are at ease in Zion. We are living in the last days. While the love of many is growing cold we are being called to stoke the fires of revival and pray for an awakening.

Affirmation: I am guarding my heart against becoming lulled into spiritual sleepiness in this age of easy access to sin. My cry is the same as the early church, "Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus."

Reflection: Give some thought to how the ease of accessing wickedness (particularly sexual sins) is affecting believers and the church today. If our hope is truly in God's kingdom then we must stand firm for righteousness and against wickedness.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

Be Prepared To Serve God

At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"

Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out."

"No," they replied, "There may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves."

But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

Later the others also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said, "Open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you."

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. - Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus often used parables to demonstrate a truth and in this chapter of Matthew he gives three parables about serving. This parable about the ten virgins is about being prepared to serve.

I was 13 years old and at the time I was sleeping in a small trailer beside the very small house where my parents slept. I woke up in the middle of the night and

began to pray. I felt the urge to preach so, laying in my bed, I preached my first sermon. It was a message on the ten virgins; five were wise and five were foolish.

My preaching woke my mother and father and my father said, "What is that boy doing, has he gone crazy?" My mother listened carefully and said, "No, he's preaching."

Prayer: Lord, help me to always be ready to serve you. Amen.

Message: Many believers have become enamored with the excitement of the day, but they have not properly prepared for the times which lie ahead. Those who are prepared for kingdom service will be invited in to the presence of the bridegroom; those who are not prepared will be left behind. Be prepared at all times.

Affirmation: I am committed to being prepared to serve whenever and wherever the Lord calls.

Reflection: This is an interesting parable. Ten young women who were pure in every sense of the word are called to be servants at the marriage. They were all good girls, but only five of them were considered wise. The other five were called foolish. How can you see that same analogy being applied to believers today?

My Thoughts:

Serve God Diligently

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five... His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things."

The man with the two talents also came. "Master," he said, "You entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more." His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things."

Then the man who had received the one talent came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."

His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest." - Matthew 25:14-30

We are not only called to be prepared to serve but we are also expected to serve diligently when we are called. God will never give you more to do than you are capable of handling and he will not expect more from you than faithfulness - but he does demand faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always serve you well.
Amen.

Message: God will never give you more to do than you are capable of handling and he will not expect more from you than faithfulness - but he does demand faithfulness.

Affirmation: I am careful not to let the fear of loss override my commitment to faithful and diligent service.

Reflection: This parable is about faithful and diligent service. Notice this; the master was not demanding that the one talent man produce like the five talent man. He was just calling him to serve diligently. Good people who are not faithful servants do not receive the master's best. Read the rest of this story in Matthew, verses 28-30, to see the attitude the master has about those who fail to serve well.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

Serving God By Serving Others

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you" when did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you"

The king will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did for me."

- Matthew 25:31-46

One of the aspects of this parable to get my attention was the attitude of the righteous ones. They did not do their good works to be seen, but they did them simply because it was the right thing to do. We can tell this because of their surprise at the Lord's statement and they asked, "Lord, when did we ever see you in that condition?"

There are some of us who would certainly help the Lord out if we saw him in need, but our neighbors, well, they did make their own bed and maybe they should try sleeping in it.

Just remember; when we have done it for the least among us we done it for him.

Prayer: Help me to never fail to serve you by serving others.

Message: We serve God in his kingdom by serving others and we serve out of love, not to be noticed for our sacrifice. Jesus let us know that when we are serving those of lesser station in life than ourselves we are in fact serving him.

Affirmation: I give myself to service in God's kingdom simply because it is the right thing to do.

Reflection: In the Old Testament God made provision for the poor, the widows and the orphans. When the fields and vineyards were harvested they were not to go back through a second time but they were to leave whatever was not harvested the first time for the needy among them. Knowing that, and having this parable Jesus gave us, we can see that we have a mandate to help our neighbor who is in need.

My Thoughts:

Would You Like To Lead A Bible Discussion Group?

We have found that believers who gather in small groups to study the Bible and pray together seem to grow deeper in their faith. Acts 2 gives a formula for growing in faith.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (v42-47).

Notice they did these things: 1) Continued in the apostles teaching; 2) They were together in fellowship; 3) They broke bread together (had meals together); 4) they prayed together.

Meeting on Sunday morning for corporate worship is a very good and needed part of our spiritual life, but many have found that they needed, or desired, more than that. They wanted a time of discussion where they could ask questions and share their own ideas and feelings about Scripture.

You may have some of the same feelings. Have you found yourself wanting to meet with other believers to discuss what you have been reading in the Bible? Do you desire to have a few people that you can gather with for prayer and sharing what God is doing in your life?

If any of those things appeal to you I would invite you to explore what we have to offer. New Hope Ministry Resources offers material for group study and discussion. In fact, this devotional, the Daily God Walk is used by many for that very purpose.

We publish a Study Guide Edition of the Daily God Walk which has a second page for every devotion. On that second page we give the main principle of the devotion and an affirmation to reinforce that principle

in times of prayer and meditation. There is also a reflection which is usually a paragraph which contains questions and seed thoughts for personal contemplation or for discussion.

The page concludes with a section titled, "My Thoughts." Readers are encouraged to journal their thoughts about the devotion and then discuss those thoughts in the small group.

If you have an interest it would be good to visit our website at:

www.nhmresources.org/small-groups

If you have any questions feel free to email us at:

paul@nhmresources.org

Feel free to send us any comments you might have concerning these devotions, or if you would like to receive a printed copy. Just email us at the above address.