

Daily Readings

Please note: Matthew 19 and 20 build on the teaching that Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount. As we move through these passages in 19 and 20 our daily readings will focus on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The daily readings allow us to dig deeper.

Monday, September 20 – Read Matthew 6:1-4. This short passage is much quoted in the church about the secrecy of giving. The point of this passage is not so much about keeping the offering secret as it is about pride. In the first century temple worship, a larger gift was a sign of greater devotion. Again and again, Jesus focuses on the condition of the heart. What is our motivation in our faith? What is the motivation behind our giving or lack of giving? Are we giving in faith?

Tuesday, September 21 – Read Matthew 6:5-18. This is the most well-known passage and most often quoted passage in the entire Bible. We know it as the Lord’s Prayer. Again Jesus points to the practice of prayer for that day. The Gentiles thought that the longer the prayer, the greater chance a person would have in getting what they wanted. The Jewish leaders loved to call attention to themselves with their fasting and eloquent words. Jesus was more worried about the relationship between the divine and the human. Jesus prays, **“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”** What is your attitude when you pray? God looks at the heart. Do you spend time in prayer just connecting to God? Or just asking?

Wednesday, September 22 – Read Matthew 6:19-21. Verse 21 is a passage that cuts to the heart of the 21st century fixation on affluence. **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** Where is your heart? How do you spend your time? What is your greatest worry? Where does your money go? There you will find your heart. Is God there?

Thursday, September 23 – Read Matthew 6:22-25. Now Jesus uses the eye as a metaphor for our attention. Where are our eyes focused? Where are they drawn? What makes us smile? How many secrets do you keep? In verse 25, Jesus points directly at the great temptation of every age and generation – the glamour of wealth. Jesus said, **“You cannot serve God and wealth.”** Look at your check book, how much of your expenses are focused on your household, on God, or on others?

Friday, September 24 – Read Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus knew that a life focused on self breeds worry. Now Jesus turns to the subject of anxiety of how we live. Worry. In verse 33 Jesus gives us the antidote, **“But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”** Is God first in your life? Do you trust God to provide all that you need? Do your actions reflect what you believe?



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, September 19, 2010

Winners and Losers —

Not the Destination, but the Journey (Week 2 of 3)

Matthew 20:1-4 — The Word from the Bible (New Revised Standard Version)

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘you also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.”

The Journey

I have often heard the phrase, “the ends justifies the means.” This is not the way of God. For the disciple of Jesus Christ, how we do what we do is as important as what we do. This is a hard philosophy in a results oriented society. The world asked, “Where are you going?” Jesus asks, “How are you going to get there?”

If we believe God is directing our lives, then the “how” is far more important than the “where.” The Bible teaches us that there is nothing in this world that would count as a final destination. We are all on the way to something else. Finally, life is in God’s hands. The journey we all seek as a disciple of Jesus Christ is always defined by how well we live under God’s grace and mercy – no matter where the journey may lead us.

Matthew 20:1-16

Only Matthew has preserved this parable of Jesus. This is one of the more problematic parables of Jesus because it seems to run counter to a sense of fairness. It would be preposterous to look to this parable in defense of unconditionally free enterprise or as a basis for labor-management relationships. The parable presupposes the situation in first-century Palestine.

The householder does not have a crew of regular workers, but is dependent instead on the occasional help of men from the village. The first group of workers went out to the fields at sunrise (early in the morning), the next at nine o’clock, and next at noon, the next at three in the afternoon, and the last group at five. At sundown (the twelfth hour) all were called together to be paid. When those who had worked only one hour received an amount (a denarius, equal to about 2 cents) that was considered generous for a full day’s work, the others must have quickly calculated how much more they would receive. To their astonishment and chagrin, all received the same. That they grumbled is understandable, especially to anyone who has worked under the hot Palestinian sun. The

householder will not yield to their complaints, however, since he insists that he is free to be equally generous with all. He is sovereign over his own lands and household; if he chooses to, he can give freely to all. There is not ground for complaint, he insists, against such generosity.

Matthew 20:15

The two main points of the story appear in the double question: Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? The householder operates by the standard of grace, not of merit. The laborers are so bound to legalistic thinking that they cannot conceive of anyone motivated by grace alone. The central actor is the generous householder not the disgruntled employees. The parable is a defense of Jesus’ message of God’s grace to all against the attacks of the defenders of a religion on merits and works.

Matthew 20:16

The concluding comment, which is nearly identical with 19:30, draws attention to the human inclination to compare and measure. In God’s Kingdom it makes no difference who is first or last. We are not judged by what we have done, but rather by the spirit in which it was done. The gift is the opportunity to participate fully in God’s Kingdom. There is no human measure in God’s Kingdom – certainly not the measure of wages.

The workers who were hired first have missed the point. They were given the opportunity to work with the master all day. The fact that they grumble because of the wage points to the lost opportunity that had been before them all along. Their priorities were all wrong.

The workers hired last were probably the most excited of all the workers just for the opportunity to work for a few hours. They had waited and worried all day, not knowing if any opportunity would be provided. When the Master comes, they care little about what they are going to get paid. The promise of what was fair was enough for them. They put themselves under the complete mercy of the land holder.

Winners and Losers

How many of us are willing to put ourselves under the complete care and abundant mercy of God? It’s the journey of following Jesus Christ by full obedience and complete trust that makes life worth living.

Sometimes life can get as hard as the hot sun of Palestine. It’s at these moments that staying the course is most important. It’s at these moments that the character of our heart is shown. It’s at these moments that the depth of our soul and spirit is exposed. It’s at these moments that we come to know God in all God’s glory and splendor. It’s at these moments that we come to understand that we are not in control. It’s at these moments that we learn that life is not about winners and losers. Life is about living well as Christ disciple, no matter what the circumstances.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for every-one in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying. **Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!**

The following is to guide you in your prayers this week, as you remember that it’s not the destination, but the journey. The lyrics are to “The Climb,” a Miley Cyrus song from the Hannah Montana movie. Christ can be found wherever we seek Him.

The Climb

By Miley Cyrus (written by Jessi Alexander and Jon Mabe)

I can almost see it.
That dream I’m dreaming, but
There’s a voice inside my head saying
You’ll never reach it
Every step I’m takin’,
Every move I make
Feels lost with no direction,
My faith is shakin’,
But I gotta keep tryin’
Gotta keep my head held high

There’s always gonna be another mountain
I’m always gonna wanna make it move
Always gonna be an uphill battle
Sometimes I’m gonna have to lose
Ain’t about how fast I get there
Ain’t about what’s waitin’ on the other side
It’s the climb

The struggles I’m facing
The chances I’m taking
Sometimes might knock me down, but
No I’m not breaking
I may not know it, but
These are the moments that
I’m gonna remember most
I’ve just gotta keep goin’, and
I gotta be strong
Just keep pushing on, but

There’s always gonna be another mountain
I’m always gonna wanna make it move
Always gonna be an uphill battle
Sometimes I’m gonna have to lose
Ain’t about how fast I get there
Ain’t about what’s waitin’ on the other side
It’s the climb

There’s always gonna be another mountain
I’m always gonna wanna make it move
Always gonna be an uphill battle
Sometimes I’m gonna have to lose
Ain’t about how fast I get there
Ain’t about what’s waitin’ on the other side
It’s the climb

Keep on movin’
Keep climbin’
Keep faith baby
It’s all about, it’s all about
The climb
Keep the faith, keep your faith, woah

Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.

God is doing great things through the ministries of Trietsch.