

# 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 27 – Read Matthew 7:1-6.** With two metaphors, Jesus turns his attention to how we see ourselves. First, look at your own shortcomings before you judge anyone else. He aptly points out that our attention to the shortcomings of others distracts us from working on our own sin. Second, Jesus says, **“Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine...”** Again Jesus points to the lack of self-awareness in our relationship with God. In plain language, do not take the Holy for granted. Together, Jesus reminds us that our relationship with God and others are the greatest importance in life. Yet, we are prone to take each for granted, quick to criticize and slow to examine self. Is there someone in our lives from which we need to seek forgiveness for our criticism? Is there some sin in our lives that needs to be brought to God? How do we take God for granted?

**Tuesday, September 28 – Read Matthew 7:7-12.** Now Jesus lifts up our relationship with God and others with positive instruction. First, he points out the generosity of God that exceeds the human generosity. Jesus says, **“How much more will your Father in heaven give good things those who ask him!”** Second, as Jesus reminds us of the generosity of God, he calls us to treat others in the same spirit stating, **“In everything do to others, as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”** Share five blessings with someone today. How has been God been generous with you this week? Have been treating others as you want to be treated?

**Wednesday, September 29 – Read Matthew 7:13-14.** These two verses should be read over and over as a meditation for the day. The temptations of our society today are many. The self-discipline of following Jesus is not always easy. Yet, the way to life is only found through a disciplined life focused on Christ. What is your greatest temptation that separates you from God? Are you worshipping, praying, reading your Bible and serving others as a regular discipline? What message is God sharing with you today through these disciplines?

**Thursday, September 30 – Read Matthew 7:15-23.** In the first century there were many who claimed to speak in God’s name. How do we know the difference between those who are truly God led and those who are not? First we know because of the fruit of their lives. Jesus said, **“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.”** Further in verse 21 Jesus says, **“... but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”** What fruit do we bear? What would others say about our lives? Have we done the will of our “Father in Heaven?”

**Friday, October 1 – Read Matthew 7:24-29.** Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount with a story about two houses. One house was built on rock and the other on sand. Any house is only as good as the foundation on which it is built. The more solid the foundation, the longer the house will last and the better the house will withstand the trials of rain and wind. Jesus continues by pointing out that a person who hears his words and put them into action are like the person who builds a house on rock. The storms of life may come and go, but this life will stand the test. But the person who ignores these words is like the one who builds a house on sand. This life will not withstand the trials of life, and will eventually fall. How sturdy is the foundation of your life? What part of your life do the words of Jesus play in your daily living?



## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, September 26, 2010

### Winners and Losers — *Not for Ourselves, but for Others (Week 3 of 3)*

#### **Matthew 20:20-28 — The Word from the Bible (New Revised Standard Version)**

*“Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?”... whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave...”*

#### **Getting our desires and God’s design together**

We live in a competitive society. This competitiveness doesn’t just play itself out in the sport’s arena. There are now health tests for every function of the body. There are charts for weight and height to measure ourselves in comparison to others. Our education system is based on a measurement system. Our advancement through the system is calculated by how well we do in comparison to others. Most often, advancement in our chosen vocation is a measure by comparing us to our peers. Everything from the speed of our automobiles to our salaries and accumulated wealth is measured by how we compare to others.

But... how does one measure a relationship? Is there a chart that let’s us know that we have done enough or thought enough about a person? How about our relationship with God – is there a measurement?

Jesus said that the measure of our relationship with others and God is based on service. In God’s Kingdom, it’s all about relationships. He said, **“Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave.”**

How do you measure up on the servant scale?

#### **Matthew 20:20-28 – On becoming a servant**

This statement about becoming a servant is Jesus’ answer to a request for a place of special favor for the sons of Zebedee, James and John. Whereas in Mark 10:35, these disciples themselves make the request, according to Matthew, the petition is voiced by their mother. Clearly by now we can see that the disciples do not understand this concept of serving others as the highest value for the Kingdom of God. If we put Matthew’s account and Mark’s account together, it is easy to assume that the request could have come twice — once from the brothers and then from their mother. We can be hard on James and John for their brash request, but then neither are the other disciples following Jesus’ teaching. The grumbling jealous disciples are visibly irritated by the request of the brothers and their mother. They too want position and influence, not to be a servant. We see in the reply

to James and John, Jesus referring to manner in which he is to die: **“Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”** For Jesus the “cup” represented the suffering that was coming. We hear it again in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus prays, **“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, but not my will but your will be done.”**

The fact that Jesus does not speak here of his passion in the specific terms of the previous section, added to the report preserved by the early church that John lived to an advanced age rather than dying as a martyr, has led many scholars to the conclusions that here we have an authentic word of Jesus in which he anticipates his own death and that of his followers. The cup is clearly the cup of suffering – and in this case suffering which leads to death. The response of the disciples if glibly uttered with no awareness of the real consequences: We are able.

### **Matthew 20:23**

The first clause of Jesus’ reply is a warning to the sons of Zebedee that they will experience martyrdom. But the rest of the verse returns to the theme of their original request, to which Jesus replies that the awarding of places in the age to come is the work of my Father and not mine to grant. Some interpreters have found in these two parts of Jesus’ response a contradiction. On the one hand he suggests that one should not aspire to a place of honor in the age to come since it always involves suffering. On the other hand he declares that it is not his prerogative to award honors. One thing is sure, Jesus would scarcely have taught his followers to accept suffering with the motive of gaining places of honor in the new age. The measure of a servant is heart, motive of the service given.

### **Matthew 20:24-28**

The climax of the section comes in the contrast between the ordinary way people exercise authority over others when they lord it over them and the way God’s power is evident through one who accepts the servant role. Verse 28 is perhaps a comment of the early church on the significance of Jesus as servant. The Son of man announces that he will give his life a ransom for many (the latter phrase reflecting the language of triumph.) The servant was a figure of humiliation. Jesus is here seen as one who moves through humiliation to triumph.

### **Winners and Losers**

This last section of Matthew 19 and 20 is the most difficult and the most severe. God measures life and success in ways that run contrary to what our society teaches – the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Jesus clearly defines personal importance and greatness in terms of service using the literal word ‘slave’ for emphasis.

Maybe it time for all of us to do an inventory of our life. We all are slaves to something. The question for us to answer is who or what? Does our master and lord go by the name Jesus? Or do the masters of our life go by other names? How much of our life belongs to God? How much of our future is in God’s hands? Are we ready to drink from the cup that Jesus drinks?

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## **Prayer Focus**

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone 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 winning is not about ourselves, but others.

### **The Lorica of Saint Patrick**

*A lorica is a type of prayer of protection (literally meaning “breastplate”), which was popular in Celtic countries. Since then, this prayer has not only been used as a morning prayer, but as a prayer of protection. Below are excerpts from this prayer, also known as “The Deer’s Cry.”*

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity  
Through belief in the threeness  
Through confession of the Oneness  
Towards the creator.

against inclinations of nature  
against everyone who shall wish me ill,  
afar and anear,  
alone and in a crowd.

I arise today  
Through the strength of Christ with his baptism,  
Through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial,  
Through the strength of his resurrection  
with his ascension  
Through the strength of his decent for the Judgement  
of doom.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left  
Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today  
Through God’s strength to pilot me:  
God’s might to uphold me,  
God’s wisdom to guide me  
God’s eye to look before me,  
God’s ear to hear me,  
God’s word to speak for me,  
God’s hand to guard me,  
God’s way to lie before me,  
God’s host to secure me  
against snares of devils  
against temptations of vices

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Thrones,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
Towards the Creator.

Salvation is of the Lord  
Salvation is of the Lord  
Salvation is of Christ  
May thy salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.

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

**God is doing great things through the ministries of Trietsch.**