

FRIDAY: *Jesus - Commanding*

Read: Matthew 9:35-38³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

<p>Reflect: Jesus was a man of action. He did spend time in prayer...but that prayer lead to action. There needed to be action because the people were truly in need. The word picture in v36 is one of people totally at the mercy of unscrupulous leaders.</p> <p>What is the harvest? Ultimately it is the separation of the godly and ungodly at the end of this age (e.g., Mt13:24-30, 36-43). However, before the “harvesters” (i.e., angels – cf. Mt13:39) report for duty there is time for people to come to know God. But someone needs to go and let those people know...</p> <p>The prayer language of v38 is one of practically begging. The need is urgent – do the intensity of our prayers match it?</p>	<p>Respond: Jesus had deep compassion and concern for those without a shepherd (v36). Do you have examples in your life that indicate the same concern?</p> <p>Notice that Jesus commanded His disciples to pray (9:38) and then sent them out to work in the harvest (10:1ff). Do you think they were expecting that?</p> <p>What can you do to raise your awareness of people who need to know Jesus?</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Pray: Pray the prayer of v38 – commit to do so daily. Pray for the upcoming NCD health assessment, which we hope will help us to see how we can become more effective “laborers” in the harvest. Pray for Manhattan and Ozark Christian Colleges as they equip “full time” laborers.

SATURDAY: *Comfort?*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18¹ Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification...⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness...¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope...¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

<p>Reflect: Our culture simply says “go with the flow” and “just do what comes ‘natural.’” Yet, do we have the authority to determine what is right or wrong? What does God require of us? Does that have any bearing on what is right or wrong?</p> <p>What about death? How are we to handle the death of loved ones? Why in the world is this talk about “the rapture” tied in with losing a loved one? Is this even speaking about “the rapture?”</p> <p>1 Thessalonians makes reference to the Second Coming of Jesus in every chapter (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23). Apparently this is an important teaching of the early church. Why do we so often ignore it?</p>	<p>Respond: During the course of this past week have you been more attentive to the things that concerned Jesus?</p> <p>How often do you think of Jesus’ Second Coming? Do you look forward to that day?</p> <p>What can you do today to prepare yourself for corporate worship at the building tomorrow?</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Pray: Thank God for three good things that happened to you, or someone you know, this past week. Pray for all of the worship services that will be taking place around the world today and tomorrow – pray God is glorified. Thank God for Jesus’ guaranteed return.

Christ’s Compassion
May 11 – May 17

What are you going to do with the person of Jesus? That is the question everyone must face and answer sooner or later. This week the focus isn’t on whether or not He existed, was resurrected, or anything like those issues... This week we look at (some of) His concerns.

Do the things which were of concern to Jesus concern us? It seems that far too often we ask “What Would Jesus Do?” instead of looking at “What **Did** Jesus Do?” and then having our lives shaped as a result of it. Evidently it is easier to hypothesize and ask questions than to put action behind our thoughts and what we know... Why is this the case for us?

In several places Matthew says Jesus was literally moved with compassion (Mt9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). It’s a word that indicates He was deeply moved in the depths of His being. He was touched to the extent that He had to do something!!!

When are we so deeply moved by what we see and know that we feel as if we have to do something? Is it when our favorite sports team gets beat so we can’t help but throw a fit? Is it when we hear of a good sale so we make sure we get to the store to “save” our money? Is it...

Paul told us to “put on compassionate hearts” (Col3:12). What are we doing to follow that command? John questions whether or not people who turn a blind eye and deaf ear to those in need really have God’s love in them (1Jn3:17). The need to renew our minds is so evident (Rom12:1-2).

In Myanmar over 22,000 people were killed and twice as many are missing after a cyclone last Saturday. Is tragic too trivial a word to describe such a disaster? Yet it’s not long before headlines of our favorite Hollywood celebrities, or who is declaring for the NBA draft, are once again headlining the news...that and the rising price of gasoline.

God has instituted the church to reconcile the world to Him. How are we doing? Are the people around us “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd?” We may think the “lost” people we see want nothing to do with God...but I guarantee you that if they saw the life Jesus lived (in this instance His miracles) thousands would be flocking to Him as well. I wonder if His words to His disciples today would be basically the same...

Monday: Jesus - Compassion

Read: Matthew 9:35-38³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Reflect:
 In some ways this is the "typical Jesus." We think of Him teaching others. In Mt7:28-29 the crowds were astonished at His teaching because He had authority. The best teachers of their day either quoted each other or the Scriptures for their arguments. Jesus did neither. He was a Master Teacher...
 We also think of Jesus healing others. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus has already healed many (e.g., Mt4:23-25). Healings like these drew great crowds to Him, which gave Him the opportunity to teach (e.g., Mt5:1).
 Yet when we think of Jesus we don't typically think of Him asking for help – do we? After all, He is divine; why does He need us? Perhaps it's not just "us" He needs, but our prayers for God to act, which flow from sharing the same concerns...

Respond:
 Jesus' teaching didn't match up with the culture of His day (e.g., Mt5:22,28,32,34,39,44). Does it match up with ours?
 Have you ever had the desire to heal others? Who would you heal if given that gift? How can you help them without it?
 Is prayer easy, hard, or somewhere in between for you? Upon what do your prayers focus?

Pray: Thank God for our time of worship at the NLCC building yesterday. Pray for a heart that is concerned about the things that concern Jesus. Confess to God any struggles you have with prayer itself.

Tuesday: Jesus – Another Divine Introduction

Read: Matthew 3:1-12¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"...⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance...

Reflect:
 Jesus did not simply appear on the scene without an introduction. His cousin, John, was already at work. Citing the book of Isaiah (40:3), in Mt3:3, indicates that Jesus is in fact divine. Isaiah said that it was for YHWH, our God, that a road was being prepared. John "changes" the text to indicate it is Jesus.
 The Pharisees and Sadducees never catch a break in Matthew's Gospel – they are constantly at odds with anyone who is truly doing God's work. Sadly, they thought they were the ones doing His work...
 In vs8-9 John uses harsh language to get the point across that nationality doesn't matter to God. God isn't concerned about your pedigree – but He is concerned about your passions...

Respond:
 What is a way of thinking that you need to repent of and confess to God? Will you?
 Roads in Palestine were generally in poor condition...but if royalty (i.e., a king) was coming they would receive maintenance. Isn't it amazing how blatant (yet at the same time veiled to us) the gospels are about Jesus' divinity?
 What are the top three passions of your life? How do they glorify God? How much of your time do they receive?

Pray: Confess to God your dependence upon Him and ask for His help to make your repentance genuine. Pray for a growing desire to bear fruit for God. Pray for the unity of NLCC.

WEDNESDAY: Jesus – Same Message

Read: Matthew 4:17¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Reflect:
 Much has happened in the life of Jesus up to this point. Matthew doesn't tell us a lot of details about His childhood, but we are told enough. God is working in a brand new way and His presence will be with us like never before (cf. Mt1:23; 28:20).
 As an adult Jesus was immersed (Mt3:13-17) and then He was tested by the devil (Mt4:1-11). Having been obedient (immersion) and having passed the test(s), Jesus is now ready to get to work. Yet His message is not a new one; it is a call to repentance (cf. Mt3:2).
 The beginning words of verse 17 are repeated again in 16:21; both are turning points in Matthew's Gospel. In 4:17 Jesus begins His public work. In 16:21 Jesus explains to His disciples, for the first time, that He must suffer and die. The world has never been the same since either of those points.

Respond:
 Are you aware that God is with you at all times – no matter where you are or what you're doing? How can this fact impact your behavior?
 If you are not sure about your need to repent of anything...read chapters 5-7 in Matthew.
 The darkness mentioned earlier (4:16) is a spiritual one. What is a recent way in which your eyes have been opened to the light?

Pray: Thank God for His presence and pray it impacts your actions. Confess to God your desire to do His will...ask for His help. Thank God for the area of darkness (last paragraph in "Respond") which has had light shone on it.

THURSDAY: Jesus – Falsely Accused

Read: Matthew 9:32-34³² As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him.³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel."³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

Reflect:
 The action is starting to pick up in Matthew's Gospel. After calling His disciples and delivering the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus performs many miracles in chapters eight and nine. Most recently, Jesus handled a question about fasting, raised a dead girl, and healed two blind men.
 These words of the Pharisees (vs34) are the backdrop to what Jesus said next (vs37-38). The language of vs34 indicates the Pharisees continually made this charge against Jesus. It seems they did all they could do to discredit Him.
 The Pharisees (and other religious leaders) were to be the shepherds of God's people. Unfortunately they were not doing their job. We can't know their motives – perhaps they were simply being selfish, perhaps they thought they were doing God's will. We'll never know for certain. What about our motives and intentions?

Respond:
 Read Ezekiel 34. During the time of Jesus wasn't the first time those responsible for God's people had been doing a poor job.
 Read John 10:1-21. Those verses share Ezekiel 34 for a backdrop as well. Do you desire to be a shepherd for God's people?
 Do you find yourself struggling between wanting what God wants and wanting what you want? How do you handle it?

Pray: Pray for the elders of NLCC – ask for God's continual blessing on them as they seek to lead NLCC. Pray for the worship team's practice tonight. Pray for God to raise up people with a desire to be a shepherd for His people.