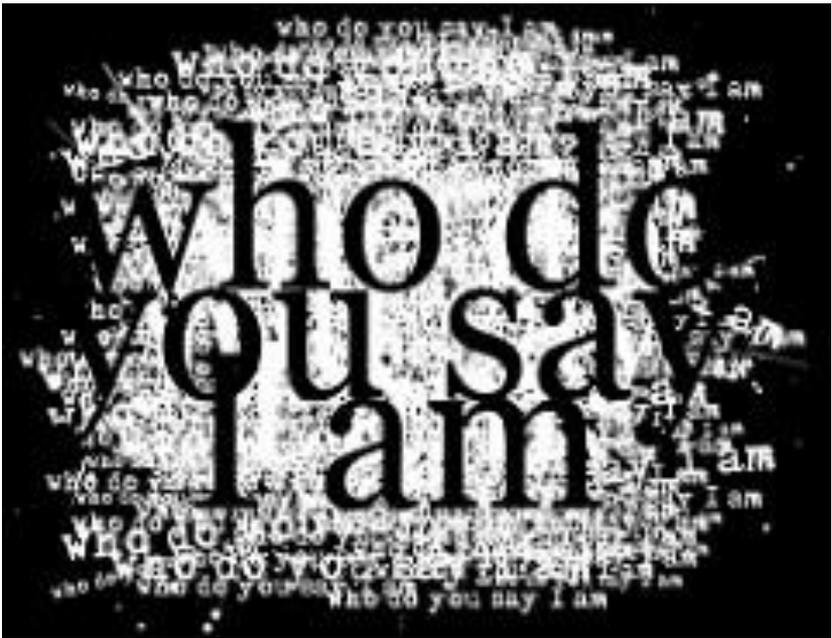


**Words and Works of Christ
leading to the cross.
Matthew 13-20**



APRIL 2018

Day 1

What is one story your parents or someone in authority told you to make a point? What was their point?

My parents had lots of stories they liked to tell. The most frequent stories were stories from their childhood where they did not have much, walked to school, made up their own games to entertain themselves. They would tell these stories at times when I would complain about what I did not have materially or when I would want what others had. I got the point, though I am sure I rolled my eyes at them a time or two. We all tell stories to illustrate a point. We do it as parents, teachers, pastors preaching sermons or even in our interaction with friends. Jesus did the same thing with the people who came to listen to them. Ask God to teach you through parables today.

Read Matthew 13:1-23

Look at verses 10 to 17, summarize in your own words why Jesus told parables to people?

If you get the point how are you blessed according to verses 16 and 17?

Now to the parable. I want you to summarize what each seed is – what Jesus says about in the story and its interpretation.

1. Seed sown on the path –

2. Seed sown on rocky ground –

3. Seed sown among thorns –

4. Seed sown on good soil –

This describes everybody in the world. 3 seeds are not Christians and one is. So which seed are you? Why would you say you are that seed?

PRAYER – Pray for 4 people who are representative of the 4 seeds.

Day 2

If you could tell any story to make a point to someone in your life, what story would you use? Why?

I love sharing the story of an elderly Jamaican man I met on a mission trip. He lived in a tin shack, had very little furniture and other possessions. He had a little garden outside his shack. As we were visiting people in the village he asked if he could pick veggies from his garden to give us. Why? He had nothing. His response was the Lord had provided for his needs and he wanted to share what he had with others. Wow! What a great story to challenge people on how content we are with our lives. That experience changed my life, so I like to share it with others. Ask God to continue challenging you as you read more parables today.

Read Matthew 13:24-43

Summarize in your words the parable of the weeds in verses 24 to 30.

What is Jesus point in using this parable in verses 36 to 43?

How does that parable challenge you when you think about your life?

According to verses 34 and 35, why was it important that Jesus used parables in his ministry?

What is the point of the parable of the mustard seed in verses 31 and 32?

What is the point of the parable of the leaven in verse 33?

How does the mustard seed and leaven encourage and challenge you in your walk with Jesus Christ?

PRAYER – Help to understand the Bible and how to apply it to your life.

Day 3

What is the best movie you have ever seen that made a pretty clear point?
What was the point?

I like disaster flicks. If made right they can leave you a little on the edge of your seat. I liked the movie *The Day After Tomorrow*. It was about a second ice age and how it hits hard the northern part of the globe forcing everybody to move south to their neighbors. America basically had to move to Mexico. But the biggest point of this movie was that we need to take care of the world. If we don't we will push our world into a 2nd ice age. Point received. I hope the last couple days you have learned from the parables. Today is the last batch of Kingdom Parables Jesus told. Ask God to impress upon your heart His word today.

Read Matthew 13:44-52

Summarized the following parables in your own words and then write what the challenge is to you when it comes to your life:

1. Parable of Hidden Treasure – verse 44 –

2. Parable of Pear of Great Value – verses 45-46

3. Parable of the net – verses 47-50

The people say they understand these parables. What does Jesus say they need to be like and what they need to do in verses 51 and 52?

What treasures can you share with the people God has put in your life like the master of the house you read about?

What are ways you struggle in following the Lord as is laid out in the parables?

PRAYER – For a better understanding of God’s word and opportunities to share it with other people.

Day 4

What is the worst rejection you have faced? What made that rejection so bad for you?

I remember watching the first set of X-Men movies. Iceman and Pyro were friends. They were educated under Dr. Xavier in the school for the gifted. They trained together. But when the world continued to reject mutants and Magneto started to attack humans, Pyro wanted in. Iceman tried to convince his friend to stay good and do the right thing. But Pyro rejected his friend and joined Magneto. They were now on different sides, finding themselves fighting each other. What a rejection and betrayal. Jesus dealt with rejection in his earthly ministry. Today we look at an account of this rejection. Ask God to open your eyes to see His truths.

Read Matthew 13:53-58

How do we see that the people were astonished at Jesus?

Why were they astonished? What were they using as their bar of comparison?

What did their astonishment turn into in verse 57?

Why do you think they were offended at what Jesus was teaching them?

What aspects of our faith, if we share it with people, can cause people to be offended? Why?

Why do you think Jesus says a prophet is honored everywhere but in his hometown?

What family members can you be praying for to come to faith in Jesus?
Write one prayer request you can pray for them along with salvation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PRAYER – Pray for those 3 family members.

Day 5

What are the different ways you have heard, read or seen that Christians have suffered for their faith? Write down all you can think of.

As you look at that list, what emotions or thoughts go through your mind and heart?

It is sad to hear about the persecution of Christians in the world. You hear about Chinese churches being torn down, and their pastors put into jail and tortured. There are Christians in the Middle East who are seized by Muslim extremists and girls forced to convert and marry Muslim men, while the men are beheaded if they do not recant their faith. The list goes on in the ways in which Christians are persecuted for their faith. Today we look at the death of John the Baptist. Ask God to grow you as you read His Word today.

Read Matthew 14:1-12

Who did Herod think Jesus was? Why?

What things did John say to Herod and Herodias that angered them?
Why did that anger them?

What kept Herod from killing John initially?

Why did he ultimately kill John the Baptist?

What does this story show us about many people in the world who are not Christians?

We can be persecuted for standing up for the truth. How does John's example encourage and challenge you in your faith?

PRAYER – For boldness to stand firm and strong in our faith.

Day 6

If you could multiply any food, what would it be and why?

I would multiply 2 things – my wife's coconut and chocolate Christmas cookies and pizza. The cookies because they are hands down the best Christmas cookie on the planet and I need an endless supply. Pizza because you can have all the food groups on them and it still tastes amazing. That is what I would multiply. Jesus did many miracles during his earthly ministry. One was feeding a large group of people. Today we read that account. Ask God that you would grow in your faith through reading His word today.

Read Matthew 14:13-21

How do we see that the people REALLY wanted to see Jesus?

What does this say about what the people believed or felt about who Jesus was?

What ways did Jesus have compassion on the people in this story?

What do we see about the disciples' doubt and lack of faith?

What thoughts do you think went through the disciples and peoples' hearts and minds as Jesus prayed for this food?

How did those thoughts change after they eat and were filled?

How would you describe your faith in Jesus today? Explain.

PRAYER – For growth in your faith; help trusting God in all things.

Day 7

If you were out on a boat, and it was storming a little bit, and you saw your best friend walking on top of the water towards you. What would you say? What would you do? What would think and feel? Write them all down.

This is not something we see every day. We would be filled with awe, wonder and probably a good dose of fear. What does this mean? What is happening? Am I seeing things? I think of Flash in the *Incredibles*, when he is running away from the bad guys and he accidentally runs onto the water. He pauses and has a moment of fear. But when he realizes what he can do he runs even faster over the top of the water. Today we look at the story where Jesus walked on water to the boat his disciples were in. Ask God to help you read and comprehend his word today.

Read Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus was not with his disciples. Why not? What does this show us about the person and character of Jesus Christ?

What is the initial reaction of the disciples seeing Jesus? Why?

How does Jesus react to them in verse 27?

What is Peter's request? Why is this a bold request?

Peter walks on water. What causes him to start to sink? What does Jesus do for him and then say to him and the other disciples?

The disciples walked with Jesus and they struggled in their faith, yet part of them that believed. What are your biggest 2 struggles in your faith?

1.

2.

PRAYER – Pray for those struggles.

Day 8

What is a tradition people do that you think is ridiculous? Why?

What is a tradition you hold that people think you are ridiculous? Why?

Christmas is what comes to mind here. My family loves on the Friday after Thanksgiving to pop in the Chipmunks Christmas album. It is the first Christmas music of the season. My wife thinks that is a ridiculous tradition. She rebels against it. But then on the other side, my wife grew up with the tradition that all the kids came down and opened their stocking stuff while mom and dad slept. I was floored. How can you open anything without everybody present? That was ridiculous to me. Though we now do it every year with our children when at other people's houses. Today we look at traditions that were not being kept and the Pharisees were mad with Jesus. Ask God to teach you through his word today.

Read Matthew 15:1-9

What tradition were the disciples breaking in verses 1 and 2?

Why would that bother the leaders?

Jesus then turns it on the Pharisees and scribes. What command had they and many others disobeyed?

What tradition were they keeping before the commandment?

Because they have kept their tradition over God's Word what does verse 6 say they have done to the Word of God? What does that mean?

Jesus calls the religious leader hypocrites for their accusations and yet they did not follow Gods Word. What did Isaiah say about the leaders in verses 8 and 9?

Do you follow tradition above God's Word? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Ask God to show you how you are disobeying and following traditions more than his word.

Day 9

When you say someone is “dirty” what are two ways that can be interpreted:

1.

2.

Are you a dirty person? Explain.

For me the image of Pigpen from the *Peanuts* cartoon comes to mind. Everywhere he walks there is a cloud of dust that follows him. He is dirty physically. But for me the other definition of dirty is someone who acts and talks in inappropriate ways. The person that comes to mind is the produce manager of the grocery store I worked at. He would always swear, tell dirty jokes and say inappropriate things about women who would walk through the store. Yesterday the Pharisees and scribes were upset over the disciples eating with dirty hands. Today Jesus talks about what truly makes a person dirty. Ask God to reveal the attitudes of your own heart.

Read Matthew 15:10-20

What does Jesus say about things that you put into your mouth in this section? Do they make you dirty? Why not?

What does Jesus say makes a person dirty in verse 11?

What does that mean according to verses 18-19?

The Pharisees were bent out of shape by what Jesus said, because he was ignoring their traditions of handwashing and addressing their hearts and they did not like that. It showed them their sin. So take a good hard look, write down 7 things you have said, thought or done in the last week, good and bad. What do each one of those things show you about your heart?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

PRAYER – Pray about your heart – the things you do, think and say.

Day 10

What is something you have begged for that you knew you did not deserve? Why did you want it so bad?

There is a scene in *Remember the Titans*, a football movie, where Petey gave up on his team because he was getting called for a penalty and did not feel he could do anything. He was benched. He asked to go in. He begged to go in. The coach told him that if he sits and supports his team from the bench then he will start the next year. Ouch. Then in the championship game, Alan who took Petey's spot, could not defend the other team. He tells the coach that Petey should go in. Coach tells Alan to go put Petey in the game. Petey goes in and plays well. He did not deserve to play but he does. Today's story in the life of Christ is about a woman needing Christ's help who did not deserve it. Turn your eyes to God's word today. Ask for a heart of understanding.

Read Matthew 15:21-31

Based on what we read in this passage about this woman, describe her.

What did she want to see happen?

What are the ways in which Jesus ignores and denies this woman in this story? Why do you think he did this? What was he testing?

How do we see this woman had incredible faith in Jesus even though it seemed like she was being denied?

How does Jesus acknowledge she is a great woman of faith?

What do we see about Christ's power and authority in this story and also in verses 29 to 31?

How does this story today, challenge your faith in Jesus Christ?

PRAYER – Ask for your faith to grow; confess your sin.

Day 11

Have you ever had a déjà vu experience, where you felt like something happening had happened before? Describe that experience.

There is a movie called *Déjà vu*. In this movie a terrorist bombs a ferry in New Orleans. A technology is developed so a team can go back in time and try to piece together what happens so as to prevent the bombing from taking place. They are living 4 days over again but seeing it from a different angle. Déjà vu. We come to a story today that you might be thinking, did we just read this a few days ago? The answer would be no. It is different and yet similar. Ask God to teach you from a different angle the truths he wants you to learn today.

Read Matthew 15:32-39

What do we see about the need of the people in verse 32?

How does Jesus show he is compassionate when it comes to those who are following him?

How did the disciples show they did not really understand Jesus power and authority in this second feeding of a mass amount of people?

What kinds of thoughts do you think went through the disciples' minds and hearts as they saw Jesus provide food again?

Why do you think these men who walked with Jesus did not seem to get who He was and what He could do?

What are a couple things you have a hard time understanding about God?

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Pray for understanding in the above areas.

Day 12

Think of 3 ways in which people misunderstand the teachings of Jesus:

1.

2.

3.

There are a lot of quotes that people could hear from Jesus and other authors and go do something that he did not mean. "If your left hand causes you to sin, but it off. If your eye causes you to sin, gauge it out." If that was meant to be taken literally then we would all be one handed and one eyed. "If you give your enemy food or water, then you will heap hot coals on his head." Ouch. Don't take that one literally either. We need to seek to understand God's word, because sometimes we are taught things that we should not be taking literally. So what is the meaning? Today we see how the Pharisees and the disciples did not understand Jesus teaching or who he was. Ask God to instruct your heart today.

Read Matthew 16:1-12

What does Jesus say the Pharisees can and cannot interpret?

He says they had the sign of Jonah and would not get any more. What was the sign of Jonah and how it pointed to Jesus?

What did the disciples not understand?

How does Jesus address their lack of understanding and belief?

What did Jesus mean by the leaven of the Pharisees? What did he want the Pharisees and us today to look out for?

How do we see false teaching in the church today?

Do you stand up for what is true or not? Explain.

PRAYER – Pray we would teach truth and stand up for truth.

Day 13

Who do people say that Jesus is? Write down a bunch of answers.

Good teachers, sage, prophet, priest, madman, figment of our imagination, ghost, reincarnated person, and the list goes on. When you ask someone who Jesus is, you get a little window into their hearts and their beliefs. What does your response reveal about your faith? Jesus asked this question of his disciples. Ask God to help you see who Christ is as you study Matthew today.

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Who did the disciples say other people thought Jesus was?

Why do you think they thought he was those people?

Then Jesus turns the question to the disciples. Why?

Who speaks up? None other than Peter. What does he say in verse 16?
When you think about his response who is he really saying Jesus is?

How do we see Peter, and us, cannot know this without God's help?

So in verses 18 and 19 did Jesus say the church will be built on Peter?
Explain.

The church is built on Peter's testimony (rock) that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. The disciples were to keep quiet about this truth for a little while longer. But for us today, we need to share this truth with the people God puts into our lives. List 4 people, their relationship to you, and one way you can start to share your faith with them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

PRAYER – Pray for the salvation of the 4 people above.

Day 14

Think of someone who is a mentor to you, a key person in your life. If they came to you and said they were going to die and knew exactly how, what would you do and say?

In the *Return of the Jedi* Luke tells Leia that he has to go and face Darth Vader. It is unavoidable. That would be a death sentence for most people. Leia tells Luke to not do it, but to run. He does not have to do that. She did not want to lose her friend and unbeknownst to her, her brother. But Luke knew for his training to be complete and for the balance of the force to be restored he had to face his father, even if it meant death. Jesus tells his disciples about his impending death and they don't react well. Today we read a little bit about that encounter. Ask God to reveal his truths to you and help you apply them to your heart and life.

Read Matthew 16:21-28

How does Peter react to the news Jesus shares with them?

What does Jesus say to Peter? What does he mean in his statement?

In verses 24 to 26, how does Jesus say all those who follow him will have to sacrifice and suffer too?

What does he say about those who try to live for the world and gain the things of the world?

How do we see there will be rewards and punishment on that day Jesus comes back?

Verse 28 can be confusing. All the disciples died before Christ came back. What does that mean? They would immediately see Jesus transfigured later. They would see and experience the kingdom of God in that experience. It is not talking about the 2nd coming. So this is a true statement of Christ.

How are you denying yourself to follow Jesus Christ? How are you not?

PRAYER – Ask for help in taking up your cross and denying yourself.

Day 15

What are experiences you have had that are hard to put into words? Why were they hard to put into words?

When a person's life is radically changed by God, so that you almost do not recognize them anymore. That is hard to put into words. When you are on the mission field and you see God open doors to reach out to people really hardened by sin. That is hard to put into words. When you have done everything possible to change a hard situation in your life and then all of sudden circumstances out of your control come to pass and things change. That is hard to put into words. There are many things God does in our lives that are hard to put into words. I would guess the same was true for the disciples as they heard Jesus words and saw him perform many miracles. Today we come to a life changing situation the disciples experienced. Ask God to grow you today in knowledge and faith.

Read Matthew 17:1-13

Look at verses 1 to 6. If you were the disciples, what are you thinking and feeling during this event?

What do we see about who Jesus Christ is? Why is that important?

What is the disciples' reaction? How does Jesus comfort them?

In what way did Elijah come according to Jesus in verses 10-13? How did Jesus use this to foreshadow what would happen to him?

This experience changed the disciples lives. It reminded them Jesus would suffer and die. It confirmed that Jesus word was true. They would later realize they could trust Jesus in all things. What are ways in which you are struggling to trust Christ? List them and write why.

PRAYER – About what you wrote above, that you could trust Christ!

Day 16

What are 2 ways you have failed to serve God faithfully? Write next to it how you reacted to your failure?

1.

2.

In *Return of the Jedi* Luke is on Dagobah training with Master Yoda. At one point Yoda has Luke try to use the force to raise his X-wing fighter out of the swamp. He tries as hard as he could, gets it up a little, and then it sinks again. Luke says Yoda asks the impossible of him and he huffs off and sits down. He was such a whiner. Then Yoda, way smaller than Luke, steps forward and he lifts the ship and lands it on the dry land. Luke watches and says he cannot believe it. Yoda basically says Luke lacked faith. This is a great picture of the disciples and how they failed so many times to trust in Jesus. They looked at things as impossible and yet Jesus did them. He multiplied bread and fish. He raised the dead and walked on water. Impossible for man but possible for God. Today we come to another instance in Jesus ministry. Pray for a heart of understanding.

Read Matthew 17:14-21

Reading between the lines of verses 14 to 16, how would you describe the boy in this story and how would you describe his father.

1. Boy –

2. Father –

How would describe the disciples based on what happens?

What things does Jesus do? What does this show you about who Jesus is, his power, authority, love, and how he trains his followers?

Jesus tells the disciples if you had faith the size of mustard seed (one of the tiniest seeds out there) then they could tell a mountain to move and it would. Since we don't do that, what does that say about their and our faith? Explain your answer.

Reflecting on this story and the mustard seed picture, what would you say about your own faith in Jesus? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Ask God to grow your faith, help you trust Him in ALL things.

Day 17

Do you think we should pay taxes to the government? Why or why not?

No matter your thought on taxes, if you don't pay them you WILL go to jail. There is a joke: what is certain in life? Answer: Death and taxes. We are all going to die and all people just about everywhere in the world, pays taxes. There is no escape from them whether it is taxes coming out of your paycheck, on your house, at the gas pump, when you buy a stick of gum. We are paying taxes on so many different things. We cannot avoid them. Why are we talking about taxes during a devotional? Well Jesus dealt with this question with the disciples in relation to Rome. Ask God to open your heart to his truths today.

Read Matthew 17:22-27

What truth does Jesus share with his disciples in verses 22 to 23? What kind of mood did that set them in? Why?

How do we see Jesus paid taxes in verses 24 and 25?

What does Jesus teach about taxes in verses 25 to 26?

As sons of God we are free. We are not tied down by death or taxes. But that is a future hope for all of us. How does Jesus show that he and all his followers will abide by the rules of man in verse 27?

How do we see in this story that God provides for our needs?

Jesus is showing in this story that we are to be submissive to the law of our government. Jesus was. What are ways it is easy for you to follow the laws of our government? What ways it is challenging for you?

1. Easy –

2. Hard –

PRAYER – Pray for our government and you would submit to it.

Day 18

Nobody is going to look at this question. What 2 or 3 sins do you struggle with the most? How often do you struggle with them?

1.

2.

3.

Struggling with sin is a part of this life we live this side of heaven. We will not beat it. We have to deal with it. Temptations swirl all around us from the shows and movies to watch, the music we listen to, our friends who encourage us to do things we know we should not do, our need to look good in the eyes of the world. There is no shortage of temptations. Today Jesus talks about sin. Ask God to show you your sin, and to show you how you need to be repenting of your sin.

Read Matthew 18:1-9

Jesus said that the greatest in the kingdom is like a child. What does he mean by that when you think about verses 1 to 4?

What does Jesus then say about causing children to sin? What is his point when you think of his harsh words?

In verse 7 Jesus continues this thought. What does he say about people who bring temptations? What does that mean?

Then we get to verse 8 and 9. What does Jesus say about sin and temptation in them? Does that seem extreme? Explain.

I don't think Jesus meant to physically cut off your hand and gauge out your eye. What is Jesus point in this graphic imagery in dealing with sin?

Now I want you to write all that comes to mind in regards to sin below:

1. Who has tempted you to sin –
2. What are ways you have tempted others to sin –
3. What are ALL the sins you have committed in the lasts week –

PRAYER – Pray for the first question at the beginning and all you just wrote above in the last question.

Day 19

Think about all the people in this world. Who needs us as Christians to look out for them and why? List all you can think of.

In just about any movie where there is a battle or a threat the call goes out to get the women and the children to safety. The men take their place to fight and send a few men to escort the women and children to safety. Why? Because they are the weakest among us and need us to help them. It is not to be taken as demeaning though some would take it that way. Today we look at how much God cares for the weak and how that should challenge us to think about those people God has put in our lives that we need to see to care for and encourage. Ask God to open your eyes to those people in your life as you read the Bible today.

Read Matthew 18:10-14

Some people say verse 10 is about every Christian having a Guardian Angel. This is not true. What is God's point of verse 10? How does God show care and concern for children? For all his people through this verse?

How is that encouraging to you?

What picture does Jesus use to show God's love for his people in verses 11 to 14? What is the shepherd willing to do to find the lost sheep?

What is God's reaction to finding the lost sheep in verse 13? Why?

What does God desire for all his children in verse 14? How do we see this is true when you think of all Christians in all of time?

Jesus is the Good shepherd. If he seeks to save us, willing to leave the ones who know him, then we are to do the same thing. Who are you willing to go out of your way to call to salvation in Jesus? List 3 people and a way you can pray for them today in addition to their salvation.

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Pray for the 3 people above. Pray for their salvation.

Day 20

If you see someone who is a Christian sin, in a little or big way, what do you do? Do you confront them or ignore the situation? Why? Be honest.

In the culture we live in we do not want people to judge us. I have seen some interesting shirts/sweaters recently. I have seen a line of shirts that says, "Stop judging me." I have even seen a Christmas sweater that said, "Santa, stop judging me." We don't like people judging us. My business is mine so keep your nose out of it. This is our attitude even towards Christians who sin. It is not my business so I will let it go. Yet the Bible says the opposite. As Christians we are to call each other out on sin. It is a command. Let us look at the Bible on this topic today. Ask God to teach you and challenge you in your faith today.

Read Matthew 18:15-20

Describe the 3 steps in confronting people with sin that Jesus outlines for us in verses 15 to 17.

Step 1 –

Step 2 –

Step 3 –

When you think about this whole process of “Church Discipline”, what do we really want to see happen?

When you think about this process, how serious does God want us to take our involvement in the process? What excuses will we make to not do it?

Now look at verses 18 to 20. So if a couple of friends and I want the same thing and we pray for it together we will get it, is that what Jesus is saying? If not, then what is his point in these verses?

What is the great promise Jesus gives us in verse 20? Why should that encourage you to gather and pray with brothers and sisters in Christ?

PRAYER – Pray for 2 Christians you know you need to confront with their sin. Pray for opportunities to pray with Christian friends.

Day 21

What is hard for you when it comes to forgiving people?

If someone asks for forgiveness, and they mean it, should you forgive them? Why?

Have you ever had or seen a wound that was left untreated? If you have you see that it gets uglier and uglier. It starts to swell, get discolored and becomes more and more painful. Why would a person let a wound get to that point when all they had to do was wash it, get some antibiotic, apply and do that every so often until the wound healed? It saves a whole lot of pain later on. Yet many of us are like this when we don't forgive people when they ask for forgiveness. We become like that wound. Ask God to show you your attitude towards forgiving others as you read today.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

What is the point of Jesus saying to forgive 7 times and then 77 times? What is he saying about forgiveness?

Jesus tells a parable. What do we see about the mercy and sacrifice of the master in this story?

How do we see that the man who was forgiven of his debt did not understand what it means to be forgiven?

How was the man more miserable at the end rather than the beginning of the story? What does this show us about our need to forgive others?

We do not forgive people who do not ask for forgiveness. We are told to forgive as Christ forgave us in Ephesians 4:32. We were forgiven when we repented of our sin, not before. So the same is for us in forgiving others, we don't forgive before but after they ask. So who is a person or two that you know you would struggle to forgive if they asked you? Why?

PRAYER – Pray that God would help you be ready to forgive a person who has wronged you if they ask for forgiveness.

Day 22

Describe the situation of a family where the mother and father got a divorce? What has life been like for the children, for the couple?

Divorce is a sad reality in our culture today. 40 to 50% of couples in America in 2017 get a divorce. That means 1 in 2 couples will see their marriage end in divorce. The divorce rate in the church is about 30%. Staggering. There are so many reasons on why marriages end in divorce. What should our view be as followers of Jesus? Is marriage okay? When is it okay? When is not okay? Well Jesus addressed this issue briefly. And that is what we come to in the word today. Ask God to help you wrestle with this topic as you study the scriptures today.

Read Matthew 19:1-12

What question did the Pharisees ask to try to “test” Jesus in verse 3? What point were they trying to make with their question?

What does Jesus first say about marriage in verses 4 to 6?

Why do you think it is important Jesus said this about marriage?

The Pharisees then quote Moses and how he allowed divorce. What does Jesus say about that in verse 8 to 9?

Based on Jesus words, do you think he support divorce or not? Explain your answer.

The disciples thought that it would be better to be single after this tough teaching. What important things does Jesus say about being single and unmarried in verses 10-12?

PRAYER – Pray for your future spouse and that your marriage would be strong. Or pray that God would show you if you should remain single.

Day 23

Why do people get annoyed by children? What kinds of things do they do and say?

In the original *Jurassic Park* movie, Dr. Grant describes how awesome the Velociraptor is. After his description a child who is looking at the bones of the raptor says that is nothing, it looks like a big Turkey. Dr. Grant then goes into detail of how this meat eater hunts and then eats you, scaring the boy to death. Later he talks about how he just does not like children. Children are often looked down on and are told by adults that they should be seen and not heard. Jesus loved to minister to children and talk about them. Today we read about one of these encounters. Ask God to instruct and teach you today.

Read Matthew 19:13-15

Why were people bringing children to Jesus according to verse 13?

Why is this a pretty cool scene to think about?

The disciples did not like the children coming. We are not told why. So why do you think they did not like this? Speculate.

How does Jesus react to the disciples' rebuke that the children should not be coming to Jesus? What does he do and say?

What does this show us about how important children were to Jesus in his ministry?

It is important for us to minister to children too. We are following Jesus example. What are ways in which you can minister to children God has put in your life?

PRAYER – Pray for those opportunities and God would use you in the lives of children.

Day 24

What must you do to inherit eternal life? Describe in detail.

Now when you think about your answer, was it about what you need to do or what God has done for you? You see we cannot do enough to earn eternal life on our own. We are sinful and we mess up and everything is tainted by sin. We can only be saved by admitting our sin, believing with our hearts and our minds that Christ became a man, died on the cross for our sins and raised again from the dead. If we truly believe that we are saved. Jesus has a confrontation with a rich young, religious ruler, who thought his works would save him. Today we read about that encounter. Ask God to show you why you think you are saved as you read today.

Read Matthew 19:16-30

At first what did Jesus say the man had to do to be saved in verses 18 to 19? What did the man say about these requirements?

What does Jesus say the man needed to do in verse 21? How did the man react and why?

What sin was exposed in this man that he did not want to deal with? Why do you think he did not want to deal with it?

How hard is it for rich people to get to heaven according to Jesus? Why is that such a good picture to use?

In verses 27 to 30 what do we see about what we need to be willing to give up in order to truly follow Jesus?

Think of your own life. What are you willing to give up to serve Jesus? What would you have a hard time giving up to serve Jesus?

1. Willing to give up –

2. Have a hard time giving up –

PRAYER – Use this last question to guide your prayer time today.

Day 25

What are reasons people give as to why they deserve a raise at their job?

Is the boss obligated to give a raise? Why or why not?

Most of the times when we think we deserve more reward from our parents, a boss, a teacher or a coach is because we usually compare our performances to that of the other people around us. We think we put more effort, worked harder or worked longer. And because of that we deserve more than the other people. In some ways that might be true but as we will see in our parable today, that is a selfish way of thinking. Ask God to challenge your heart and attitude as you read, pray and think about God's world today.

Read Matthew 20:1-16

What are some important characteristics we see about the master in this parable? Next to each one write how we see that characteristic in Jesus.

What reason did some laborers give as to why they deserved more money than other laborers? What does the master say to them?

What are ways in which we as Christians show the attitude of the first laborers hired when looking at other Christians?

How do we see in this parable that the reward was not about the work of the laborers by the grace and mercy of the master?

Be honest on this next question! Do you think God owes you something because you serve Him? Why or why not?

PRAYER – Thank God for his gifts to you, for his grace and mercy.

Day 26

Describe a time when you knew something bad was about to happen. What did you do, say, feel as that bad thing approached?

In the movie *Gettysburg* on the 3rd day of the battle, General Lee orders his men to charge over open ground to take the union position at a grove of trees in the middle of the field. General Longstreet is not comfortable with that plan and thinks it will not go well. He sees that coming to pass. You can see how uncomfortable he is with General Lee going through with the plan. What happens? The confederates are beat badly, whole companies totally destroyed in the battle. The Confederates have to organize and retreat. It is not fun to see something awful coming and not having any strength to stop it. We see that in this part of our study today as the time of Christ's death approaches quickly. Ask God to cement to your heart his truths today.

Read Matthew 20:17-19

Summarize in your own words what Jesus says is going to happen to him as they approach Jerusalem.

Put yourself in the sandals of the disciples. What are you thinking, feeling and hoping?

Why do you think they might have thought, felt or hoped that?

What do we see about the character of Christ, who was fully man, as he obediently, confidently going into Jerusalem knowing what is going to happen?

When you think about Christ's sacrifice, what are 3 things that should fill our heart with thanksgiving?

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Give thanks to God using what you wrote to guide you.

Day 27

How would you describe someone who is a servant? Give attitudes, thoughts and actions?

For some of us we may have the picture of a person who has no rights and is like a slave to someone. There is nothing they can do to get out of the situation in life in which they have been placed. They are stuck. Others of us think of a person who sacrifices of themselves to take care of the needs of other people. They never put themselves first. They have the attitude that is given us in Philippians 2 in that they think of others ahead of themselves and model after Jesus Christ by serving with no thought of being served. Today we look at this idea of being a servant as we see Jesus exchange with James and John's mother. Ask God to show you what it means to be a servant for Christ as you read today.

Read Matthew 20:20-28

James and John's mother comes to Jesus and her sons are with her. What does she want from Jesus? Why do you think she asks this?

Describe Jesus interaction with James and John in verses 22 and 23.

What does Jesus show about his own servanthood and who is his authority in this answer?

Of course the other disciples get angry with James and John and start to fight. What does Jesus say about being a servant in verses 25 to 27?

Jesus of all people deserved to be served. He was and is God. Yet what does Jesus say about himself in verse 28?

Think about your own walk with Jesus Christ. Would you say you are serving God by serving others or looking to be served? Explain your answer. Be honest.

PRAYER – As you reflect on that last question, let that guide your prayer.

Day 28

Describe a time when you wanted something so bad you kept asking for it until it was given to you. What did you want? What did you do and say to get it? Why did they give it to you?

Luke in *The Empire Strikes Back* really wanted to train as a Jedi. He thought he was ready. He appealed to Ben Kenobi to tell Yoda he was ready. He tried to have an answer for every reason Yoda had to not train him. He whined and complained and pleaded to be trained. Yoda gives in and decides to train him when Luke said he would follow through. He then goes on to become a great Jedi. We can all remember times where we pleaded for something and people gave into us, whether parents getting us a treat at the grocery store, a teacher giving us a better grade after we plead our case, a coach putting us into the game among other situations. Today we look at a couple men who really wanted something from Jesus and they shouted and pled until he listened to them. Ask God to lay on your heart truths that need to guide you in how you live for him.

Read Matthew 20:29-34

What do the two blind men show they believe about who Jesus is from their cries in verse 30?

How did people react to these two men in verse 31? Why do you think they reacted this way to these poor, blind men?

How did the reactions of the people motivate the men further?

Describe in your own words Jesus interaction with the two men in verses 32 to 34. What do you see about Jesus compassion?

Would you consider yourself to be someone who is compassionate towards people who are hurting? How are you? If you are not, why?

PRAYER – Pray for compassion to help hurting people like Jesus ministers to the hurts and pains of others.