

ST. MATTHEW PRESENTS THE CHRIST

HOME STUDY: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Who's the most influential Christian person you've ever known? Which Christian person in your lifetime do you think has done the most to benefit the kingdom of God? Is there some hero of the faith that you most admire?

Jesus, of course, is the ultimate spiritual super-hero. But who is it that Jesus views as significant, and noteworthy, among his followers? Today's Bible story gives us the answer that he shared with the people of his day.

TODAY'S READING

We're moving quickly through the early chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel! Today we turn to chapter 11. Read verses 1-3.

John the Baptist, the one sent by God to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of Christ, had been imprisoned by wicked King Herod. John had his own followers, similar to the disciples of Jesus. Even in prison, John heard about the ministry of Jesus. From his prison cell, he instructed some of his disciples to ask Jesus an important question. Read verse 3 again.

Do you think John really wasn't sure of the answer at this point in his life? Earlier he was clearly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Was he now, perhaps, trying to help out his disciples, to clarify their view of Jesus as the Christ? Or was he discouraged by his misfortunes, and the persecution that he was experiencing?

Now read verses 4-6.

Jesus' answer is a great summary of what he's been doing thus far in his public ministry. How does each phrase in verse 5 give evidence of Jesus' divinity? Which of these activities is most convincing to *you* that Jesus was truly the one who was promised to come from God?

Think through Jesus' words in verse 6. What kinds of things cause people to fall away "on account of Jesus"? Perhaps when Jesus doesn't match their expectations? Perhaps when they realize that Jesus requires a full commitment? What other examples can you think of?

Many people back in Jesus' day weren't able to accept him as the Savior, as their true God. What is it about Jesus that causes many people today to reject him?

Read on, in verses 7-15. Here Jesus turns to the crowds, and shares his view about the importance of John's example. What are some of the fine qualities of John's that Jesus identifies in these verses? Why was John's ministry so important, in Jesus' view?

Jesus gives John high praise, especially in verse 11. John played a key role in the salvation story, as the messenger who pointed people to Christ. Is there any greater Christian work that any of us can do, than to point people in our day to Christ? Is there any more important mission for our congregation, than to bring people to Christ and bring Christ to people?

Notice the point Jesus makes in verse 12. As great as John was, and as important as his prophetic work was, he's actually no greater than anyone else in God's kingdom! Why not? Aren't we all completely reliant on the grace of God, from the greatest among us to the very least? We're all in the same boat, and brother John the Baptist is right there by our sides. Fortunately, God's the captain of that boat, and we're only the passengers.

Finish today's section, by reading verses 16-19.

Jesus laments the generation of God's people, who seem to be missing the message and warning of John. Instead of heeding his words, many are rejecting him and disparaging him. And, the Lord points out prophetically, they're rejecting Jesus, too.

Does Jesus seem discouraged by the increasing rejection he's facing? Does he allow it to sway him from his mission? Does he give up?

Is the Christian Church, in our day and age, ever rejected and disparaged? Think of some examples of how the church's place and authority in our modern culture is fast fading.

What would Jesus tell us today, if we were feeling discouraged, or were tempted to give up?

Like John, we are all fully reliant on the Lord Jesus for our salvation, and we can do nothing more important than to help the generations of people in our society come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. If one person in your life comes to faith and is saved, because God enables you to be his witness in some small way, than your Christian life has been a glorious, magnificent, spectacular success! To God be the glory!

PRAYER

Lord God of my/our salvation, it is your will that all people might come to you through your Son Jesus Christ. Inspire my/our witness to him, that others might know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection. I/we pray in his name. Amen.