



Meeting

The Ultimate King

Matthew 9-15

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church

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Matthew 9:18-38: The Shepherd King

Read Matthew 9:18-38

1. What contrasts and similarities can you draw between the story of the dead girl and the sick woman in v18-25? (Social position, role of faith, touch....)
2. Both the ruler and the woman were desperate. What is the connection between desperation and faith?
3. What does this story encourage you to do in desperate situations?
4. What is the significance of the title the blind men use of Jesus in v27 (See Mt 1:1; 12:23 as well as 2 Sam 7:12-16)?

How might this help explain Jesus' reluctance for people to know about the healing (v30?)

5. What are the three reactions people have to Jesus in v27-34? How are the reactions of the blind men and the mute man similar?
6. How do Jesus' actions in v35-36 prove the Pharisees wrong?
7. Read Ezekiel 34:1-16. What was God's opinion of Israel's leaders?

What was his opinion of his people?

How does Jesus reflect those attitudes?

8. How do these stories model what it means for you to labour in the field of God's kingdom where he has placed you?

Prayer Points:

Matthew 10: Living for the King

Read Matthew 9:35-10:42.

1. How and why does Jesus demonstrate compassion for the crowds (9:35-38)?
2. What is the connection between the end of chapter 9 and the start of ch 10? (Did you notice 9:36 and 10:6?)
3. Jesus sends out the Twelve (10:1-15). Describe their mission.

How is it similar to Jesus'?

How is it different?

4. Is there a principle for us to follow from v11-14 to do with finding a worthy person? How might it work for you in practice?
5. Jesus warns the disciples that their compassionate ministry will not be warmly received (10:16-25). What will they experience?

What reasons does Jesus give for such opposition?

6. What does it mean to be shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves (16)?

What does this look like in practice?

7. What attitudes does Jesus want his disciples to have? What reasons does he give?

Attitudes	Reason
v17	v17
v19	v19-20
v22	v22
v26	v28-31

8. In 10:26-33 Jesus prepares his present and future disciples for opposition. What form will this opposition take?

Why shouldn't his disciples be afraid of those who oppose them?

9. What challenging commands does Jesus give in these verses?
V32-33

V37

V38

V39

10. What does Jesus promise to those who are receptive to our message (10:40-42)?

Prayer Points:

Matthew 11: A Case Of Mistaken Identity

Read Matthew 11:1-19:

1. Look back to John's proclamation of the kingdom that Jesus was coming to introduce (Mt 3:7-12). Did this expectation fit what the Old Testament prophesied about the coming kingdom (see Isa 6:8-13; Jer 15:1-7)?

Did this expectation fit with what John had heard Jesus had been doing (eg 9:18-34)?

2. How does Jesus answer John?

What is Jesus saying about the nature of his kingdom (see Isa 35:5-6; 61:1)?

3. How do the two aspects of the kingdom fit together?

4. What encouragement does Jesus add for John in v6?

How have other people fallen away on account of Jesus (understood his identity and nature incorrectly)? See 9:34; 11:19; 11:20-24

5. In what sense is John greater than those who have come before him (v11)?

In what sense are the least in the kingdom of heaven greater than John?

6. John preached one aspect of the kingdom. Jesus preached another. How did people respond to each (v18-19)?

In what way are they like children (v16-17)? What is Jesus' point?

Read Matthew 11:20-30

7. Jesus has just announced blessings on some (v6). He now announces woes. What is the sin of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum?

How does this fit with the aspect of the kingdom he described in 11:4-5?

Why will the judgment be worse than for Gentile cities?

8. What things have been hidden from the wise and learned (v25)?

9. What does it mean to be little children?

Is this like the children in 11:16?

10. Lots of people have misunderstood Jesus in this chapter. What is the only way to understand who Jesus really is (v27)?

11. If it's about the Son choosing to reveal the Father to us, what is our responsibility (v28-30)?

What is Jesus' promise to us?

Prayer Points:

Matthew 12: Responding to the King

Power over people is not easily shared. Wars have been fought, people assassinated and elections rigged in order to gain or maintain power. The leaders of Israel were becoming concerned over the growing reputation and following of Jesus. Like ripples in a pool of water, the ministry of Jesus and his disciples continued to have a widening impact on the Jewish nation. If Jesus' followers became too numerous, the leaders would end up losing their positions of authority. In Matthew 12 they formulate a strategy to discredit him.

Read Matthew 12:1-21:

1. Consider the ways that religious leaders attacked Jesus in verses 1-14. What was their strategy?
2. What does Jesus mean that one greater than the temple is here (v6)? What's his point?
3. In v7 Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6. Does this mean God doesn't approve of sacrifices? In what circumstances?

Which is more important? Why?

When have you fallen into the trap of offering sacrifice, but neglecting mercy?

4. As you compare the Pharisees' second accusation against Jesus (v. 10) with their own response (v. 14), what irony do you see?
5. Why did Jesus warn the healed people not to tell others who Jesus was (v16)?

What point does the quote from Isaiah make (v17-21)?

6. Notice the startling contrast between the religious leaders' attitude toward Jesus and God's attitude (vv. 15-21). How do they differ?

Read Matthew 12:22-37:

7. The crowd's excitement over Jesus as the Son of David (see 2 Sam 7:12-16) reveals a messianic expectation for a political deliverer. Yet Jesus' kingdom is not a political one. How do the Pharisees also get the nature of Jesus' kingdom wrong (v24-28)?

What does Jesus' answer (v25-29) tell you about the true nature of the kingdom of God? About Jesus' ministry?

8. From the context, what do you think it means to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (v31-32, notice also v28)? How have the Pharisees committed this sin?

Since forgiveness must be asked for, why is it impossible for this sin to be forgiven?

9. What meaning does Jesus give for the Pharisees' growing hostility (v34-37)?

Read Matthew 12:38-50:

10. Why do you think the Pharisees wanted to see a miracle? Why does Jesus respond to the request? Is it wrong to ask for a sign?

11. What is the sign of Jonah? How is Jesus greater than Jonah? Than Solomon? What is Jesus' point?

12. In verses 43-45 Jesus tells the Pharisees and teachers of the law a story. What does it reveal about them?

13. In light of the growing controversy, why might Jesus' mother and brothers be eager to speak to him?

Looking back over the last few weeks, would others see you as a brother or sister of Jesus, or a distant relative?

Prayer Points:

Matthew 13: The Kingdom Is Like...

Crowds are fickle. One moment they follow with enthusiasm, the next they turn hostile and angry. In Matthew 13 Jesus speaks to a mixed and fickle crowd. Some are hungry to hear his message. Others are suspicious and hostile. In this setting Jesus begins to speak in parables. These stories test our spiritual sight and hearing. They also expose the condition of our hearts.

Read Matthew 13:

A common misunderstanding of parables is that Jesus uses them to make his teaching “interesting” or “easy to understand.” But the funny thing is, they’re actually more like frustrating riddles. Like Jesus himself, the parables are easily dismissed - and they sift out those who really want to know him.

The Parable of the Sower

1. What is the seed? How would you have known this if Jesus didn’t explain it?
2. What are the four types of soil? Could you have worked this out if Jesus didn’t explain it?
3. From verses 10 to 17, why does Jesus say he speaks in parables?
4. How does Jesus describe the people of Israel?
5. How do parables work?
6. In what way is the parable of the soils a “parable about parables”?
7. What warnings should we take from the parable of the soils?

The Parable of the Weeds

8. In the context of chapter 12, who do you think are the weeds Jesus speaks of?
9. Wheat and weeds look similar until the harvest. How does this parable explain God's delayed judgment of the wicked (vv. 24-30, 36-43)?
10. Compare Jesus' interpretation of the parable in verses 36 –43 with the final chapter of Malachi in the Old Testament.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

11. What encouragement would the few real disciples of Jesus get from this parable?
12. What warning does this parable hold for those who say the kingdom is “unimpressive”?
13. What do the parables of the mustard seed and yeast suggest about the way the kingdom grows (vv. 31-35)?

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl, and the Fishing Net

14. What’s the point of these parables?
15. Deciding to follow Jesus often comes at a cost. What costs has Jesus already warned his disciples of?

Jesus Mother And Brothers

16. Interestingly, the section of parables starts and ends with a comment on the mother and brothers of Jesus. Any idea what point is being made?
17. How did Jesus “home crowd” respond to him, and why? How does this confirm the truth of his parables?
18. What have YOU done with what you have heard of “the word”?

Prayer Points:

Matthew 14: Two Kings, Two Feasts

Crises are uncomfortable. They force us to make painful decisions, even when we don't want to decide. In Matthew 14 Jesus places the disciples in tough situations where they must act on what they have learned about him. The focus shifts from parables about the kingdom to the identity of the king.

Read Matthew 14:

1. Herod's murder of John happened some time before this. Any idea why Matthew chooses to include the account of John's death here?
2. What does Herod seem to fear most; the fame of Jesus? The ghost of John? The reaction of his dinner guests? His wife?
3. Why does Jesus withdraw? How does he react to the interruption?
4. How is the feeding of the five thousand (vv. 13-21) a test for the disciples?
5. Herod and Jesus, the two kings in this passage, both serve banquets. What does each king's banquet reveal about his character and authority?
6. Why does Jesus dismiss the disciples so abruptly (v22)?
7. Why do you think Jesus wanted to pray alone?
8. Imagine you are in the boat with the anxious disciples (vv. 22-26). Describe what you would see, hear and feel.
9. How is Peter's trying experience on the water a vivid picture of faith and doubt (vv. 28-31)? When are you most tempted to take your eyes off the Lord and to sink in doubt?
10. In verse 33 the disciples worship Jesus and declare, "Truly you are the Son of God." What do you see in this incident that leads you to worship Jesus?
11. Suppose you had no prior knowledge of Jesus, and that you were reading the Gospel of Matthew for the first time in order to understand who He is. Explain how Matthew 13:1-14:33 would contribute to your understanding of Jesus.

Prayer Points:

Matthew 15: A King For EVERYONE

There is relief and pleasure when something we have not quite understood becomes clear to us. In this section of Matthew the disciples come to a supernatural understanding of Jesus. What they thought they knew becomes a new and deeper knowledge. Peter, speaking for the disciples, declares who Jesus really is. Peter's words bring us to the climax of the first half of Matthew.

Read Matthew 15

1. Top religious leaders from Jerusalem oppose Jesus by attacking the disciples (15:1-2). What is their complaint, and what does it suggest about Jesus?
2. Compare the way Jesus addresses each group here (identified in vv 1, 10, 12). Who is Jesus harshest with? Why?
3. In Jesus' address to the multitude (verses 10-11), he identifies two very different views of the sinfulness of man. Identify and contrast these two views. (See also vv 17-20.)
4. How do you reconcile His teaching here with all the Old Testament teaching on uncleanness (e.g., Leviticus Chapter 15)?
5. How does Jesus respond to their accusation (15:3-20)?
6. How would you account for the unusual interaction between Jesus, the woman and the disciples (15:21-28)? Does Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman seem overly harsh to you? Explain.
7. Describe the Canaanite woman's response to Jesus in verse 27. In particular, what did she not dispute in Jesus' reply to her, and what was the basis for her plea for help?

Why did Jesus commend the Canaanite woman for her "great faith?" How did she exercise faith in this situation?

8. Can you see a connection between Jesus' teaching on the real source of what defiles a man (verses 11f.) and the faith of the Canaanite woman?
9. Jesus statement in v32 is a test. Do the disciples pass? How do you account for their lack of insight and faith?
10. What is Jesus' reason for healing and feeding the crowds?
11. What do you think Jesus was teaching His disciples through this incident? Why do you think this was a difficult lesson (apparently) for them to learn?

Prayer Points: