

Week 20

Matthew series: Ministry of Jesus (Who is the greatest Pt. 2)

Matthew 19: First and last

Often, I have wondered why we have so little scripture in Genesis 1-3? I heard someone say that if we had about double the words, we would have a lot less problems in the world. What they meant is that we are told man and woman are made by God. God made them to be helpers and mates. Since that time, we have had a tremendous amount of arguing over who can marry and divorce. A few more reasons and definitions might have helped solve those questions.

Then it hit me. Someone else said usually the simplest answer is the right answer. A few words might be all that was needed. Yet, we want more to make each of our situations fit better. The Israelites grumbled a lot in the Old Testament. I bet Moses had enough more than once. Even God had enough. Moses decided to let the people divorce. If you read Deuteronomy 24 it's complicated. It's not very fair for the woman. Sometimes the culture seeps into the scriptures as it should. It was written to them and not us. Our culture is different. We need to remember that.

This topic of divorce is a hang up. This section is the third time Jesus mentions adultery in this Gospel. It's also been numerous times that he mentions children. Jesus mentions being, acting, and are like little children no less than 26 times. It means something to Jesus and to Matthew. I could also say that Matthew talks about who, how, or when people will be in heaven. I think it was the major topic of the day like global warming is to us. What questions do you want answered by God?

Matthew 19:20 **"The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?"**

Deuteronomy 24:4 **"her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession."**

This is still training ground. I have sat in many groups where each person had a difference of opinion on scripture. I have talked with friends who said I was an evangelist. Yet, other friends thought I was not. They all had criteria in what they believed. This chapter is a good example. We cannot divorce. Only if I do all the ten commandments will I enter heaven. We rebuke people for bringing certain people to God. I know a woman who told me she was distraught that I was called to be a Christian instead of someone else she wanted in church. Do you have restrictions on church?

Matthew 19:13 **“Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them”**

Titus 1:15 **“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”**

I mentioned pure in Titus above. We all have definitions on pure, holy, undefiled. I have believed that I am tainted because of my upbringing. I think part of that comes from the looks in church. Not being raised Christian means something to many. What does that mean to you? I know that I am a better man knowing right from wrong by having lived on the wrong side at times. I know the difference. I have often wondered if those living in Christian protected homes have no grace. They have only experienced holiness.

The one good thing about Jesus is experience. We could say “of course God and Jesus are sinless, they cheat because they are God.” I really think God did not know. He understood sin. He is sickened by sin, yet he did not know. So, he comes to earth to live among sin, ungodliness, and defilement. Jesus does understand and know us better because he dwelt among us (Emmanuel). When Jesus talks about issues like those in Matthew 19. Remember he lived with us for 33 years. He saw it all from both sides of heaven and earth.

Matthew 19:17 **“And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”**

Romans 1:19-20 **“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.”**

Read Matthew 19. Also read Deuteronomy 24 and Romans 1. These are different views on sin and sinless.

1. I was told once that what they ask in an interview is not as important as to what they did not ask. People are looking for certain answers. They want certain people. In the end, people want to be accepted. They want likeminded people in their lives. This chapter 19 is just like that. Why do you think they asked about divorce? Herod killed John the Baptist because of adultery allegations. I bet the religious rulers we looking to Jesus for condemnation and justification.

The disciples rebuked those bringing little children. It’s true, but I was rebuked once for inviting kids to church. It’s insane but I have seen it several times. When we read these stories in Matthew 19, it’s an ominous reminder. As a Christian you read the Bible. In time you begin to gain knowledge

and understanding. The three types of people in this chapter did too. Each one used that knowledge and understanding for the wrong reasons.

It's not about divorce half as much as why? Why did they not ask Jesus for ways to keep a marriage. Why not ask Jesus if it's ok to have the children come? Why not ask Jesus for knowledge and understanding in God's world? It's because they wanted their sins justified before God. We tend to reject the unworthy because it makes us look cleaner. Being told your saved, cleaned by the blood of Jesus, and Sanctified, does not make you cleaner. What's Sanctified? It's a Christian word that means several things like "being set apart."

In church you will hear that word to describe about us, Jesus, and the church. Verse 17 is Jesus tossing Sanctification out. Verse 18 is tossing the ten commandments out. Because they are no good? No, it's because we will take words and verses and use them to justify ourselves. That is something Jesus did not do in verse 17. Take note of the humbleness of Jesus towards everyone including his Father in heaven. Think about it. In verse 21, Jesus gave up the comforts of heaven to dwell among us.

Matthew 19:21 "Jesus said to him, **"If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."**

Philippians 2:6-7 **"who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

2. It's interesting how Matthew is constructing this book. We have stories, parables, and famous verses. I don't blame anyone for getting wrapped up in them. They are all famous because they hold deep truths. What is the most famous chapter in the Bible? You will get a lot of answers based on stories, parables, and verses. Yet, at times, we see famous chapters are so, because of the chapters surrounding it. Little ones are mentioned in Matthew 18. Who will sit with Jesus is in Matthew 20. The whole Bible plays a part in the little verses and stories.

I feel that this chapter hinges on a certain statement in verse 30 *"But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."* I am stunned by this chapter. The Bible characters are us. We want to know who is lead pastor. We want to know who is head elder. I do a good job at work. Some people have said I think I'm special for working hard. Either way, we want to know who will be first and last. Yet, it means nothing. The first and last still see the movie. They all enter heaven at some point. Yet, we feel the need to know.

Matthew 19:27 **"Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"**

Romans 1:16 **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."**

3. The rich young ruler is so fascinating. Did you see that the young boy wants to follow Jesus? He probably wanted to do right by God. I hate it when they chastise this young man. I know rich people

who have no time for God. Yet, this boy wants to go further. He asks the same question we all have. This question is asked in different ways throughout the gospel of Matthew. What must I do?

Jesus only answers in a Jesus way. He tells the boy what laws he has kept to this point. The young man does not dispute it. He agrees with Jesus. Maybe proudly. Maybe arrogantly. Who knows. I feel the fact that this conversation is happening at all is important. It's an earnest question. Then Jesus hits the nail on the head as he did for the woman at the well. For many of the religious rulers. Jesus asks the question they are not asked. Yes, the young man walks away dejected. It's a teaching moment for the disciples too. This question needs to be asked at some point in our Christianity. Read this chapter again. It's not about rebuking children, young rich men, or anyone. It's about our role in Christianity. We should not be concerned with the role of others.

Matthew 19:22 "When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions."

James 4:2-3 "You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

4. If you wrap up chapters 18-25 together, it could be one big chapter. Jesus is teaching and preaching on what the kingdom is like. The people were just not getting it. They kept asking the same questions. We do that too. We ask if we're old enough. Then we ask when we are old enough. Finally, we ask if the rules could be bent. The point is we get fixated on getting what we want or deserve. I feel that Jesus uses the analogy of little children over and over because it's the way God looks at us. We are his children. Far too often we think that means lower than. How about as loved children? I think the word children is sprinkled throughout just because the people were not getting the message. Instead they were seeking complicated answers children never ask.

Verse 27-28 are interesting. Peter says they have given up everything to follow Jesus. Oh, we give up stuff but not everything. By the way, what is everything? These verses are interesting because Peter says "we have." Jesus responded by saying "you, who have." Jesus does not say yes, Peter you are in. He says yes, whoever gives it all away for Jesus name sake will receive a ton. Earlier in verse 25 they responded by saying "who can be saved?" Why ask? Because the criteria are harder than they thought. Who indeed, will enter heaven?

Matthew 19:13 "Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them."

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

What it means?

I don't need to go on and on do I? Or, do I? This whole gospel is asking who Jesus is? Who am I in the kingdom? Where do I fit? Who is first and last? Who is worthy? These themes are being repeated over and over because we want better answers. Who wants to be last? Who does not want to be important? I get it. These questions are being constantly asked of Jesus. Yet, he always tries to give the same answer. It does not matter. What matters is what you do with what God gives you. Never mind what others think, do, or say. This Christianity is community. Yet, it's also based firstly, on your relationship with God.

I know the church means well. They want the best people to make the church appear to be important, the best, and professional. Recently, I have looked at a certain church. They have a philosophy on how to make a Christian. They ask certain questions. They offer certain ways to become a better Christian. In both instances it's about what they don't ask. It's about what they are not concerned about. The Bible. We preach the Bible. Yet, if we commanded people to know their Bible better, it would cause strain. It's not fun. It's important yet, not attractive. Do the best people preach the best way?

Why do so many people offer life groups? A place to have community with other Christians outside of Sunday. What happened to mid-week Bible studies? Coming to church on a weekday to go deeper. It might have to do with fun. Bible study is not that fun. Why do churches hire pastors' kids? They are good stock. They come from untainted lives. Do they live and breathe the Bible? Maybe. Yet, what makes a church professional and fun? I doubt it's the Bible. Why harp on fun and the Bible? Where do you gain strength as a Christian? It's in knowing without a doubt who Jesus is and why he came. It's in hanging out with those who know their Bible and share their Bible. Fun groups and good stock kids don't always provide that. Think about it.

Matthew 19:17 ""Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

Malachi 3:16 "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name."