

Week 26

Ministry of Jesus: Be Ready Pt.2

Matthew 24:43-Matthew 25: Use what is given

There is a point in any journey when you get where you are going. Matthew is a really big book. I suppose the entire Bible is bigger. The book "War and peace" is bigger. Yet, Matthew is bigger because of all the themes, connected scripture, and deep meanings. It would take many years to know this book. I almost think it's impossible. So, here we stand looking at the cross. This whole book laid a path to the cross. We have been on our own personal journey with Matthew. Somehow, we have been on a journey with Jesus. We have witnessed his connection to creation, to King David, Mary, and God the Father. There is the prophesy connections. All this points to the cross.

Why the cross? I feel the cross is the line in the sand. To accept God as creator is one thing. To accept Jesus is one thing. Many have done that. Yet, many have rejected Jesus as God. They refuse to believe the notion that Jesus died and rose again. When you read Matthew, it's all about the impossible. Time and time again the disciples and religious rulers dismissed the impossible. It's impossible for a man to die and rise again after three days. It still points to the cross.

The last part of chapter 24:43 and into Matthew 25 points to the kingdom; what we have been given; and are we ready. It's all of it. Matthew has prepared you for the cross. The prophesies point to it. The words of Jesus point to it. The story points to it. This last section of Matthew stands on the edge. The parables in this section tell us that we have been given all that is needed to be Christian. It also tells us that the Lord is coming back. There is no more teaching, miracles, or ministry. The last three chapters drive us towards the cross. What is the cross to you?

Matthew 24:50 "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of."

Matthew 19:26 "Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The Bible has a thing about forecasting. You can call it prophesy if you want. Yet, at times, it is seen in actions. You could see that coming. Jesus says to Peter that the cock would crow three times. It did. Abraham would have a child, he did. Our lesson and insight into Matthew today is all about the future and the present. On one hand we have the present. This second half of Matthew 24 and into chapter 25 has the people left to tend to the kingdom; invest given money; and wait with lamps. Everyone is given a choice. What choice? To use what has been given or go on your own way without a

care. Matthew has told us the truth about where we began through Jesus. What will you do with what you know now?

Matthew 25:13 **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”**

Genesis 18:14 **“Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”**”

All throughout the Bible is judgment, punishment, and weeping and gnashing of teeth. It seems like the end is going to be really bad. How do you sell a religion that points to death and destruction? It comes down to paying attention and Matthew 25:24-25. The slave hides the money because he heard the rumors. He was very afraid. What we miss at times is the other two men. They took what was given and made it better. They knew the rumors. They knew the fear, yet they drove ahead to please their master. Adam hid. Moses was tentative. David stayed home and got into trouble. What will you do when the time comes?

Is it about harsh punishment? Is it about hell and damnation? In the Bible, we see men and women who saw God as loving or mean. C.S. Lewis is a famous Christian writer. He wrote a book series called the Tales of Narnia. The lion Aslan is a Jesus like figure. At one point they asked if we should be afraid of Aslan. Is he safe? Read this quote below. This is Jesus.

“Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh” said Susan. “I’d thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion”...“Safe?” said Mr Beaver ...“Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

All of it points to the harsh and mean cross. Nothing is safe in Christianity, but it is good.

Matthew 25:24:25 **“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you”**

Psalms 51:1-2 **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin”**

Read Matthew 24:43-51 and Matthew 25. Read Psalm 51. This Psalm is said to be written after David was punished by God. David is afraid, sad, and fearful. Yet, he loves the Lord.

1. Matthew 24:42 says “therefore be on alert.” The beginning of Matthew 24:43 says “but, be sure of this.” Be sure of what? People can discount the Bible. Sure, they can. I have read stories of people testing fate. The Darwin awards are a bunch of stories collected through the years. These

stories re-tell the accounts of people finding stupid ways to die. They usually ignored the warnings of danger. Jesus and Matthew have warned us. It's now up to each of us to take the warning or reject it. How do we want this life to end on earth? The "be sure" is that Jesus was not kidding.

The section of Matthew 24:43-51 is us. We are thrown into a forecast. In Matthew, Jesus has not gone to the cross yet. However, this section tells us something about what happens after the master is gone. We are left holding the bag. The bag? The kingdom of God. There is no pillar of fire like in Moses day. There is no prophet to warn us. The savior has gone back to heaven for a time. We are those left standing here. Acts 1:11 has Jesus ascending to heaven. The angels are asking the men why they are looking up. There is a need to look at what we are left with. A time to use what is given.

Don't look at the words master or slave. It's a parable. Don't look at gnashing and weeping. They are just words. It's like I said earlier. We can sit in fear of God. We can fear death and what people think of us. We can keep our eyes fixed on heaven. We can fix our eyes on earthly things like getting drunk. Far too often we must fix our eyes on something to exist. We tend to dwell, ponder, and mull over a great many things. Yet, there is work to be done. What are you going to do with what has been left for you?

Matthew 24: 47 "Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions."

Acts 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

2. Matthew 25:1-13 has been dissected into many pieces. Who are the virgins? Should we be virgins? Who are the five with lamps trimmed? Who is the bride, bridegroom, the foolish, and the prudent? We tend to look so deep into verses for meaning. There are new rules in the National Hockey League to guard against bad calls. Recently they have made mistakes. The commissioner said they are were looking for mistakes instead of looking at the play. People have looked into the ten-virgin's parable the same way. Read this parable and see that the 5 were prudent and five were not.

We are to be ready. It's interesting that Jesus is called the bridegroom. We are the bride. It's not sexual but relational. In the Bible the married couple become one. A relationship with Jesus is to become one with God the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit. That is why this Spirit is given to us. To dwell in us. How are we soul and flesh? It's a question that on this side of heaven cannot be answered.

We have been given the Spirit of God. I can't exactly feel it. Yet, something has changed. I remember in the Grinch that when he got Christmas, his heart grew three times that day. Really? I bet he just knew. I bet he was different from that day on. The spiritual is beyond us. Yet, somehow it dwells within us. We all know it. So, what will we do with it? Will we be ready, willing, and alert when Jesus comes back?

Matthew 24:23 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut"

Judges 16:20 **“Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him.”**

3. Matthew 25:14-30 is reality. Moses was asked to go talk to Pharaoh. He told God he could not. Gideon was asked to fight for God. He wanted a sign. Matthew 12:38 has the Pharisees asking for a sign. We are given talents, abilities, and wisdom from God. Why do we ask for more? Why do we ask for what others have? In the parable of the talents it says in verse 15 that we are given according to our given abilities. We have all we need and all that it takes to be great. Why do we always ask for more?

This parable is twofold. One is that we fear. We fear that God is holding back. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent said God was holding back. Abraham slept with the slave Hagar because he couldn’t wait for God. We get into so much trouble when we can’t wait. We can’t see what God sees in us. We fear being insignificant or left behind. Remember this. Jesus said in Matthew 18 that not one sheep would be left behind. That includes you.

Secondly, it’s about the three men. Nobody has more talent than another. We all have talent. Yet, we measure its importance. Two baseball players. One is a superstar. The other is a coach of the super star. When they were children they both had a passion for baseball. They both play ball, but one appears greater. Yet, they needed each other to succeed. We have been given a measure of ability. What will you do with what is given?

Matthew 25:29 **“For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”**

Malachi 3:10 **“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”**

4. Matthew 24:43 is ringing in my heart “be sure of this.” Matthew 25:31-46 is all about what goes right and wrong in ministry. First of all, ministry is not what you think. I am sure I have mentioned this before. Ministry is not a preacher. It’s not a church. Ministry does happen through those people and buildings. Ministry is not an orphanage. It’s not a food bank. Ministry flows from Christians. Ministry is given titles, authority, and church funds. Yet, ministry is not any of those things. Ministry is people. We must never forget that.

Throughout this whole book, Matthew has screamed that ministry is people. The Pharisees condemned Jesus for eating on the sabbath. They condemned Jesus for healing on the sabbath. They mocked him for drinking, eating, and the miracles he did. They called his ministry Satanic because of the sinners he associated with. They missed the lame. They missed the poor. They missed the hungry. They missed the outcast. They missed God.

You have been given all you need to be the kingdom of God on earth. What will you do with it? Will you puff yourself up? Will you see the poor? Will you feed the hungry? Will you notice the beggar? God does, but do you? You are now standing on the backside of the cross. You are all that’s standing there now. Jesus is not hear. Yet, God is inside you. There is time and

ability to make the kingdom great through the Spirit of God and through you. Are you ready and are you willing? Read Matthew 25:31-46 again.

Matthew 25:45 **“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”**

2 Chronicles 25:2 **“He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly.”**

What it means?

How can I sit here and do so little? I have served in church. I have helped the food banks. Yet, what have I really done. Yes, I am doing something. I pray for others. We give our money away when we can. Yet, there is this lingering feeling I could do more. Oscar Schindler tried to save Jews during the second world war. At the end of the movie he could not see who he had saved. Instead, he broke down over all those he did not save. I get it. I could do more. Yet, I have been given abilities. I have been given faith. I have been also given opportunity. Have I done enough with what I have been given? Time will tell.

This world is clearly getting darker. It breaks my heart where we are going. The human race appears rudderless. Have we not learned anything? This section of Matthew is on the edge. It's the last instructions from Jesus before the cross. He does not give us a list of things to do. Instead he reminds us that we are ready. We have been given enough to do the kingdom work.

What it means is simple: you are ready? More training will come but it's not needed. Do you need training to pray? Is a degree required to feed and visit the poor? Is a great speaker needed to be a friend? Is money required to hold a hand? We will wait till Jesus comes back. Acts 1 says don't look up. Matthew 28:19 says go and tell. Jesus told the disciples to take nothing with them. Why? Because we have all we need to do the work. It's up to you now.

Matthew 25:32 **“All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”**

Matthew 28:19 **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”**

Luke 9:3 **“He told them: “Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.”**