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MATTHEW

The Kingdom Displayed – Part 2

The Tragedy of Almost

Matthew 8:14-22

I. Introduction

a. The Kingdom of God

- i. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom, He explained the people of the kingdom, and now He is displaying the power of the Kingdom
 1. Through healing – making someone whole
 - ii. Leper – pushed to the fringes of society – physical ill, relationally separated, and spiritually rejected
 1. If you are willing make me clean – not heal me – make me clean. Jesus touched Him and said “I am willing”
 - iii. The Centurion – Roman commander – Gentile
 1. On the outside of God’s promises
 - a. Showed an understanding of the person of Jesus that was unique in all of Israel
 - b. Understood the authority of Jesus – speak a word and my servant will be healed
- b. Jesus is displaying the heart of God and the power of God so that people will understand the Kingdom of God
- i. Matthew continues that theme now with Peter’s mother-in-law

Mat 8:14 Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. 15 So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. 16 When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”

- ii. From leper, to Centurion, to inner circle
 1. Outside of society, to inside of society but outside of God’s favor, to the inner circle
 2. And then everyone else
- c. ***they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”***
 - i. Matthew’s primary interest in the healing miracles is in their revelation of the mission of Jesus – I am willing, whether you are Jew or Gentile, slave or free
 1. Jesus has authority and He uses that authority to heal
 - ii. Who wouldn’t want to be a part of His traveling party? Who wouldn’t want to be His disciple, moving from one city to the next – performing miracles, healing, feeding the hungry – being celebrated for these mighty deeds

1. But they didn't fully understand where the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy was ultimately going to take Him

Mat 8:18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. 19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." 21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

II. How to Almost Follow Jesus

- a. A scribe came to Him – an expert in the law
 - i. Not all the scribes and Pharisees were openly hostile towards Jesus. Some were interested. Nicodemus was a Pharisee who met with Jesus under the cover of night to discuss His teachings.
 - ii. Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to his home for dinner but didn't show him even the most basic hospitality that would be offered a guest
 - iii. In fact, there were hundreds if not thousands of people following Jesus in the early stages of His ministry
 1. In John 2, as Jesus performed many signs, people flocked to Him but the apostle John writes that Jesus did not commit Himself to them because He knew what was in the heart of man
 2. But what's the problem with this scribe in particular? He said, "I will follow You wherever You go."
 3. That seems "all in" to me. The problem is this scribe didn't really know where Jesus was going. His real statement was "I will follow You wherever You go, as long as where you're going is comfortable."
 - iv. Jesus' response to this scribe reveals the condition of his heart - "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
 1. Following me isn't an easy road. He invites us to share in His sacrifice, suffering, and rejection
- b. Both of these men are referred to as disciples – meaning they were following Jesus
 - i. But their relationship to Him was that of a student and a common Rabbi or teacher
 - ii. Rabbi was still a term of high honor and respect – but Jesus wasn't your common Rabbi.
 - iii. When we simply see Jesus as a teacher, someone with nuggets of wisdom to share, on par with Confucius, and the Dali Lama, and Mother Theresa, and Plato, then we are doing exactly what Paul described to Timothy
 1. We appear godly because of our interest in Jesus but we deny His power
- c. Could it be that this scribe thought he was following Jesus into his fame? His popularity? His manifestation of power?
 - i. Similar to Simon the Sorcerer who followed Philip around and was amazed at the great signs and miracles that he saw
 1. When Peter and John came down and prayed that the new believers receive the Holy Spirit Simon saw this and he wanted it
 2. So, he offered them money and said "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

3. *Acts 8: 20 Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23 For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”*
 - ii. If we want to almost follow Jesus – chase after the miracles and the blessings and the security and the comfort you think Jesus provides instead of simply following Jesus for who He is
 1. What will eventually happen is things will get uncomfortable, trials will come, life won’t go as planned
 2. And just as Jesus foretold in His parable of the seed and the sower - When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.
 - d. Another way to almost follow Jesus is to hear His invitation and then say “wait, I’ll catch up to you in a minute.”
 - i. Let me wrap a few things up first. Let me do this one thing I can’t do if I’m following you.
 - ii. I must bury my father – I must fulfill all my duties as a son
 - iii. It was a sacred duty to care for your parents and to ensure a decent burial – let’s not take this man’s request lightly
 1. But when the creator of the universe is saying come – follow me – there is nothing in this world that is more important than answering that call
 - iv. It is easy to live in the “tomorrow” – I saw a post that said “The only way I wouldn’t procrastinate is if for every hour I didn’t do my tasks one of my friends died. But even then, I would wonder, well, which friend?”
 1. We don’t just put off the menial things in life. Sometimes we put off the most important things.
 2. My wife is unique in the sense that she gets things done almost to a fault, except if she is in labor. “We can leave in a little bit.” But you’re in tears! “Let me finish this pudding snack.”
 - v. Do you want to almost follow Jesus? Follow Him tomorrow.
 1. Jesus knows our hearts – those who put off following Jesus until tomorrow are spiritually dead today
 - e. That sets the stage for Jesus’ next miracle
 - i. And provides comfort for all of us who are following Jesus imperfectly

III. How to Almost Follow Jesus

- a. There is a condition of the human heart that is interested enough in Jesus to hang around Him and His people, to enjoy all that Christian community has to offer – fellowship, companionship, support in difficult times – but never really submits and surrenders to the authority of Jesus
 - i. Jesus asks this sobering question - **Luke 6:46 “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?**
 - ii. No one is born again by proxy – your faith won’t save me – each one of us is accountable to God for what we did with the truth of His gospel
 1. Narrow gate vs the wide gate – we are Abrahams decedents versus we are sons of God
 - iii. **2 Tim 3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive,**

disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

- b. All demonstrations of faith are not the same
 - i. The house built on the rock and sand
 - 1. From the street there were two houses
 - ii. The parable of the seed and the sower
 - 1. The seed that fell on rocky soil grew up quickly – impressively
 - iii. The houses and the crops looked very similar – maybe indistinguishable
- c. Public Opinion
 - i. ***Mat 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!" 10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" 11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."***
 - ii. ***Mat 27: 22 Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" 23 Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"***
 - iii. All professions of faith are not the same
 - iv. It wasn't until the circumstances changed do we see the difference – the storm, the sun, the weeds, and the wave public opinion
 - 1. The rain, floods, and winds didn't create the weakness in the foolish man's house; they simply exposed it. The storm is the test of the foundation.
 - 2. The sun is necessary for growth, but for the rootless, it becomes the cause of death. The same "heat" (trials or persecution) that matures a true believer withers the one who has no depth.
 - 3. The crowd followed Jesus when they thought he was a political liberator who would free them from Roman occupation and provide bread and miracles on the sides.
 - a. When they saw Him in chains, beaten and disfigured before Pontius Pilate they cried out crucify Him!
- d. The crowds
 - i. Difference – one is circumstantial and conditional – moved to and fro based on the waves of this world - the other is quality of character – identity – that is what God is concerned about – the condition of the heart
 - 1. A person who praises does so when things are going well or when the music is right.
 - 2. For a person of praise, their praise is not a reaction to circumstances, but a reflection of their nature.
 - 3. Oswald Chambers makes this distinction – "'It is quite possible to be a 'follower' of Jesus without being a 'disciple.' A follower is one who is attracted by the personality of Jesus; a disciple is one who has been conquered by the authority of Jesus."
 - a. Disciple – not just what we do, it is who we are at our core