

Devotional and Reading Plan for 2022, Week Forty

Week 40 — October 1st-7th. Matthew 5-7; 8:5-13,23-34; 9:18-26; 11:1-13:52; Mark 2:23-5:43
Luke 6-8; John 5

This week's theme has to do with what Jesus taught. The Beatitudes, the entire Sermon on the Mount, the majority of His parables and a wide variety of other topics are included in what Jesus teaches in these passages. Yet more than just the elements of *what* is taught is the significance of remembering *who* taught. Jesus is the perfect Teacher and therefore His teachings are perfect.

October 1st

Matthew 12:1-21; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11 John 5. "Liar, Lunatic or Lord"

After reading passages like today's you can picture the Pharisees following Jesus around every minute just looking for some fault. The only accusations they ever had with Him were the result of their own misinterpreted mess of self-justifying rules. In the end they had to make up lies with false witnesses to try to accuse Jesus of anything.

In John, chapter five, Jesus presents His own legal case to support His claims. He presents fact, testimony, witnesses, etc. His claim was that He was who He said He was. He claimed to be the Son of God, equal with God and honored as God. The Pharisees understood exactly what He was saying and "tried all the more to kill Him." They were fully aware, as we should be, that there are only two options; either you believe Him and what He claimed, or you accuse Him of blasphemy. Which option have you chosen? Remember, there is not another option as some want to claim (i.e. good person).

October 2nd

Matthew 5:1-6:4; Mark 3:7-19; Luke 6:12-36. "Searching for Happiness"

Would you like to know how to experience hope, joy and happiness? The Beatitudes (Mt. 5 & Lk. 6) tell us how. The first thing to note is that we will never get anywhere in our search for true happiness until we give up trying to find it by our own efforts and receive it instead as God's free gift. God is the source of all spiritual blessings. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (James 1:17).

The first effect the Beatitudes have on those who understand them is to turn our minds to God. In fact, each beatitude portrays a picture of Jesus. He displayed each of these attributes for us. According to Him the way to happiness is found in a poverty of spirit, in a character marked by humility, meekness, purity and mercy, and in a hunger and thirst for righteousness, peace and justice. Jesus lived them, and because He did, we too can find happiness.

October 3rd

Matthew 6:5-7:29; Luke 6:37-49. "Submitting to Others"

Think of what today's passage teaches us about submission: Submit to the Father in prayer; Submit to the words and direction of Jesus; Display submission through forgiveness, fasting, and treating others as you would have them treat you. Often we do well with the first items but not the last. We may struggle with forgiving others. We may find ourselves guilty of

gossiping about someone or criticizing them. D. L. Moody once said, "There are thousands of families that could easily be reached if we had thousands of Christians going to them and entering into sympathy with their sorrows. That is what they want."

How are you submitting your life and surrendering your time and emotions for the families around you? Is there room to improve? Are you truly ready to put the love of Christ into practice and commit yourself to give others time, resources if they need it, a listening ear, a tongue that is tied tight when it comes to saying anything inappropriate, and a heart that is genuinely concerned and always ready to forgive?

October 4th

Matthew 8:5-13; 11:1-30; Luke 7. "Their Faith"

Jesus gives us a short commentary on the faith of three individuals in today's reading. First, we read of the Roman officer who had the faith that Jesus could just "say the word" from wherever He was and his servant would be healed. Jesus said He had not seen faith like that in all of Israel. Second, we meet John the Baptist who preached the coming of the Messiah and was harshly persecuted and martyred for it. Jesus said John was greater than any who had ever lived. Third we are introduced to a woman with an immoral past who anointed the feet of Jesus with a very valuable jar of perfume. She continuously kissed His feet and wiped His feet with her hair as her tears fell. Jesus said she understood more about salvation, forgiveness and gratitude than the self-righteous Pharisees sitting with Him.

The lesson for us today reminds us that faith is something we live out and display in what we do. What would Jesus say of your faith?

October 5th

Matthew 12:22-13:9; Mark 3:20-4:20; Luke 8:1-8, 19-21. "A Heart Search"

"Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks." Jesus went beyond just saying good things. He went beyond just saying He was equal with God. Jesus also did good things. He also did things which displayed His power. But to many of the unbelieving it wasn't enough: "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove that you are from God" (Mt. 12:38), as if He had not already done enough. Up to this point He had turned water to wine, healed the sick, the lame, the leper, the paralyzed, cast out demons, and even raised a boy from the dead.

The Pharisees had already made a decision in their heart. I pray your heart is open to Jesus. It probably isn't if you are looking for more miracles and waiting for more evidence than the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. "If you look for Him with all your heart you will find Him." (Deut. 4:29)

October 6th

Matthew 8:23-27; 13:10-52; Mark 4:21-41; Luke 8:9-18, 22-25. "Teachable Spirit"

Dad says to his son, "You better get ready. The bus will be here in a minute to pick you up and take you to Sunday School." His son asked, "Did you go to Sunday School when you were a boy?" Dad replied, "Yes I did." The boy said as he was getting dressed, "It probably won't do me any good either!"

Either you're teachable or you're not. Jesus explained, "To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given... but to those who are not listening..." The

disciples around Jesus had things explained to them far more than anyone else. Although there were, I'm sure times Jesus shook his head, His disciples were teachable. That teachable spirit (soft heart and open eyes and ears) may take time to prove itself. The son in the paragraph above came to the conclusion that his dad was not too teachable. The disciples authenticated their teachable spirit years later. Their growth took them from students to teachers.

October 7th

Matthew 8:28-34; 9:18-26; Mark 5; Luke 8:26-56. "Living Out What You Believe"

What do you know about faith? Most often people tend to make some kind of emotionally active connection with descriptions like "hope." However, today's passage makes a physically active connection.

She had been hemorrhaging for 12 years with no hope in sight, but then she heard about Jesus. She believed that if she could just touch his clothing she would be healed. She made her way through the mob, came up behind Him, touched His robe and was immediately healed. Jesus said that her faith had healed her. The Greek word for "healed" actually means "saved." In this case both physical healing and spiritual salvation are meant. She was healed when she touched Him, but Jesus said her faith caused the cure. Faith involved action. The book of James reminds us that "faith shows itself." Faith shows itself with action. How do you put your faith into action? What in your life demonstrates to others your faith in Jesus Christ?