

A Lenten Look

Discovering Our Messiah in Matthew and the Psalms

Monday, March 2 - Matthew 1

Take a careful look at the names in Jesus' family line and pay special attention to 4 "bad girls" (vs.5- Ruth; vs. 6- Bathsheba (so bad she isn't even named!); vs. 3- Tamar; vs.5-Rahab). Tamar's children were by incest, Rahab was a prostitute, Ruth was a foreigner, and Bathsheba committed adultery! Despite all this, our Saviour's name was "Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (vs. 21). What does this tell us about God's ability to "love the sinner"?

Tuesday, March 3 - Matthew 2

Why were the wise men so intent to find Jesus? Notice that they spared no expense in distance travelled or in their choice of extravagant gifts. They were searching for Him by faith. Contrast that with the reaction of Herod who acted in fear. What can we learn from this?

Wednesday, March 4 - Matthew 3

Would you describe John the Baptist as a bold person or timid? Look particularly at vs. 7. Are there times when we should be more outspoken about our faith, even if it ruffles a few feathers? What was the purpose of the Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus in vs.16 (hint: see Acts 10:38). Compare this with how the Spirit operates in our lives, as shown in 1 John 2:20,27. Do you see the similarity?

Thursday, March 5 - Matthew 4

Jesus was physically and emotionally tired after 40 days of fasting (vs. 2), yet he stood up to Satan's temptations. What was the weapon he used? What excuses do you use for not standing up to temptation? What is keeping you from doing what Jesus did?

Friday, March 6 - Matthew 5

Carefully examine the 8 be-attitudes in vs. 3-10. Which of these need work in your life? Consider the danger of anger and the severe stance Jesus takes on it (vs. 21-26). Are you ever guilty of either justifying your anger or downplaying it? Read vs. 38-42 again and challenge yourself today to walk out these verses in some practical way.

Saturday, March 7 - Matthew 6

Do you like to give? Do you feel a need to be recognized for your giving? Think of some ways that you can be generous and also be secret about it. Re-read vs. 14-15. Is there really any wiggle room when it comes to forgiveness? Are you a worry wort about certain things? What is the antidote (vs. 33)

Sunday, March 8 - Matthew 7

Why do many people focus on the words of vs. 1 and then use it as an excuse not to confront others in their sin? Compare this with Galatians 6:1-2. What is the difference? Read vs.12 again. What are some practical ways you can fulfill the requirements of the “Golden Rule”? Read vs. 24-27 again. There is only one difference between the 2 scenarios, but it is the crux of the issue. What is it?

Monday, March 9 – Matthew 8

Do we need to talk God into performing healing (see vs. 3)? Is God’s Word our authority on healing, or what other people say? Note how the centurion came under God’s authority for healing for his servant. Read vs. 17 very carefully, as well as Isaiah 53:4 and Psalm 103:3. These scriptures are clearly showing that there is healing in the death of Jesus on the cross. How will that affect the way you pray?

Tuesday, March 10 - Matthew 9

How long did it take for the rotten scoundrel, Levi (Matthew) to decide to follow Jesus (see vs. 9)? Think of the people you know who are far, far away from God, and then read vs. 10-13. How will this affect the way you pray for them? Read vs. 36 and ask yourself, “Does my heart reflect the Saviour’s heart?” If not, what will you do about that?

Wednesday, March 11 - Matthew 10

Consider the assignment that Jesus gave the 12 apostles. Are we exempt from this type of ministry, or is there still a need for it today (Hint: see Hebrews 13:8)? What about persecutions, as outlined in vs. 16-26? Should we expect persecution as we seek to live out our Christian faith in an ever-increasing anti-Christian world? Compare with 2 Timothy 3:12. Do the “little things” in ministry count (see vs.42)? What are some “little things” you can be doing for others?

Thursday, March 12 - Matthew 11

What happened to John the Baptist? He seemed so bold and fiery back in Chapter 3 and now he’s even doubting about who Jesus really is. Do you ever struggle with doubt? Basically, Jesus instructed those reporting back to John to simply tell him what Jesus was doing (vs.4-6). If it worked for John the Baptist, can we trust that it will work for us too? What does vs. 25 seem to say about the mindset we should have if we want to learn from God?

Friday, March 13 – Matthew 12

Why do you think Jesus did so many of His healings on the Sabbath? What is the purpose of Sabbath? Do you burn the candle at both ends in your life, or do you observe some sort of weekly Sabbath? What do vs. 18-21 say about the character of our Saviour? How well are you imitating His example?

Saturday, March 14 – Matthew 13

In the parable of the sower, only 1 out of 4 scenarios produced fruit. Consider vs. 22 and ask yourself, “Am I struggling with any of these issues? In the parable of the pearl of great price (vs. 45-46) Jesus teaches about the value of God’s kingdom. Is this a price you are willing to pay?

Sunday, March 15 – Matthew 14

Who did Jesus say should feed the hungry multitude (vs. 16)? Is that realistic or unrealistic to you? Compare with Phil 4:13. What are some of the “impossible” things God is asking you these days? Re-read vs. 22-33. What did Peter do right? Where did he fail? What can we learn from both?

Monday, March 16 - Matthew 15

Do you like to keep traditions? What about traditions we observe in church, are any of them detrimental to our Christian lives (see vs.6-9)? What was commendable about the woman whose daughter was suffering from demon possession? During the feeding of the 4000, at what point did the food multiply? Why is this significant? What great work of God can He accomplish using you?

Tuesday, March 17 – Matthew 16

Is it wrong to ask God for a sign, as the Pharisees and Sadducees did? Gideon asked for a sign and he wasn’t rebuked. Compare with what Jesus said in Luke 16:27-31. Why was Peter’s confession so significant (vs. 16)? Think of this in terms of how Muslims view Jesus as just “another prophet” or great moral teacher.

Wednesday, March 18 - Matthew 17

What do you think was the purpose of Jesus’ transfiguration? See 2 Peter 1:16-18. Why were the disciples unable to cast the demon out of the boy (vs. 20)? Compare with Romans 10:17. Jesus paid taxes to the Roman government. How should this affect our attitude toward paying taxes?

Thursday, March 19 - Matthew 18

What is it about being childlike that makes it a vital prerequisite for entering heaven? What things keep us from having this innocent, trusting manner? Jesus follows up the parable of the lost sheep with instructions about church discipline. As you consider this, what then is the goal of church discipline? Jesus then tells the parable of the unmerciful servant. Again, what is He trying to convey to us when dealing with those who need correction?

Friday, March 20 – Matthew 19

God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) but loves divorced people. What can the church be doing to better reach out to those affected by divorces? How can the church work to help strengthen marriages? What about the rich young ruler was good, that was pleasing to the Lord? What was the source of his

problem? Consider your own life and ask yourself, “Is there anything in my life right now that is soiling my relationship with Jesus, or taking more of my time and energy?” If you were able to identify something, what is your next move?

Saturday, March 21 – Matthew 20

Does the parable of the vineyard workers seem unfair to you, or could it be that we need to read it from a perspective of compassion? Could it be that the church is sending the wrong message about the love of our Saviour towards sinners? What does the request of James and John say about their level of maturity in their service to God? Did you notice that they even got their mom to do the dirty work of asking Jesus on their behalf (vs. 20)? How does their attitude line up with what Jesus taught in Mark 10:45?

Sunday, March 22 - Psalm 2

This is a Messianic Psalm (ie. it speaks about Jesus, The Messiah). Look at what the psalmist calls Him in vs. 2 and compare it with the description Luke gives in Acts 10:38. What is Jesus’ destiny and inheritance according to this passage of scripture? According to the latter part of the psalm, what should our response be to our Messiah?

Monday, March 23 - Psalm 16

In this Messianic psalm David speaks of God’s victory and the hope we have if we stay faithful to the Lord. Meditate on that line in vs. 2: “You are my Lord, my goodness is nothing apart from you”. Can you really say that with all honesty? If not, what is holding you back? Consider vs. 9-11 and rejoice that in these verses there is the promise of the resurrection from the grave.

Tuesday, March 24 - Psalm 40

When you face trials and tribulations, it is important that your faith is strong and grounded in God’s word in order to get through. David knew all about this. Look at vs. 1-3. By waiting patiently for the Lord his breakthrough came and that encouraged others to trust God (vs. 3). We often want to “do things” for God as a sacrifice to make up for our failings. Jesus showed us the right way in vs. 8. What are some ways you can get more of God’s law (His word) into your heart?

Wednesday, March 25 - Psalm 45

This Messianic psalm uses marriage terminology, with Jesus as our bridegroom and the believer as His bride. Look closely at vs. 1 What is your tongue writing about your Saviour? (ie. How do you praise Him and speak well of Him to others)? The author of Hebrews attributes this psalm to Jesus (see Hebrews 1:8-9, quoting Psalm 45:6-7). Re-read vs. 17. In what ways will you make the name of Jesus remembered in all generations?

Thursday, March 26 – Psalm 89

This Messianic psalm focuses on calling to mind the promises of the covenant that we have with God. Go through this psalm and pick out every promise you can find that God has for you as one of His precious children. In vs. 20-28 the promises are to “My servant David” (that’s a reference to Jesus). Then in vs. 29 he begins to speak of “His seed” (that’s us!). Read vs. 46 again. Even with the assurance of God’s promises we can still doubt. Ask God to help you to trust Him through the storms of life.

Friday, March 27 – Psalm 22

This Messianic psalm is a very graphic one describing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Read through this psalm slowly and carefully and think deeply on the great suffering our Saviour went through to reconcile us to the Father. The last 2 verses (vs.30-31) stand as a challenge for us to keep telling the message of Jesus and His cross. Are you being faithful to this challenge?

Saturday, March 28 - Isaiah 52:13-53:12

There is no clearer passage of Scripture which points to the crucifixion of Jesus then this one. Written some 750 years before the time of Christ, it portrays in startling detail His suffering on the cross. Read the passage slowly and carefully and let its message sink into your heart as we approach the upcoming days of Holy Week.

Sunday, March 29 – Matthew 21

The beginning of Christ’s passion week shows Jesus Triumphantly entering Jerusalem to the cheers of the adoring people. How different things would be in only a few days! Why did Jesus cleanse the temple? What were the people doing there? What should they have been doing? Do you think our church has areas that need to be cleansed? The fig tree was cursed by Jesus because, although it had lots of leaves, it didn’t have any fruit. What is that a problem? Do we have any ministries like this in our church?

Monday, March 30 – Matthew 22

The opening parable of this chapter shows how so many reject the wonderful offer of salvation from God. It also shows that God reaches out to all people, but there is still His justices. Look at vs. 11. How are loving God and loving others a summation of the whole gospel? What are some ways to show love to those who seem to be so “unlovable”?

Tuesday, March 31 - Matthew 23

Carefully look over the list of things the Pharisees were doing that were repulsive to God. Is the church guilty in its own way of doing similar? Jesus was very bold to call the Pharisees out for their hypocrisy. Are we willing to be so bold in our day and age? What’s stopping us?

Wednesday, April 1 – Matthew 24

Jesus gave ample warnings of the end times. Have any of these things spoken here happened yet? Are there signs that we are getting closer to the end? Read vs. 36. How do you respond, then, to so many cults and groups that claim to know the precise timeline? Should we worry about the timeline? How should we be living in order to be prepared for the Lord's coming (hint: see vs. 45-51)

Thursday, April 2 – Matthew 25

In the parable of the virgins, did all the virgins have the same opportunity to be ready for their master? What was the difference between the two groups? In the parable of the talents did each servant who was entrusted with his master's money have opportunity to produce results? Why did the third servant fail, and what was his consequence? What do those parables teach us about readiness for the Lord's coming? How would you rate yourself, right now, on a scale from 1-10?

Good Friday, April 3 - Matthew 26

Why was the woman who "wasted" her fragrant oil commended while His disciples were rebuked? How was Judas a direct contrast to this humble woman? What made Peter so confident that he would stand by His Lord? Where did his confidence lie? Did it work for him? Will it work for us? Why couldn't the disciples stay awake to pray for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? Do you ever struggle to do the right thing, even though you are convinced of how important it is to do it? How can this be overcome (see John 14:16,18)?

Saturday, April 4 – Matthew 27

Why did Judas hang himself instead of seeking God for forgiveness? What is the difference between being "remorseful" (vs.3) and being repentant? What do you think went through the mind of Barabbas when he saw Jesus take his place on death row? How might you have reacted? What does vs.46 say about the severity of our sin and what it cost Jesus in His relationship with the Father? How does that make you feel? What do Joseph of Arimathea's actions say about his devotion to Jesus? Would you call yourself a devoted follower of Jesus?

Resurrection Sunday, April 5 - Matthew 28

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is clearly the highest point of the Christian faith. Read vs. 7-8. How well of a job are we doing at bringing the message of Christ's resurrection to those in our world? How might you have reacted if you had met Jesus on the way back from the tomb (vs.9), as these women did? This gospel ends with a clear mandate from the risen Saviour to "go and make disciples of all nations". In what ways are we, as a church body, doing a good job of fulfilling that mandate? Where do we need improvement?