

Week 5 Psalm 8, Matthew 20-24, Psalm 9

Psalm 8— This is an incredible psalm, portraying the majesty of God compared to the smallness of man. Have we ever marveled at God’s love for us? Why does God care for us at all? He could just wipe us out in an instant and start over, creating a new race of beings more inclined to love and serve him. Instead, He chose to save us. ***Describe a time when you were overwhelmed with an awareness of God’s majesty and grace.***

Matthew 20— Jesus gives the parable of the workers in the vineyard who all receive the same pay even though they worked a different amount of hours during that day (v. 1-16). After Jesus discloses His death, the mother of the sons of Zebedee asks for a special place in His kingdom for her sons (James and John). Jesus uses this occasion to teach that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who shows a servant’s heart (v. 17-28). Christ heals two blind men near Jericho (v. 29-34). ***1. What are some of the lessons taught in the parable of the Workers of the Vineyard? ...about God? ...about the workers? 2. Give the contrast between the way the Gentile rulers exercise authority over people and the way leaders in God’s kingdom do it.***

Matthew 21— Jesus reveals His power and authority as Messiah through His triumphal entry (v. 1-11), His acts of cleansing and healing in the Temple (v. 12-17), the cursing of the fig tree (v. 18-22), and His exposure of the hearts, motives, and actions of the religious leaders (v. 23-46). Jesus said, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer (v. 22).” ***Taking into consideration other similar verses in the Bible, in addition to believing, what other qualifiers in scripture are there for God to answer our prayers? See I John 5:14, James 4:2-3, John 14:14,15:7, and Luke 18:4-5.***

Matthew 22— Jesus gives the parable of the wedding banquet by telling of the invitation of the guests and the qualifications of those who enter (v. 1-14). He answers the questions of the religious leaders about paying taxes (v. 15-22), the resurrection (v. 23-33), and the greatest commandment of the law (v. 34-40). Jesus then turns the tables and asks the Pharisees a tough question (v. 41-46). ***1. What did Jesus mean by the statement, “Give (render) to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s (v. 21).” Who is primary in the life of a Christian, government, or God? Why? See Acts 5:29. 2. What is the Great Commandment (v. 36-40)? What importance should it have in the life of a follower of Christ?***

Matthew 23— Jesus gave a scolding denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, outward show of piety, and status seeking (v.1-13). Christ pronounces seven woes of judgment on these religious leaders for: (1) shutting the door of salvation (v 13-14), (2) entrapping converts (v. 15), (3) justifying evil through binding oaths (v. 16-22), (4) neglecting the most important teaching of the law (v. 23-24), (5) having a clean outside but filthy inside (v.25-26), (6) being whitewashed tombs (v. 27-28), (7), and finally, for being the descendants of the murders of God’s martyrs throughout the ages (v. 29-36). Lastly, Jesus laments over Jerusalem for rejecting Him as their Messiah(v. 37-38). ***What is the principal sin of the scribes***

and Pharisees given by Jesus in this chapter (Jesus called them this six times)? When did this sin occur in the early church? See Acts 5:1-11.

Matthew 24— Jesus gives His Olivet Discourse (from the Mount of Olives) to His disciples, prophesying events in the future that will take place before His second coming. Jesus says that although the years ahead will be marked by false messiahs, wars, disasters, growing wickedness, and persecution of God’s people, they still are not the final day of God’s wrath that will be poured out in an unprecedented fashion during the great tribulation (v. 21) that was spoken by Daniel the prophet (Daniel 9:24-27). Since we don’t know when Christ will come back, we need to be faithful, watchful, and ready for His imminent (any moment) coming. Jesus said, “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (v. 44).” ***Although this verse may not apply directly to the Church, what should a Christian do to prepare himself for Christ’s imminent (any moment) return? Extra Question: Explain what Jesus means in verse 15 when He speaks of the “abomination of desolation.” See Daniel 9:24-27 and II Thessalonians 2:3-4.***

Psalm 9— This psalm reminds us of the sovereignty of God. He rules over the nations and none can thwart His will. All who oppose Him are brought to ruin and defeat (v 6). This is good news for those who trust in Him (v 10). ***How does David respond to God's deliverance from trouble?***

Week 6 Psalm 10, Matthew 25-28, Mark 1 Psalm 11

Psalm 10— “Why, O Lord, do you stand far off...?” We are reminded by the Apostle Peter that God is on His own timetable, not ours. Our lack of understanding His purpose does not nullify His love or His promises. As the psalmist writes, God sees our trouble and grief and responds. ***In what way has God proven Himself faithful?***

Matthew 25— In this Chapter Jesus taught the seriousness of living your life in the Kingdom. In the parable of the Ten Virgins (bridesmaids) He stresses the need of watchful readiness as well as individual responsibility of all who want to be a part of His wedding feast (v. 1-13). In the parable of the Talents Jesus tells us that no matter how much He has entrusted to us in gifts and abilities, whether great or small, we are responsible to be faithful stewards (v. 14-30). In this final judgment of the nations before Christ’s earthly reign, the sheep and the goats will be separated according to the way the brothers of Jesus were served during their time of dire distress and need (v. 31-46). Some day you will stand before Christ and give account of the stewardship of the talents, gifts, abilities and resources He has given you. ***How would you rate your stewardship thus far? In what ways can you grow in this area? Extra Question: In the final Judgment of the nations (v. 31-46), it appears that God will give people eternal life or eternal damnation depending on whether or not they helped and served the brethren of Jesus. The writings of Paul, John, and others declare that eternal life comes only by faith in Christ’s redemptive sacrifice on the cross. How would you explain this apparent contradiction?***

Matthew 26— The chapter opens with the plotting the death of Jesus by religious leaders with Judas offering to betray Jesus for a price (v. 1-4, 14-16). A woman (Mary - John 12:3) anoints Jesus for His burial (v. 6-13). Jesus celebrates the Passover and institutes the Lord’s Supper in the upper room with His disciples (v. 17-29). Jesus foretells of Peter’s denial and then agonizes in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane knowing of His forthcoming suffering and death (v. 30-46). After betrayal of Jesus by Judas and arrest in the garden, He was illegally tried before Caiaphas the High Priest and the elders. They proclaimed Jesus guilty and worthy of death (v. 57-68). Finally, Peter denies Jesus three times (v. 69-75). ***Why were the disciples indignant at the woman for pouring out expensive perfume on the head of Jesus? Why did Jesus approve of this apparent extravagance?***

Matthew 27— Judas is filled with remorse and hangs himself when he realized his betrayal will cause death of Jesus (v. 3-10). Jesus is taken before Pilate but gives no response to his interrogation. The crowd chooses to release Barabbas but wants Jesus to be crucified (v. 11-26). Jesus is mocked and beaten by the soldiers and then delivered to be crucified (v. 27-31). Jesus dies on a cross between two thieves and suffers a horrific death paying for the sins of the world. At His death, the darkness, the earthquake, and the tearing of the temple’s curtain attest to reality of who Christ is (v. 32-54). The body of Jesus is wrapped and buried, and soldiers secure the tomb (v. 57- 66). ***1. Why did the curtain in the temple tear from top to bottom? 2.***

As you consider the insults, agony, suffering, and finally death that Jesus endured for you, write down your appreciation and gratitude for what He did for you.

Matthew 28— Jesus rises from the dead on the first day of the week. The angel rolls the stone away and appears to the women, and then Jesus appears to the disciples (v. 1-10). The Jewish leaders bribe the soldiers who guarded the tomb (v. 11-15). Christ proclaims to His disciples the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (v. 16-20). ***1. Why is the resurrection of Jesus important? 2. Exactly what is the Great Commission, and how does one fulfill it? What promise comes with it?***

Mark— The gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, to the Gentiles in the city of Rome sometime between 55 to 65 A.D. as he heard it from the Apostle Peter. The key verse Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (NIV).” This verse presents Jesus as the suffering servant with the first half of the book showing Him as the Servant of the Lord, and the last half revealing His suffering as a ransom for the sins of the world. The gospel of Mark is the shortest of the gospels and is a book of deeds showing a rapid succession of actions by Jesus with very little of His teaching as compared with the other gospels. The last 12 verses of this gospel were omitted in earlier manuscripts and possibly added later to the gospel to give it a sense of completeness.

Mark 1— Skipping the genealogy, birth, and childhood of Jesus, Mark starts his book with the public ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, as prophesied in Isaiah 40:3. Jesus came from Nazareth to be baptized by John in the Jordan River, and then is immediately compelled by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (vv. 1-13). After the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus preaches the good news of the kingdom of God in Galilee and calls four fishermen to become His disciples and follow Him (vv. 14-20). As He comes to Capernaum and enters the synagogue, all are astonished at Him since He teaches with authority and uses that authority to command the unclean spirits to leave a man (vv. 21-28). After the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, all those who were sick or demon-possessed were brought to Jesus for healing and deliverance. Early the next morning Jesus was able to get away to a deserted place to pray before being found by Peter who urged Him to take advantage of His popularity (vv. 29-39). A leper implored Jesus to heal him if He was willing. Jesus said, “I am willing, be made clean (vv. 40-45).” ***How did Jesus prepare Himself for His extremely busy schedule? See verse 35. Thinking of our busy schedules, what are some creative ways we can get alone with God in prayer and reading the word?***

Psalm 11— Here is another Psalm of David. It rings true with the courage of a shepherd, bear killer, lion slayer, and defeater of giants. When faced with overwhelming odds, we can say to our fear “How can you tell me to flee? God is my refuge.” ***What does it mean when it says God is righteous?***

Week 7 Psalm 12 Mark 2—6 Psalm 13

Psalm 12 — How poignant is this psalm for our modern society? Faithlessness and immorality are the acceptable standard of public and private conduct. As Christians, we must strive for God’s higher standards. ***What does the word “faithful” mean?***

Mark 2— Returning to Capernaum, Jesus enters a home to teach, but the house was so full of people that four men who brought a paralyzed man to be healed were unable to bring him through the door. Taking the man to the roof and then making a hole in the roof, they let him down in a mat in front of Jesus. First, after seeing the faith of the men, Jesus declares that the man’s sins are forgiven. Then, to show His authority to forgive sins, Jesus heals the paralyzed man (vv. 1-12). After calling Levi (Matthew) to follow Him, Jesus went to the house of Levi who had invited his tax collector friends to eat with Jesus. Seeing Him mingling with tax collectors and sinners, the scribes complained to Him about associating with such men (vv. 13-17). People came to Jesus and asked him why His disciples were not fasting like the disciples of John and the Pharisees. Jesus indicated that when He is gone they indeed would fast. He said that He had not come to follow the old wine of Judaism but the new wine of the Kingdom of God. Complaining about His disciples eating grain while walking through the fields on the Sabbath, Jesus declared that He was the Lord of the Sabbath (vv. 18-28). The Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast (v. 18). ***Should Christians fast today? If so, what would be the purpose of fasting? See verse 20, Matthew 6:16-18, and Acts 13:1-3.***

Mark 3— Jesus heals the man with the paralyzed hand on the Sabbath which causes the Pharisees and Herodians to unite in order to plot His murder (vv. 1-6). The common people follow Jesus in masses to such an extent that they would crush Him. Because of this, He would have to teach them from a small boat that was a few feet away from the shore (VV. 7-12). Of all the disciples that followed Jesus, He chose twelve to be His Apostles (sent ones) so that He could personally invest Himself in their lives in order to prepare them and empower them for ministry (vv. 13-19). Thinking Jesus had gone off the deep end, His family came to restrain Him and take Him back home. Instead of conceding to His family’s wishes, He emphasized His spiritual family that is united to do the will of God in their lives. When the scribes accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed, He warns them of the foolishness of their accusation since it would cause the kingdom of Satan to be divided. Attributing the Holy Spirit empowered work of God done by Christ to that of Satan would cause the scribes to be eternally damned since a person cannot be saved by the Holy Spirit when at the same time rejecting the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (vv. 20-35). The family of Jesus thought that He had become unhinged and possibly deranged, and they came to have a family intervention and take charge of Him. ***Do you have any family members that oppose your faith in Christ? What would you say is the best way to deal with them so that they will come to know Christ?***

Mark 4— Jesus delivers the parable of the Four Soils by the Sea of Galilee, and then privately explains their meaning to the twelve disciples (vv. 1-20). He says that we are responsible to let our light shine for Him and not keep it hidden. The person who is diligent to listen and apply spiritual truth will be given a greater understanding of God’s truth (vv. 21-25). He then proceeds to give two parables to his disciples: (1) the Growing Seed (vv. 26-29) and (2) the Mustard Seed (vv. 30-34). He and His disciples head across the Sea of Galilee when a fierce windstorm arises

causing the boat to become swamped with water. Jesus, who is sleeping in the stern of the boat, is awakened by His frantic disciples. Rebuking the wind, the sea immediately becomes calm, and the disciples marvel at the person of Jesus (vv. 35-41). **Analyze verses 35 to 41, the story of Jesus calming the storm. (1) Why was Jesus able to sleep during the storm? (2) What did the disciples not understand about Jesus? (3) Of what did the disciples accuse Jesus? (4) What was the real reason the disciples were fearful? (5) What does this story say about our trust in the Lord when we are fearful during our storms of life?**

Mark 5— As Jesus travels to the region of Gerasenes which is the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee, He confronts a man possessed by a legion of demons who is completely uncontrollable and self-mutilating. Jesus casts the demons out of the man and allows them to enter a herd of pigs that rush down a steep bank and die in the sea. The people of Gadara were more fearful of Jesus than the demons and asked Him to leave their region. Although he wanted to be with Jesus, the former demon-possessed man is told to go back to his people and tell them the great things the Lord has done for him (vv. 1-20). Returning to the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee, a synagogogue leader by the name of Jairus begs Jesus to come and heal his daughter who is on the verge of death. On the way to the house of Jairus, a woman who has been suffering from bleeding for twelve years touches Jesus and is healed. Coming to the house of Jairus and finding the 12 year old girl dead, Jesus goes to her room with her parents and raises her from the dead to the utter astonishment of everyone (vv. 21-43). **Why did the people of Gadara beg Jesus to leave their region? What does this say about their values? How does this apply to our world and church?**

Mark 6— Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth and is amazed at their unbelief which limited the miracles He was able to do (vv. 1-6a). He sends out the twelve disciples in pairs to nearby villages with the message of repentance, the ministry of healing the sick, and with authority over unclean spirits (vv. 6b-13). Herod Antipas thinks that Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead. Previously he had imprisoned John the Baptist, and then reluctantly executed him at the request of the daughter of his unlawful wife Herodias who hated John the Baptist for His convicting preaching about their sin (vv. 14-29). After a busy time of healing the sick and casting out demons, Jesus tried to take the disciples to a remote place by boat. When they came to shore, a huge crowd was awaiting them. After teaching into the night, Jesus had compassion on the multitude and fed five thousand men (plus women and children) through the multiplication of the five loaves and two fish (vv. 30-42). After sending the disciples in a boat to the other side of the sea, Jesus comes to them walking on the water in the middle of the night during a huge storm. He tells them to take courage and not be afraid. Upon arriving at Gennesaret, Jesus continues His ministry of healing (vv. 45-56). **As you meditate on the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, what are some lessons we can draw from this story about the disciples, and for our own personal lives?**

Psalms 13 — This Psalm shows our distorted perception of time in the midst of trouble. When sorrows and pains seem an eternity, we can trust in God's unfailing love. Truly, sorrow endures for the night but joy comes in the morning. **How do we overcome our fears of abandonment in the midst of adversity?**

Week 8 Psalm 14, Mark 7-11, Psalm 15

Psalm 14 — The Apostle Paul quotes this Psalm in Romans 3:10-12. He uses it to make the point that righteousness based upon merit is an unattainable goal. It is interesting to note that this Psalm makes no attempt to justify our sins before a holy God. Verse 7 cries out for salvation, not if God chooses, but when he does. ***What are God's attributes given in this Psalm?***

Mark 7— The conflict with the Pharisees and scribes continues as they accuse Jesus of not following the tradition of the Elders which was doing a ritual hand washing before they ate. Since Mark was written to a non-Jewish audience, he explained the customs and traditions of the Jews. Jesus taught that the Pharisees used the tradition of the Elders to keep from obeying the law given by God through Moses. He made it clear that the real defilement of a person arises from the evil thoughts, words, and actions that come out of the heart, not any food that goes into the body (vv. 1-23). Withdrawing to Tyre and Sidon, Jesus heals the demon possessed girl and is amazed at the faith of her Greek mother who was from the region of Phoenicia in Syria. He then heals the deaf mute giving him the ability to hear and speak clearly at the astonishment of the crowd (vv. 24-37). ***By what measurement should we judge the traditions of our church, and how can we keep church traditions from becoming ritualistic or overly formal?***

Mark 8— While Jesus is in Decapolis, a Gentile area, He has compassion on a crowd of 4000 men (plus women and children) that had been with Him three days and had become very hungry. Being slow to remember and learn, His disciples questioned where they would find enough food to feed such a large crowd. After feeding the multitude with seven loaves and some fish, Jesus and His disciples get into a boat and travel to the district of Dalmanutha (vv. 1-10). The Pharisees demand a sign but Jesus sighs because He knows that even though they had seen many powerful miracles that no sign will convince them that He is the Messiah. The disciples receive a rebuke from Jesus for their lack of trust in Him since they discussed with great concern how they had not remembered to bring bread with them on the boat, but they were forgetting that Jesus had just fed 4000 people with only seven loaves of bread (vv. 11-21). Jesus heals a blind man in stages instead of instantly. After Peter declares Him as the Messiah, Jesus reveals to them that He must suffer and die at the hands of the Jewish leaders and then will rise again. Peter is then rebuked by Jesus for trying to persuade Him to not go to the cross. He then declares that no one can follow Him unless that person follows the way of the cross which involves obedience, suffering, dying to self and the world, and boldly declaring allegiance to Him (vv. 22-38). Jesus said in verse 38, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words...the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the Holy Angels (HCSB).” ***Do you remember a time in your life when you were ashamed to identify yourself with Christ? If so, describe what happened. What can you do to keep from being ashamed of Christ?***

Mark 9— Taking Peter, James, and John on a high mountain with Him, Jesus was transfigured before their eyes. Appearing with Elijah and Moses, His clothing became dazzling white, and He received approving words of His Father (vv. 1-13). Returning from the mountain, a large crowd meets Him, and He heals a demon-possessed boy who His disciples could not heal. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, but Jesus makes it clear that the greatest is the one who

is the servant of all. The measure of true greatness is self sacrificing service to the least important of society such as a little child was in that day (vv. 14-37). Although the disciples were unable to cast the demon out of the boy, they were forbidding another man from doing it since he was not of their group. Jesus told them not to stop that man from doing it. He warns of the seriousness of sin in our lives that cause others not to believe in Him. Using hyperbole, Jesus puts emphasis on taking extreme measures to rid sin from our lives because of its damning effects on us and the lives of others. As Christians, we need to have saltiness which means complete allegiance to Christ, His teachings, and His gospel so that we can be effective witnesses to the world. A part of our saltiness is to be at peace with other Christians by recognizing our common loyalty to Christ and the gospel (vv. 38-50). The teaching of verses 38 to 41 is that we need to acknowledge other Christians who are not a part of our church, group, or denomination. ***What are the essential scriptural beliefs necessary to be held by another ministry, group, or church in order for us to recognize them as truly Christian and orthodox? In other words, what are the fundamental doctrines (teachings) of the historic Christian Church?***

Mark 10— Chapter 10 begins our Lord’s final journey which starts at Galilee, continues through Judea, and ends with His suffering on the cross in Jerusalem. Answering a question of the Pharisees, Jesus speaks on the subject of marriage and divorce (vv. 1-12). He encourages the little children to come to Him and teaches that everyone must approach Him like a little child. The rich young ruler comes to Jesus to find out how to inherit eternal life, and Jesus tells him that the one thing he lacks is to sell everything he has, give it to the poor, and follow Him. Stunned by the demand, he went away grieving. Thinking that being rich was a sign of God’s blessing and approval, the disciples were also astonished at His words. Then Jesus assures them that leaving behind the security of material possessions to follow Christ will be duly rewarded in this life and the next life (vv. 13-31). Jesus then reveals for the third time that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die but would rise from the dead three days later. James and John ask for a special place with Jesus in His future kingdom. He uses this occasion to teach that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who shows a servant’s heart (vv. 32-45). As Jesus, His disciples, and a large crowd are leaving Jericho, a blind beggar continually cries out to Jesus to have mercy on him, and he receives his sight (vv. 46-52). ***Some say that Jesus never disapproved of homosexuality. After reading verses 5 to 9, how would you answer them?***

Mark 11— After two of His disciples found a young donkey in the way Jesus had described, He mounts it and crosses over into Jerusalem with the shouts and praises of the people (vv. 1-11). The next day Jesus enters the temple complex and throws out all those who are there for commercial reasons instead of the purpose of making it a house of prayer for all nations. Returning the next day from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples commented that the fig tree Jesus had cursed the previous day was completely withered from the roots up. Jesus used this as an illustration of believing prayer (vv. 12-26). Being angry at this intruder and the loss of money at the temple complex, the Jewish leaders ask Jesus by what authority He is doing these things. Jesus astutely asks them a question which they do not wish to answer because of their fear of the crowd (vv. 27-33). ***What were the lessons Jesus was teaching by cursing the fig tree? See also vv. 20-26, Luke 13:6-9, John 15:4, 8, 16, and Hosea 9:10.***

Psalm 15— The word “who” is repeated nine times in this Psalm. Who may, who is, who does, who speaks, and so on. These are words depicting faith in action. Words

depicting a life spent living out the two greatest commandments. *Who may dwell in God's temple or holy hill?*