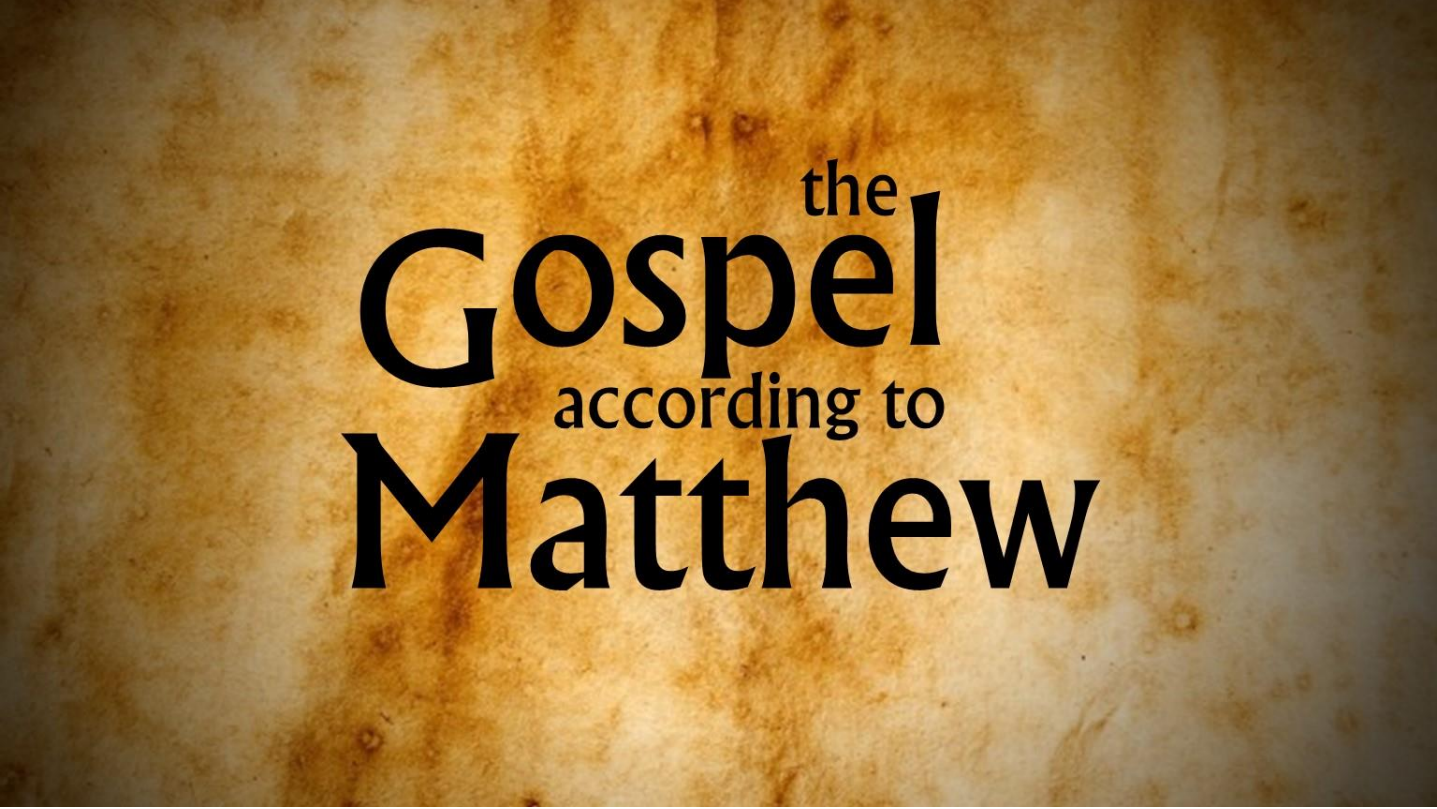


# The Book of Matthew



the  
**Gospel**  
according to  
**Matthew**

**2023 – Part 4**

**5 more studies in Matthew's Gospel**

**Brief Outline of Matthew's Gospel**

1:1 – 4:16	Introducing Jesus
4:17 – 16:20	Public ministry in and around Galilee
16:21 – 18:35	Private ministry in Galilee; preparing the disciples
19:1 – 25:46	Ministry in Judea
26:1 – 28:20	The death and resurrection of Jesus

**Please Note the following:**

1. It is helpful, but not mandatory, to prepare your answers before meeting with your group.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

## Study 1 – The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard – Matthew 20:1-16

*(Sermon on 30-April-23)*

**Before we begin:** Read Matthew 19:27-30 to get the context of Matthew 20:1-16.

1. What is Peter's point in Matthew 19:27?

*Unlike the rich young ruler whom Jesus told to sell all he had (but couldn't) and give to the poor and follow Him (Matthew 19:21); Peter says rightly that the disciples HAVE left everything to follow Jesus. But Peter is gloating somewhat and then follows up his statement by asking Jesus: "what then will there be for us?". In other words, "what's in it for us, in following you, Jesus?"*

*But that's not really the attitude we should have when following Jesus.*

2. What does Jesus mean in Matthew 19:30?

*In verses 28 and 29, Jesus promised that those who sacrificed for His sake and the sake of His kingdom would be rewarded. Then He said in v30, that though they would be rewarded, it would be different than what people usually expect; because we usually believe that the first will be first and the last will be last. The parable following in chapter 20 will illustrate this principle.*

### Read Matthew 20:1-16

1. What is the Kingdom of God likened to in verse 1?

*The Kingdom of God is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard.*

2. What daily rate of pay do the first laborers agree to in verse 2?

*The agreed daily rate was a denarius which was the usual daily wage for a laborer.*

3. What daily rate of pay are the laborers in the "third hour (nine in the morning)" offered in verses 3 and 4?

*They are offered "whatever is right".*

4. What daily rate of pay are the laborers in "sixth hour (noon)" and "ninth hour (three in the afternoon)" offered in verse 5?

*They are also offered "whatever is right".*

5. What is the problem with the "eleventh hour (five in the afternoon)" laborers in verses 6 and 7? What daily rate of pay were they offered?

*No-one had hired them.*

*No pay rate is actually mentioned.*

*They are most likely just grateful to get some work!*

6. How is the pay dished out in verse 8? Is this surprising?

*The landowner told the foreman to pay the workers, beginning with the last workers hired and going on to the first workers hired. This means the workers doing the least work will be paid first and the workers doing the most work will be paid last! This is surprising in human terms; as we would normally pay the workers who did the most work first (or at least pay all the workers together).*

*It's not surprising in Jesus' terms because He is a God of reversal and rules an upside-down Kingdom ruled by a servant King!*

7. How much were the “eleventh hour (five in the afternoon)” laborers given in verse 9? Is this surprising?

*There were given a full denarius (a day's wage) for probably about an hour's work. Again, in human terms, this is surprising as we would pay each person by the hour and these workers would receive only an hour's pay, not a whole day's pay!*

8. What did the first laborers expect to receive in verse 10; and what did they actually receive? Is this surprising?

*The first laborers were expecting to receive more (based on what they saw the last laborers receive) but they received a denarius (day's wage) also. It may be surprising if we think the same way as the first laborers did; but unsurprising when we realize they received what they were told at the time of hiring.*

9. What complaint do the first laborers make in verses 11 and 12? Is this a reasonable complaint? What does their complaint say about them?

*They complained that the last laborers only worked one hour but were given the same pay as them. It's an unreasonable complaint because they agreed at the start to be hired for a day's wages of one denarius. The complaint says this about the first laborers: a) they are ungrateful; b) their agreement with the landowner meant nothing; c) they are jealous of the last laborers.*

10. What response does the landowner give to their complaint in verses 13 to 15? Is this reasonable? (cf. Romans 9:20-21)

*The landowner responds to their complaint by pointing out that they agreed to work for a denarius; and that he wants to give the laborers hired at the end the same pay as the first laborers; and besides the landowner says he has every right to do what he wants with his own money. And the landowner even suggests the first laborers are envious of the last laborers because the landowner is generous!*

*The landowner's response is more than reasonable.*

*Romans 9:20-21 says: But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?*

11. What do the two expressions: “so the last will be first, and the first last” and “many are called and few are chosen” that Jesus uses in verse 16 mean?

*These two expressions are all about how God’s grace works in His Kingdom.  
By definition God’s grace is undeserved.*

*The essence of God’s grace is that He rewards and blesses human beings according to His will and pleasure, not necessarily according to what humans deserve or according to human thinking. God’s ways are always higher and better than our ways.*

*Humanly speaking we say you get what you deserve but God’s grace says: God deals with us according to who He IS not according to who we ARE.*

*The landowner did not treat any of the laborers unfairly; though he was more generous to some than others. We can be assured that God will never be unfair to us, though He may, for His own pleasure and purpose, bestow greater blessing on someone else who seems (to us) less deserving.*

*The point is: God doesn’t give everyone the same reward. Though all believers go to Heaven, where there will be rewards in different measures; God rewards on the principle of grace (which by definition is underserved) and so we should expect surprises! **Surprises where those who thought they should be first will be last; and those who thought they were last, will be first.** God will never be less than fair, but He reserves the right to be more than fair as it pleases Him. God’s grace always operates righteously.*

*Living under God’s grace means we can’t come complaining to God saying “Don’t I deserve better than this?” because God will reply “Do you really want me to give you what you deserve?”*

*Charles Spurgeon says this: “My last word to God’s children is this: what does it matter, after all, whether we are first or whether we are last? Do not let us dwell too much upon it, for we all share the honour given to each. When we are converted, we become members of Christ’s living body; and as we grow in grace, and get the true spirit that permeates that body, we shall say, when any member of it is honored, ‘This is honor for us’...If any brother shall be greatly honored of God, I feel honored in his honor. If God shall bless your brother, and make him ten times more useful than you are, then you see that he is blessing you — not only blessing him, but you. If my hand has something in it, my foot does not say, ‘Oh, I have not got it!’ No, for if my hand has it, my foot has it; it belongs to the whole of my body.”*

*The expression “**many are called and few are chosen**” emphasizes that both God’s calling and choosing of people is by His grace – and especially His choosing!*

12. **Ponder:** What is the point of the parable?

*Is to show that God’s grace operates differently to human thinking.*

*God is always generous. His grace abounds!*

**13. Ponder:** How does the parable answer Peter's question in Matthew 19:27?

*Back in Matthew 19:27, Peter made the comment that he and the other disciples had left everything to follow Jesus; and Peter asked "what then will there be for us?". In other words, "what's the reward, we get, for following you, Jesus?"*

*The answer to Peter's question is: "Peter, it may not be what you're expecting; there will be surprises in store; and people who think like you Peter, might be last; whereas people who are a bit more humble, may get to be first!"*

**Read the following Old Testament passages;** how do they relate to Matthew 20:1-16?

### **Psalm 103**

*Psalm 103 reminds us just how gracious God is:*

- *Don't forget all God's benefits (v2)*
- *He forgives sins and heals diseases (v3)*
- *He redeems our lives from the pit and crowns us with love and compassion (v4)*
- *He gives us the good things we desire (v5)*
- *He cares about those who are oppressed (v6)*
- *He is slow to anger and abounding in love (v8)*
- *He doesn't always accuse us – or harbour His anger forever (v9)*
- *Nor does He treat us as our sins deserve or repay us for our sins (v10)*
- *Instead of anger and revenge, God shows love (v11) and He removes our sins as far away from us as possible (v12)*

*That gracious God in Psalm 103 is the landowner in the parable in Matthew 20:1-16*

### **Proverbs 16:2**

*People may seem pure to themselves but their motives (in their heart) are weighed by God. The first laborers' hearts were weighed by God – they'd agreed to the denarius per day for their wages – but then their hearts became envious – God (the landowner) called them out on their motives.*

### **Proverbs 21:1-2**

*A person may think their own ways are right but the Lord weighs the heart first. Again, the first laborers can be seen here; they think their own way is right and better than the landowner (God). But landowner (God) says "no, I can do what I want with my own money". God can do what He wants – He is the Creator of all things – and everything is His - but He is never unfair!*

**What's the BIG IDEA of Matthew 20:1-16?**

*How Grace in the Kingdom of Heaven works*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *Repent of thinking that we know better than God*
- b. *Repent of complaining about God and thinking He is unfair. Whenever we find a complaining servant, we know that they have not fully yielded to the Father's will!*
- c. *Don't be preoccupied with ourselves and what reward we get for following Jesus but be preoccupied with being Holy and loving God and His Son and serving Him. The whole idea of "what's in it for me?" is alien to the Kingdom.*
- d. *Examine our motives. Jesus detected in Peter a possibility of a wrong motive for following Him; that is why Jesus warned that some who were first in their own eyes, would be last!*
- e. *The more dependent we become on God, the more God works in us and the more effective we become. However, the more conscious about our effectiveness we are, the less dependent on God we are in danger of becoming.*
- f. *Like the elder son in the story of the Prodigal Son, we find it hard to abandon our human scale of values (especially when comparing with others!) and to accept the large-heartedness of God towards those we regard as undeserving.*
- g. *God treats us with "unreasonable" generosity!*
- h. *Thank Him for His amazing grace in not treating us as our sins deserve but instead allowing His Son to die for our sins to be forgiven and raising Him to life, so we can have eternal life.*
- i. *Have a right attitude to service; show grace to others the way we have experienced grace:*
  - i. *By seeing that how we have been called to serve is a gift of grace*
  - ii. *By having an attitude that wants to follow and serve Jesus with pure motives and not so we "get something out of it"*
  - iii. *By serving with humble hearts: not wanting accolades or praise; not wanting rewards and not wanting to be first.*
  - iv. *By serving without complaints; without comparisons with others who seem to get more blessings than we do*
  - v. *By giving more (time and energy and money) than is expected*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God that His ways are not our ways and His ways are greater than our ways. Thanking God for His amazing grace.

## Study 2 – Greatness is Serving – Matthew 20:17-28 *(Sermon on 07-May-23)*

**Before we begin:** Read Matthew 19:27-30 to get the context of Matthew 20:17-28.

1. What is Peter's motive in Matthew 19:27?

*The context is that the rich young man has walked away from Jesus sad, because Jesus knew he loved his wealth so much and told him to sell everything, give it to the poor and follow Jesus. Jesus then told the disciples how difficult it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of Heaven because they often love their wealth much more than God, the disciples are stunned by this because in the culture of the day, those who were rich, healthy and wise were seen as blessed by God and certainties for Heaven. The disciples are wondering, if the rich can be saved for Heaven, who can be? But Jesus says "what's impossible for humans, is possible for God"; because God has a plan to save people for Heaven, through Jesus, who IS able to obey the Law of God fully and ALWAYS does the Father's will; and it's just a matter of putting Jesus first and following Him.*

*So, Peter in verse 27 is basically saying "If we follow you, Jesus, what's in it for us? After all, we left everything to follow you?"*

*And again, the answer is – 'things are different in Jesus' upside-down Kingdom!'*

### **Read Matthew 20:17-19**

2. Where does Jesus say He and His disciples are going and what details does He give about His destiny?

*Jesus says they are going to Jerusalem. Jesus is basically going to die there.*

*This is the third time that Jesus has predicted His death. He also mentions it in Matthew 16:21 and Matthew 17:22-23. Jesus says He will be delivered over to the chief priests and teachers of the Law and they will hand Him over to the Gentiles (Romans); He will be mocked and flogged; and for the first time Jesus also mentions that He will be crucified and handed over to the Gentiles. Jesus also mentions on the third day, He will be raised to life; but as we've said before, the disciples seem to focus on His death.*

*The whole catalogue of humiliation and suffering leaves no room for visions of earthly glory of the Son of Man (as prophesied so clearly in Isaiah 52:13-53:12)*

### **Read Matthew 20:20-28 (and parallel passage in Mark 10:35-45)**

3. What does the mother of Zebedee's sons ask Jesus for? Is this a surprising request? Why? Why not?

*The mother of Zebedee's sons asks that her two sons, James and John, be seated on the right and left of Jesus in His Kingdom.*

*It's not such a surprising request when we recall Matthew 19:28 - <sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

*Jesus has said they will sit on thrones; so, James and John want prime positions next to Him.*



*It is surprising in that their request comes immediately after Jesus predicts His death and His teaching in 19:30 and 20:16 that the “the last will be first and the first will be last” They haven’t quite got the concept that following Jesus comes at a cost; there is a cost of discipleship.*

4. Who does Jesus reply to and what is His answer in verse 22? What does Jesus mean by “can you drink the cup that I am going to drink”? (cf. Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 49:12; Matthew 26:39)

*Even though it was their mother who made the request; Jesus replies to her sons, James and John in v22: “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”*

*In several places in the Old Testament, “cup” is used:*

*Isaiah 51:17:* Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the **cup of his wrath**, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes people stagger.

*Isaiah 51:22:* This is what your Sovereign LORD says, your God, who defends his people: “See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the **goblet of my wrath**, you will never drink again.

*Jeremiah 49:12:* This is what the LORD says: “If those who do not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, why should you go unpunished? **You will not go unpunished, but must drink it.**

*And also, in the New Testament in Matthew 26:39:* Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

*The cup in all these instances is describing **a cup that leads to suffering**. Sin MUST be punished. Jesus must suffer and will be punished for the sin of the world; but even His disciples in some way must share in this suffering for following Him. This really is an upside-down kingdom.*

5. What is their reply?

*James and John’s reply is that they can drink the cup of God’s anger/wrath and will suffer. They did indeed suffer. James was the first disciple to be martyred (Acts 12:2) and John had to suffer exile on the island of Patmos.*

6. What can Jesus NOT grant them in verse 23? Why not?

*Jesus tells them they will indeed drink the cup – i.e., they will suffer.*

*But He cannot grant them a seat on His left and right; only God the Father can do that; not even Jesus, the Son!*

*The parable from last week about the workers in the vineyard made it clear that the Kingdom of Heaven works a lot differently to how humans think. The disciples were like the first workers thinking they’d get greater rewards than anyone else. James and John hadn’t really learned anything from the parable – they still didn’t get it. They haven’t understood the nature of greatness – and that in God’s kingdom serving is greater than lording it over people!*

7. How did the other 10 disciples react to the sons of Zebedee's request in verse 24? Why would they react that way?

*The other 10 disciples were indignant (showing anger and annoyance).*

*They reacted that way most likely because they were jealous. In Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46 and Luke 22:24; the disciples had argued about who was the greatest; so, it's unlikely they were angry with James and John for asking for these positions; and more likely they wanted those positions themselves and were angry because James and John had asked first.*

8. What illustration does Jesus use in verse 25?

*He uses an illustration from the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. In Gentile culture the rulers lord it over the people that they rule and the rulers' officials exercise authority over the people. Which is pretty much how countries are ruled today.*

9. How is Jesus' Kingdom different to Earthly Kingdoms according to verse 26 and 27?

*Jesus' Kingdom is different: v26 – whoever wants to become great among you must be a servant (Greek: diakonos) and v27 – whoever wants to be first must be your slave (doulos).*

*This is completely different to Earthly Kingdoms – the King or President or Prime Minister is not a servant – nor a slave.*

*The Greek word: diakonos – means “servant” or “minister”*

*The Greek word: doulos – means “slave”*

*A servant volunteers to serve another*

*A slave is forced against their will to serve*

*Not every servant was a slave, but every slave was a servant.*

10. What do we find out about Jesus' mission in verse 28?

*We find out that Jesus did NOT come to be served – but to serve – AND to give His life as a ransom for many.*

*Ransom: Is price paid to release a captive. Jesus pays the price (His life) so that we can be released from the being captives to SIN and DEATH. No King or President or Prime Minister will do that!*

11. **Ponder:** What lessons are Jesus' disciples meant to learn from verses 20-28?

- Jesus spoke about our cross – but the disciples are interested in a crown and glory. That can only happen for them – by carrying their cross and drinking their cup of suffering
- They wanted their will, not God's will
- They wanted to do things their way, not God's way
- James and John wanted to Lord it over the other disciples – they were thinking “worldly” and not “heavenly”
- James and John's request was “of Satan”, motivated by pride. Satan had wanted a throne and was cast out of Heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15). Satan had offered Jesus a throne and had been refused (Matthew 4:8-11)

- There are no shortcuts to Heaven
- In Jesus' Kingdom, the disciples must not follow the examples of the World (Gentiles) – their example must be Jesus

Three insights we gain from the disciples here also:

- a. They had **great ambition** – they were still thinking in terms of personal reward and personal distinction/honour – despite the parable in 20:1-16 and Jesus' statement about "first will be last and the last will be first"
- b. They had **great faith** – despite Jesus' announcement of His death three times – they believed His statement 19:28 – about sitting on 12 thrones when He renewed all things
- c. They showed **unshakable loyalty** – they were determined to drink the cup of suffering. To conquer with Christ meant to suffer with Christ and they were willing to face this (although initially they ran away at the cross)

**It's easy to condemn the disciples, but the faith and loyalty which lay behind their ambition must not be underestimated!**

### **Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

12. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:17-28?

*This Old Testament Passage is a wonderful picture of Jesus the Suffering Servant*

*52:13 – Jesus was lifted up on the cross and yet highly exalted because He accomplished God's rescue mission*

*52:14 – He was disfigured through scourging and crucifixion*

*52:15 – His blood sacrifice – sprinkled all nations – because His salvation is available to ALL who care to believe*

*53:1 – Who will believe Jesus Gospel message – it seems incredible that the way to victory is the way of the Cross – but it's true!*

*53:2 – People were not attracted to Jesus by His beauty/handsomeness but by His teaching and authority and power from God*

*53:3 – He was despised and rejected (even by His own people) – He was a man of suffering*

*53:4 – He took our pain, our death, our suffering – it was part of God's plan that He was punished – even though the Jews and Romans thought it was their plan*

*53:5 – He was pierced (hands and feet on a cruel cross) for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. His punishment brought peace between humans and God*

*53:6 – He was punished because we are all like sheep who have gone astray and we need Jesus the Good Shepherd*

*53:7 – Even when He was punished; He didn't defend Himself (though He could have commanded His angels to help Him) – instead He went like a lamb to the slaughter – because He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*

*53:8 – He must be judged and cut off from the land of the living*

*53:9 – He was assigned a grave with the wicked – crucified with two robbers on either side – yet His tomb was with the rich – owned by a rich man called Joseph of Arimathea*

53:10 – *Jesus’ punishment was all of the Father’s will – so that Jesus would be the ultimate offering/sacrifice for sin – so that Jesus’ offspring (us) could have forgiveness and eternal life*  
 53:11 – *Jesus did not stay dead; He saw the light of life – raised and glorified and ascended to Heaven*

53:12 – *And He was given a portion among the great – i.e., exalted to the Highest Place (Philippians 2:9)*

*When we read this passage which describes Jesus’ servanthood and suffering – how can we not be moved to also serve and suffer – in thanks and praise – to King Jesus – the Suffering Servant King!*

### **Read Philippians 2:1-18**

13. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:17-28?

*Paul tells us what our response to Jesus should be in verses 1 to 5:*

- *Being like-minded with fellow Christians*
- *Having the same love*
- *Being one in spirit and of one mind*
- *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit (unlike James and John)*
- *In humility value others above yourself (unlike James and John)*
- *Don’t look for your own interests but to the interests of others (unlike James and John)*

*Why be like this? Paul tells us what Jesus did in verses 6 to 11*

- *Jesus didn’t use the fact that He is equal to God for His own advantage otherwise He would have stopped His crucifixion before it started*
- *Instead, He made Himself nothing*
- *He took on the nature of a servant and the appearance of a man*
- *He humbled Himself*
- *He was obedient in every way – even to death on a cross*
- *And because He did all this – God exalted Jesus to Heaven (the Highest Place) – and gave Him the name above all names – that every knee should bow to – and every tongue should confess that Jesus “is Lord” – to God’s glory*

*And this amazing act of service and suffering by Jesus – demands our response – Paul says in verses 12 to 18*

- *Work out our salvation with fear and trembling – be in awesome fear of God*
- *Don’t grumble or argue (about who is the greatest like the disciples!)*
- *Live blameless pure lives as children of God*
- *Shine like stars for Jesus, the Light of the World*
- *Hold firm to the word of life (Jesus – the Word)*

*This passage shows us exactly what a Suffering Servant King looks like and what our response to Him must be*

**Read Proverbs 31:10-31**

14. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:17-28?

*This passage from Proverbs 31:10-31 describes a servant like wife of noble character*

- *Because of her noble character, she is more precious than rubies*
- *She is such a servant wife; her husband has full confidence in her*
- *She is busy day and night to run the household – serving her husband and family in so many ways – putting them first – not herself*
- *She is industrious, hard-working, extremely wise, caring, compassionate, considerate*
- *But most of all – the key to her success as a servant wife and mother is in v30 “a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” In other words, she always seeks to do the Lord’s will not her own will.*

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 20:17-28**?

*Greatness is serving – not being served*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. Jesus is our example – not the world. We must follow His example of a suffering servant*
- b. Jesus came as a servant – therefore we should serve one another*
- c. Jesus came to give His life – therefore we should give our lives in service to Him and others*
- d. Perhaps too many want to “exercise authority” but few want to take the towel and basin and wash feet!*
- e. The key to greatness is not found in position or power but in service*
- f. We must identify with Christ in His service and His suffering*
- g. Ask ourselves in what way we can serve others?*
- h. Confess the areas in which we are expecting to “be served” rather than “to serve”?*
- i. Our prayers need to be as a servant to a Master – are we praying the Father’s will or our will? Jesus warned the mother of James and John “you don’t know what you are asking” – what are we asking?*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God for sending Jesus, the suffering servant, who came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Ask God through His Word and His Spirit to help us to imitate Christ’s humility and servanthood.

### Study 3 – The Healing of Two Blind Men – Matthew 20:29-34 *(Sermon on 14-May-23)*

**Before we begin:** Read Matthew 20:1-28 and summarize what Jesus has dealt with thus far in this chapter.

- *Jesus tells a parable about workers in a vineyard – where the workers all got the same pay (one denarius) whether they worked 12 hours or 1 hour. The parable illustrated that Jesus' Kingdom is different where "the first will be last and the last will be first"*
- *To illustrate how the Kingdom works – Jesus says even the King dies for His people; so, Jesus, for the third time, predicts His death by crucifixion and predicts His resurrection.*
- *Then the mother of James and John asks Jesus to give her sons positions of privilege in Heaven, with seats on His left and right hand. But Jesus says – before receiving any privileges they need to drink a 'cup of suffering', just like Him; and that the positions of glory in Heaven, are dished out by God the Father only. Besides, King Jesus, is a King who came to serve not to be served – and to give His life as a ransom; to buy back people who have been kidnapped by sin and death.*
- *Which leads us to today's passage: What about blind people? Can they be included in Jesus Kingdom? The culture of the day – said those who were sick, lame, disabled, blind etc. – were cursed by God; surely, they're not included...*

#### **Read Matthew 20:29:34 (and parallel passages in Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43)**

1. Where are Jesus and the disciples now and who do they encounter?

*They are leaving Jericho (on their way to Jerusalem).*

*They encounter two blind men – who probably only have this one opportunity to meet Jesus and get help from him. They are desperate!*

2. How do the blind men refer to Jesus? What does that say about what they believe about Jesus?

*They refer to Jesus as "Lord, Son of David".*

*"Son of David" is a term used to describe God's Promised Messiah.*

*Ironically, unlike many of the religious leaders, the blind men know who Jesus is!*

*And they believe what they've heard about Him (remember they can't see what Jesus has done)*

3. Why would the crowd rebuke the two blind men?

*The blind men are outcasts in society and are seen as irrelevant. They were not to annoy Jesus; Jesus is too important to be bothered by such people in society. But Jesus is for all people – not just the rich, the healthy and wise.*

4. How do the two blind men respond to the rebuke? Why?

*They respond to the rebuke by shouting even louder "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" They are desperate, persistent and determined; and they know Jesus can help*

5. What question does Jesus ask and what is the reply from the men?

*Jesus asks “what do you want me to do for you?”*

*Jesus asked this question with full knowledge that these men were blind. He knew what they needed and what they wanted, but God still wants us to tell Him our needs as a constant expression of our trust and reliance on Him.*

*These blind men would have asked for mercy many times from many people. They might have replied to Jesus’ question by saying: ‘I want some bread’ or ‘Give me a blanket to keep warm at night’ or ‘give me a cushion to make begging more comfortable’.*

*They replied: “Lord, we want our sight”*

6. What did Jesus do for them? Why did He touch their eyes?

*He cured their blindness.*

*He touched their eyes, so that the men knew what He was doing; and also, to show the crowd what He was doing.*

7. **Ponder:** What does this say about Jesus?

*He who was at creation and by whom and through whom all things were made, is also in the business of “re-creation”. Jesus, God’s Son, has the power of God and can do things that only God can do – because He is God!*

*He is compassionate.*

*He is restoring things back to Eden-conditions!*

8. **Ponder:** What has Jesus just put into practice? (cf. Matthew 20:28)

*Jesus puts into practice what He taught His disciples – that He came to serve. He became a servant to two rejected blind men.*

*Also, these blind men, often seen as “the last” are still part of the Jesus’ Kingdom.*

*Even people who are written off by society are included in Jesus’ Kingdom.*

9. What can we learn from the two blind men?

- *They refused to accept discouragement when the crowd tried to silence them*
- *They were specific in their request and took the opportunity presented to them; who knows if Jesus would come their way again; they came to Jesus before it was too late*
- *They showed faith and persistence. Their faith brought them into the healing hands of Jesus! The blind men were persistent like the widow looking for justice (Luke 18:1-8)*
- *They believed and followed Jesus.*

**Read Matthew 15:1-14**

10. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:29-34?

*Jesus accuses the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law of being hypocrites by putting their traditions ahead of God’s commands. They are supposed to be the spiritual leaders and guides*

*for the people of Israel; but they are leading the people astray. Jesus describes them (v14) as blind guides; they are the blind leading the blind.*

*This relates to Matthew 20:29-34 – in that the two men were PHYSICALLY blind (but SPIRITUALLY AWAKE) whereas the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were SPIRITUALLY blind (but can PHYSICALLY see).*

### **Read Matthew 23:16-26**

11. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:29-34?

*Again, Jesus accuses the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law of being blind guides for the people. This relates to Matthew 20:29-34 – in that the two men were PHYSICALLY blind (but SPIRITUALLY AWAKE) whereas the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were SPIRITUALLY blind (but can PHYSICALLY see).*

### **Read John 9:1-7**

12. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:29-34?

*Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth.*

*The disciples attribute the man's blindness to the man's sin or his parents' sin. This is because the culture of the day said that anyone who was blind, sick, disabled, poor etc. were cursed by God because of the sin in their lives. But Jesus said that the man was not blind because of the man's sin or even his parents' sin; the man was blind so that God's glory could be displayed in the miracle of Jesus' healing of the man's blindness.*

*This passage relates to Matthew 20:29-34 in that: a) in both John 9:1-7 and Matthew 20:29-34) a blind person is healed by Jesus; b) There is a correction of the wrong thinking that those who are sick/disabled don't matter to God; and c) to show Jesus is in the business of re-creation.*

### **Read Deuteronomy 29:1-6**

13. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:29-34?

*40 years ago, at Horeb (Mount Sinai) Israel made a covenant with God. In Exodus 24:7-8 – Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the people and they promised that all the Lord has said they would do and be obedient to Him. Then Moses took blood and sprinkled it on the people as a sign of a blood covenant. Now 40 years later, Moses reconfirms the covenant (as many died in the wilderness). God through Moses, reminds the people of the wonders they saw when the Lord dealt with The Pharaoh in Egypt. He reminds them of the wonders of the plagues, the rescue from Egypt and how He sustained them for forty years in the wilderness. They saw these wonders but they did NOT see them. Because they are still spiritually deaf and blind.*

*Again, this relates to Matthew 20:29-34 in that there is something more important that needs fixing than physical blindness; and that is spiritual blindness.*

### **Read Ezekiel 12:1-11**



#### 14. How does this passage relate to Matthew 20:29-34?

*Ezekiel describes the people of Israel as having “eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are rebellious people”*

*And because of this rebellion, Ezekiel tells the people they must “act out their pending captivity” by packing their bags for exile. God tells Ezekiel to even dig through the walls of his house and take his belongings out through the hole, as a picture of what will happen to the people when they go out into exile.*

*Again, this passage shows what’s important to God and it’s that’s people’s spiritual sight not physical sight.*

*The two blind men in Matthew 20:29-34 were in a kind of exile because of their sight; but sin leaves us in a spiritual exile where the relationship with God is broken. Jesus can restore that spiritual sight as well as physical sight.*

#### What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 20:29-34**?

*Jesus heals the Blind (both physical and spiritual)*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *It is possible to ask God for lots of legitimate things which never deal with the fundamental need of our lives; that we might be whole again! At the source of all else that may be wrong in the human condition is our alienation from God, as Ephesians 4:18 puts it “people are darkened in their understanding (spiritually blind) and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts” (spiritually blind)*
- b. *We must put into practice what Jesus taught – “to serve and not to be served” – and become a servant to those who ask for our help. Especially those rejected or ignored in our community.*
- c. *Jesus showed compassion to the blind men. We must show compassion to those less fortunate than ourselves.*
- d. *The request of the disciples (for the best seats) shows their blindness – compared with the request of the blind men which shows their vision in knowing who Jesus is (Son of David) and what He can do! Also compare the crowd and the Pharisees who can see but are blind to who Jesus is.*
- e. *The blind men refused to be discouraged. It was a choice between sight or blindness; and it’s the same for us, a choice between, Jesus the light (and Heaven) or Satan the darkness (Hell).*
- f. *We should be aware that as we (others) come to Jesus; people (through Satan) will try to discourage us from coming to Him. Satan doesn’t want anyone to be saved. The blind men refused to give up (despite the crowd) and the blind men persisted in crying out;*

*likewise, those who come to Jesus should not give up and turn back, no matter who tries to influence them to give up following Jesus!*

*g. The blind men didn't let Jesus pass by; non-believers must not let Jesus pass by. In Acts 17:32 when Paul preached on Mars Hill, some said "they would hear him again". They put it off until a more convenient time, but so often the more convenient time never comes!*

*h. Having believed Jesus, they also followed Him; we must do the same!*

*i. Coming into contact with Jesus, transformed these two men's lives; and it's the same for us – believing and following Jesus, transforms our lives too!*

*j. Jesus is available to ALL – no-one is written off!*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

<sup>32</sup> Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking Jesus that He can heal spiritually as well as physically. Ask God to help us with any spiritual blindness we might have in our lives.

## Study 4 – Hypocrisy – Matthew 21:12-22

*(Sermon on 21-May-23)*

**Please note: We are not covering Matthew 21:1-11 in this study because we studied this passage for Palm Sunday in our “Palm Sunday/Easter Bible Studies”**

**Before we begin:** In our last study we saw Jesus heal two blind men and we talked about “spiritual blindness”. This healing of the two blind men is followed by Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11). In what way does this triumphant entry reveal spiritual blindness in the leaders of Israel; especially when we consider what happened a few days after that first Palm Sunday.

*As Jesus rode into town on that first Palm Sunday, the crowds recognized Jesus to be the Messiah, saying “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:7). They used the term for the Messiah, “Son of David”. It’s unlikely they understood that Jesus was a Messiah to save them from sins, rather they thought of Jesus as a military Messiah who would save them from the Romans. In Luke’s version of Palm Sunday, the Pharisees tell Jesus to rebuke His disciples for crying out “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” (Luke 19:38-39). And Jesus famously says “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!” (Luke 19:40). The Pharisees are “blind” to who Jesus is...*

### **Read Matthew 21:12-17 (and parallel passages in Mark 11:15-18 and Luke 19:45-47)**

1. In verse 12, Jesus is in the temple courts. What was the original purpose of the temple courts?

*Herod’s temple, destroyed along with the rest of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, contained four separate “courts,” separated from one another and each designed for a different purpose: the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel (or the Court of Men), and the Court of Priests. The Court of the Gentiles is referred to as “the outer court” in Revelation 11:2.*

*Non-Jews were allowed to enter the Court of the Gentiles, but they were forbidden to go any farther than the outer court. The inner temple courtyards were enclosed by a balustrade, and at the entrances to it notices were posted in both Greek and Latin, warning foreigners and uncircumcised persons that crossing into one of the other courtyards was punishable by death. The Court of the Gentiles was the outermost courtyard and the only area of the temple where non-Jews were allowed. As its name implies, the Court of the Gentiles was accessible to Gentiles, foreigners, and those who were considered impure. There, worshippers could mill about, exchange money, and even buy animals for sacrifices. It was from the Court of the Gentiles that Jesus, on two occasions (John 2:11–12; Matthew 21:17–23), drove out the money changers,*

2. How do you explain Jesus’ actions in verse 12?

*The outer court was the only place that the Gentiles could come to pray. But now the focus was on it being the place where merchants in cooperation with the priests, cheated visitors to*

*Jerusalem by forcing them to buy approved sacrificial animals at inflated prices. Barclay says "a pair of doves could cost as little as 4 pence outside the Temple and 75 pence inside the Temple. That's inflation (x20).*

*What had begun as a service and convenience for visitors from other lands to obtain sacrificial animals had turned into a lucrative business.*

*The court of the Gentiles was used for mercenary business not missionary business!*

*The sacrificial system had become a commercial exercise rather than heartfelt worship and confession of one's sins.*

*Note: Two problems a) Temple tax had to be paid in the correct currency; the Moneychangers charged extra fees to change money and a further fee for changing large amounts of money greater than half a shekel; b) Animals for sacrifice could be bought outside the temple – such as doves. But animals had to be without blemish. Inspectors inside the temple courts would most likely reject animals bought outside and direct the visitors to the temple stalls and booths! That wouldn't be a problem except that the prices inside were x20 the prices outside.*

### 3. What authority does Jesus have to do this? (cf. Matthew 12:5-6)

*Jesus has authority because as He said in Matthew 12:5-6 when questioned about His disciples picking grain on the Sabbath; He is "someone greater than the Temple!". Jesus is greater than the Temple because the Temple was for the worship of God but Jesus is also God! Jesus is also the Spiritual Temple, represented by the physical Temple.*

### 4. Where is Jesus quoting from in verse 13 and what problem does Jesus identify? (cf. Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11)

*By saying "My House" – Jesus was affirming that He is God!*

*Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11:*

*Isaiah 56:6-7 –And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

*Jeremiah 7:11 - Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.*

*The problem Jesus identifies is that the Temple is designed for the worship of God and as a House of Prayer – it had a spiritual person – to get close to God. But the Temple purpose had been usurped by these market traders who were not only hijacking prayer but also ripping people off too. Focus on God and prayer had been disregarded – even lost.*

*The point was that Isaiah prophesied, and Jesus demanded that the temple be a place for all nations to pray. The activity of all those who bought and sold in the outer courts made it impossible for any seeking Gentile to come and pray.*

*The behaviour of the traders fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah 7:11.*

5. What did Jesus do in verse 14? Why?

*Jesus healed the blind and lame who came to Him at the Temple.*

*The blind and the lame were restricted to the court of the Gentiles; they could not go closer to the temple and could not go to the altar to sacrifice. After purging the court of the Gentiles of merchants and robbers, Jesus then ministered to the outcasts who congregated there.*

*Why did Jesus do this? First because He had compassion. Second, having cleansed the Temple of the moneychangers and merchants, Jesus got back to the business of the Messiah's work, to show the power of God in the context of compassion and mercy. Which in turn, attracted people to follow Him.*

*This is a good example of where those who think are last (the blind and lame) become the first and are welcome; whereas those who think they are first (moneylenders and traders) are actually removed!*

6. What was the reaction of the religious leaders in verse 15? Why?

*The religious leaders were indignant (angry and annoyed) because children in the temple courts were calling out to Jesus "Hosanna to the Son of David". The children had more spiritual insight than the "blind" religious leaders.*

*Jesus, the Messiah, was threatening the power, status and popularity of the religious leaders, and they didn't like it!*

***Such hypocrisy from the religious leaders – Greed and theft in the temple courts did not bother them – but wonderful praise of Jesus, the Messiah, from children bothered them greatly – to the point that they plot to kill Jesus in the parallel versions!***

7. **Ponder:** Why do you think children are mentioned here? (cf. Matthew 19:13-15)

*Jesus had previously said in Matthew 19, when the disciples tried to turn children away from coming to Jesus: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"*

*Children are important to Jesus; therefore, they should be important to us!*

***They show a childlike trusting, innocent, pure, unadulterated, non-doubting faith that we all should have.***

8. How does Jesus respond to the religious leaders' question in verse 16 and where does he quote from? (cf. Psalm 8:2)

*Jesus responds by quoting Psalm 8:2 "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise'?"*

*His point is God loves praise from children – this is how they learn who God is and how and why to praise Him.*

9. **Ponder:** What has Jesus just put into practice? (cf. Matthew 20:28)  
*Again, Jesus puts into practice His mission “not to be served, but to serve”.*

10. In what way are the religious leaders being hypocritical here?

*They are:*

- a. *Allowing God’s House to be used for the wrong purpose – trading and money-making rather than worship and prayer.*
- b. *They turn a blind eye to ungodly behaviour but try to silence godly behaviour when children sing praises to Jesus!*
- c. *They are more interested in their own status and power than giving proper worship of God and giving respect to the things of God.*

11. **Ponder:** What should God’s house be? (cf. 1 Timothy 2; Matthew 21:14; Matthew 21:15-16)

*1 Timothy 2 – a place where petitions, **PRAYERS**, intercession and thanksgiving is made for all people – including Kings and people of authority. Praying and good deeds to be done.*

*Matthew 21:14 – A place of healing (physically and spiritual) – a place of **HELP** and **TRANSFORMATION!***

*Matthew 21:15-16 – A place where children are involved in worship. A house of **PRAISE!***

12. What is going to happen to the temple? (cf. Matthew 23:37-38; 24:1-2) When did this happen?

*The Temple will be left desolate (Matthew 23:37-38)*

*Not one stone will be left standing (Matthew 24:1-2)*

*This happened in AD 70 – when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.*

**Read Matthew 21:18-22 (and parallel passage in Mark 11:12-14, 20-24)**

13. What does Jesus do to the fig tree?

*He performed a miracle so that the fig tree withered away and did not bear any fruit.*

*One of two “destructive” miracles – the other to a herd of pigs (Matthew 8:30-32) – both NOT directed to human beings!*

14. What does the fig tree represent? (cf. Jeremiah 8:13; Hosea 9:10, 16 and Luke 13:6-9)

*The fig tree is representative of the spiritual fruit of Israel.*

*Jeremiah 8:13 - “I will take away their harvest, declares the Lord. There will be no grapes on the vine. There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither. What I have given them will be taken from them.”*

*Hosea 9:10 - “When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved.*

*Hosea 9:16 - Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring."*

*Luke 13:6-9 -Jesus told a parable of a fig tree – which demonstrated how Israel had not borne any spiritual fruit.*

15. Why does Jesus curse the fig tree? What's Jesus' point about the nation of Israel?

*The fig tree had leaves and therefore should have had fruit.*

*The fig tree was a false advertisement that it bore fruit when it didn't.*

*In this acted-out-parable, Jesus warned of coming judgment upon an unfruitful Israel. It showed God's disapproval of people who are all leaves and no fruit. "The story is clear and simple, and its point obvious, that what counts is not promise but performance."*

*Just as the fig tree had leaves but no fruit – Israel had a show of religion but not practical experience of faith resulting in godly living!*

*God wants us to produce spiritual fruit.*

*Jesus used these two stories – the Temple and the Fig Tree – to teach His disciples a practical lesson about faith and prayer. The Temple was supposed to be a "house of prayer" and the nation was supposed to be a nation of "faith" a "believing" nation. Both of these essentials were missing in Israel. We too must beware of the peril of unfruitfulness.*

16. How do the disciples react in verse 20? Why?

*They were amazed that the fig tree withered so quickly.*

*A picture of how swift God's judgment can be!*

17. What does Jesus' explanation in verse 21 have to do with the fig tree?

*Jesus explained that this miracle was really a result of prayer made in faith. Something many of Israel lacked.*

*So, Jesus encouraged His disciples to have this kind of faith, trusting that God will hear them and nothing is impossible for God.*

18. What conditional promise does Jesus make in verse 22? What are the conditions? (cf. John 14:13-17)

*Jesus told them in v22 they will receive whatever they ask for – IF – they believe (have faith).*

*John 14:13-17 – adds that it must be in the NAME of Jesus – in other words what Jesus would want for us – not our will but God's will. And of course, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit living in us to help and guide and lead us into the Father's will.*

**Read Malachi 3:1-4**

19. How does this passage relate to Matthew 21:12-17?

*Malachi prophesies that God will send His messenger (John the Baptist) who will prepare the way for God; and then the Lord (Jesus Himself) will come to His Temple and He will be like a refiner's fire (sorting out the pure metal from the dross) and launderers soap – and purifying the Levites (priestly tribe) and making their offerings acceptable.*

*In Matthew 21:12-17 – Jesus comes to His Temple as Malachi prophesied and the cleansing predicted begins to take place. Jesus actions in the temple are indicative of what His ministry is – purifying some; healing others, like the blind and the lame; and judging others.*

**Read Micah 7:1-7**

20. How does this passage relate to Matthew 21:18-22?

*Micah gives an honest confession of the sinful state of Israel.*

*Their sin has left them impoverished – like someone gathering summer fruit – but at the vineyard there is no grapes and none of the fig trees have borne fruit. Just like Jesus describe Israel as a fig tree with no fruit.*

*Micah says their sins are: no one upright person (v2)*

*Everyone is out for bloodshed – like hunters of animals (v2)*

*Hands are skilled in doing evil (v3)*

*Rulers demand gifts and judges accept bribes – corruption! (v3)*

*There is no one godly – they are like briars and thorns – rather than fruitful (v4)*

*No one can be trusted (v5)*

*Even within families there is dishonour (v6)*

*Nothing has changed between Micah's time and Jesus' time.*

*The only answer is for Micah to remain faithful whilst all around him are unfaith. Micah will watch and hope for the Lord, and wait for His Saviour – he knows His God will hear him*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 21:12-22**?

*Inward corruption and outward fruitlessness – evidences of hypocrisy.*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *What hypocrisy is there in our worship*
- b. *Is our Church/Us fulfilling its God-given purpose – or are we conforming to the patterns of this world?*
- c. *Is our Church/US commercialized?*
- d. *Is our Church/US helping others (the blind and the lame) are writing them off or turning them away?*



- e. *Do we welcome Children? Do we listen to children? Do we value children? Are we praying for God to bring families and children to our Church? Do we have a mission/ministry to children?*
- f. *What spiritual fruit does our Church/Us bear?*
- g. *Does our Church/US show potential but no fruit (i.e., shows promise but no performance)?*
- h. *Is our Church/US faithful and prayerful. What are we praying for?*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done.*

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God for sending Jesus. Ask God to help us to remove any hypocrisy in our worship of Him. Ask God to help us make His House: A House of Prayer, a House of Help, a House that welcomes children, House of Transformation and a House of Praise.

## Study 5 – By What Authority? – Matthew 21:23-46

*(Sermon on 28-May-23)*

**Before we begin:** In our last study we saw Jesus clean up the Temple and curse a fig tree. By what authority was He able to do this?

*In Matthew's Gospel – the identity of Jesus has been a major theme.*

*In Matthew 3:16b-17 – At Jesus' Baptism, God the Father declares about Jesus: "This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" – which was repeated at Jesus Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5)*

*In Matthew 12:6 – Jesus says "I tell you, that something greater than the Temple is here" – and remember the Temple is symbolic of where God dwells with the people!*

*In Matthew 14:33 – "those in the boat worshipped Him saying: 'Truly you are the Son of God'"*

*In Matthew 16:15-16 – "He said to them; 'But who do you say I am? Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!'"*

*In John 1 – Jesus is described as the Word of God (1:1) and the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14). Therefore, Jesus is God's Word in human form – that's ultimately where God's authority comes from. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 – "Man cannot live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God".*

*So, the answer is: By His own authority; which is God's authority!*

### **Read Matthew 21:23-27 (and parallel passages in Mark 11:27-33 and Luke 20:1-8)**

1. What questions do the chief priests and elders pose to Jesus in verse 23? Why?

*They ask 'By what authority are you doing these things [cleansing the temple and healing people and teaching]?' and "And who gave you this authority?"*

*Why do they ask? Because their power, status, authority and popularity are being threatened by Jesus who has greater power, the status of being God, the authority of God and is becoming increasingly more popular because He teaches with authority, stands up to the religious hypocrites and can perform such amazing miracles!*

2. Before answering their question, Jesus asks a question of His own; what's His question in verse 25 and what is He trying to do?

*Jesus' question is 'John's Baptism – where did it come from? Was it from Heaven or of human origin'.*

*Jesus is trying to get them to think about what God is doing and to see – that just like God sent John to preach repentance and baptism by water; God also sent Him [Jesus] and He came with God's authority!*

*Jesus is questioning their competence to judge such issues. Their ability to judge John the Baptist and his ministry was a measure of their ability to judge Jesus and His ministry.*

*“His question is far more profound. If the religious authorities rightly answer it, they will already have the correct answer to their own question.” (Don Carson)*

3. What discussion do the religious leaders have amongst themselves in verses 25-27? What conclusion do they come to?

*They discuss their possible answers:*

*If they answer that John’s baptism came from Heaven – then Jesus will ask them why they didn’t believe John and why they didn’t believe Him [Jesus] because John’s ministry pointed to Jesus!*

*If they answer that John’s baptism came from human origin – they are afraid of the people – who believe John is a prophet of God!*

*So, they come up with their “we don’t know answer”*

4. Why won’t Jesus answer them in verse 27?

*He won’t answer because they were given an either/or question and they didn’t answer.*

*By not answering, He is also making them think and take responsibility for their choice.*

*He’s given them the two options; they can’t choose a third option, because there isn’t one!*

### **Read Matthew 21:28-32**

5. What is a parable?

*A parable is a story about something here on earth – which has a heavenly/spiritual meaning. As the story is told, we are meant to ask a) who am I in the story; b) who is God in the story; and c) what’s the spiritual meaning of the story.*

*Parable literally means “a throwing together for comparison”.*

6. Who/What is the vineyard in the parable?

*The Old Testament often used the picture of a vineyard to speak of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:32, Psalm 80:8, Jeremiah 2:21, and especially Isaiah 5:1-7).*

7. What two types of people do the two sons represent in the parable? And which type of people are commended in verse 31a?

*a. Those who said they would NOT believe – but changed their mind and believed [Tax collectors and sinners] – repented under John the Baptist.*

*b. Those who said they would believe – but did not believe [Self-righteous]*

*The people who changed their mind and believed are commended by Jesus.*

8. What is the point of the parable?

*Is to make the people listening (including us) think about which son we are in the parable. And to see that the choice of the first son is the correct one; and make that same choice.*

*To illustrate that John the Baptist and Jesus' authority come from the same source – God! If they would not accept the authority of John, then they would not accept the authority of Jesus; for both John and Jesus were sent by God.*

*It is a basic principle of Christian living that we cannot learn new truth if we disobey what God has already told us. The religious leaders had rejected the truth preached by John, and therefore Jesus could not impart new truth different to John. Both He and John were under the same authority. Jesus puts it this way in John 17:16-19:*

*<sup>16</sup>Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. <sup>17</sup>Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. <sup>18</sup>Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. <sup>19</sup>Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"*

*If the religious leaders weren't even following the laws God gave Moses, how are they to follow Jesus; who comes from the same source?*

9. What telling comment does Jesus make in verse 31b?

*The tax collectors and prostitutes (the ones considered last and outcasts of society) are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law.*

10. What responses to John the Baptist's ministry does Jesus describe in verse 32? What's Jesus' point?

*Either believe John the Baptist's call for repentance and believe in the way of righteousness OR reject John the Baptist's call for repentance and not believe in the way of righteousness. It's another illustration of the last will be first and the first will be last. The tax-collectors and prostitutes (considered last and outcasts of society) repented at John the Baptist's teaching and believed in the way of righteousness; but the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law did not repent at John the Baptist's teaching and did not believe in the way of righteousness; they were self-righteous.*

11. **Ponder:** Who did the religious leaders really reject? John or someone else?

*By rejecting John and Jesus – they are rejecting the ONE who sent them – God!*

**Read Matthew 21:33-46 (and parallel passages in Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19)**

12. Who is the landowner and who/what is the vineyard in the parable?

*The Landowner is God.*

*The Vineyard is the nation of Israel (God's treasure possession and meant to be IN the Kingdom]*

13. Who are the tenants?

*The tenants are the religious leaders of Israel.*

14. Who are the servants that the landowner sends? What happens to them?

*The servants are the prophets sent by the landowner (aka God).*

*The servants (prophets) were beaten, killed and stoned. When more were sent, they were treated the same way.*

15. Who is the son that the landowner sends? What happens to Him?

*The Son is Jesus. The son in the household of course is on a different level to the servants; hence Jesus is on a different level to the prophets. But they even threw the Son out of the vineyard and killed Him. Here Jesus foretells and knows that He will be killed.*

16. What was the tenants thinking in verse 38 and 39? What's wrong with their thinking?

*They thought by killing the heir they would get the inheritance. But it's the landowner (God) the owner of the vineyard, who decides who gets the inheritance, not the tenants!*

17. What question does Jesus pose in verse 40; how does the response in verse 41 of those listening to the parable pass sentence upon themselves?

*Jesus poses the question in verse 40 – ‘what will the landowner do to those tenants’*

*Those listening replied in v41 – “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end – and he will rent the vineyard to someone else”. In other words, the Kingdom of God will be given to others.*

18. Who might the other tenants be referred to in verse 41?

*The Apostles (rather than the religious leaders) and also the outcasts; and some loyal Jews and of course the Gentiles, rather than most of the Jews, who reject the Son (Jesus).*

*Those who are disobedient, disloyal and unfruitful will be replaced by OTHERS who are obedient, loyal and fruitful!*

*Ultimately, the other tenants are the Church! This will be covered in the parable in the next chapter, Matthew 22:1-14*

19. What is Jesus describing in verse 42 and where does He quote from? (cf. Psalm 118:22-23).

*Jesus describes Himself as the Cornerstone of His Spiritual Temple (where believers are living stones) – and He says that the builders (the Jews) will reject the most important stone in the building, the cornerstone, which is Jesus Himself. He quotes from a Messianic Psalm, Psalm 118:22-23. In doing so, He is identifying Himself as the Messiah.*

20. What judgment does Jesus describe in verses 43-44?

*The Kingdom will be taken away from the Jews [because they produce no spiritual fruit – like the fig tree earlier in the chapter] and given to a people [Gentiles] who will produce spiritual fruit!*

*The choice in v44 before the religious leaders is the choice before every person. We can be broken in humble surrender before God or be completely broken in judgment.*

21. What do the Chief Priests and Pharisees realize in verse 45?

*The Parable worked as intended. The Chief Priests and Pharisees knew that Jesus' parable referred to them!*

22. What plan do they have and what are they afraid of in verse 46 and why?

*Having heard the parable, instead of repenting, they plan to arrest Him but they are afraid of the people, because the people hold that Jesus is a prophet; and He is popular with the people. Their power, status and popularity are under threat from Jesus!*

### **Read Isaiah 5:1-7**

23. How does this passage relate to Matthew 21:23-46?

*Isaiah sings a love song. It's a song about God's loved one – His vineyard is the nation of Israel and Judah (v7) – but it's a sad love song – because His vineyard doesn't bear any fruit despite all the work the landowner (God) has put into it. What more could He have done? But there's no fruit in His vineyard – and there's no spiritual fruit in Israel or Judah; instead of justice, there is bloodshed; instead of righteousness, there are cries of distress (v7). So, God will destroy the vineyard and make it a wasteland (vv5-6).*

*In Isaiah 5:1-7; Israel failed to live up to God's expectation. Nothing has changed in Jesus' time! It's interesting that when the Old Testament does describe Israel as a "vine"; it is often an allusion to Israel's degeneracy and disobedience!*

*This relates to Matthew 21:23-46 as it is the same picture of Israel that Jesus finds!*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 21:32-46**

*Submit to the authority of God - and bear spiritual fruit*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *Jesus doesn't give us the option "I don't know" – He must be accepted or rejected.*
- b. *John's message "repent" is the pre-condition to Jesus' message "believe". If we don't do the first, we can't do the second!*
- c. *The parables suggest it's not too late to repent; even the religious leaders can if they are inclined to; but will they?*
- d. *The 1<sup>st</sup> parable demands – obedience.*
- e. *The 2<sup>nd</sup> parable demands – loyalty and faithfulness.*
- f. *It's not rhetoric that counts; it's response. We need to walk the talk! There is a difference between saying and doing!*
- g. *Jesus is the cornerstone we need to build our lives on.*
- h. *Jesus has authority:*
  - a. *As a teacher (Matthew 7:28-29)*

- b. To forgive sins (Matthew 9:1-8)*
- c. To heal the sick and cast out Demons (Matthew 10:1)*
- d. To control Creation (Matthew 8:23-37)*
- e. Over death (John 11)*
- f. Get's His authority from God the Father (Matthew 21:23-27 and John 14:9-10)*
- g. Has been given all authority from God in Heaven (Matthew 28:18)*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, **“Have you never read in the Scriptures:**

**“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvellous in our eyes”?**

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking Jesus that He is the cornerstone of a spiritual temple and we are attached to Him as living stones (1 Peter 2:5-9). Ask God to help us trust and obey His Son.

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**Resources:**

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible (G. Campbell Morgan)

The Message of Matthew (Michael Green)

Focus on the Bible: Matthew (Charles Price)

Matthew Volume 1 (Barclay)

Be Loyal Following the King of Kings NT Commentary on Matthew (Warren W. Wiersbe)



**Notes/Prayer Points**