

Removing Obstacles

Do we pray to the Lord when things aren't going as planned, and the world seems to be against us? God wants us to! Do we approach Him in prayer with humility? Remember, God is our Father and wants to see His children mold into the image of Jesus. We discussed this last week, but we have by no means exhausted the discussion of growing our relationship with God.

Note: I've enjoyed and recommend Mark E. Moore's "The Chronological Life of Christ." Some of my comments can be found in his material by coincidence (he's not the only one making such observations articulated in his material), and other times, I've leaned on his accurate and helpful observations. He's done an excellent job making 1st-century culture and practices available.

No events occurred between last week's lesson and today.

Jesus & The Rich Ruler (Luke 18:18-30)

- Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:

- We refer to this man as the "young rich ruler" by combining all descriptions from the synoptic gospels.
- I find it interesting how Jesus wasn't offended by His question. This may take our modern approaches by surprise, as we have often misunderstood the concept of grace. We sometimes speak as if there is nothing for us to do, or since we don't merit our salvation, such questions are inappropriate. Jesus doesn't seem to have a problem with his question. He's more concerned about what's been left out.
- Did you notice how Jesus points to the latter portion of the 10 commandments? Summarizing all accounts, here's what Jesus points to: Don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't steal, don't bear false witness, don't defraud (Mark), honor your father and mother, love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew). This essentially covers the last six commandments and summarizes them under the principle of "loving your neighbor as yourself." But what about the first 4, which center around our love for God? You see - this man had nailed the "love your brother" part, but all that "good" doesn't make up for what he knows deep inside is missing. What does that all merit if we don't have a basic love for God? Our external performance doesn't guarantee internal peace. No, his performance didn't bring peace.

- Something to meditate on:

- Jesus loved him, but he lacked love for Jesus. This is hard to watch. God isn't attempting to ruin your life. He's trying to save it. Just as Satan fooled Eve into believing God was holding off, it was God who had given her everything. God knows what He can provide (yes, He wants to give), but many times, we harm ourselves by allowing the world to come between us and the Lord. We're robbing ourselves of what could be if we would only let go. This requires trust in God. Too many of us fail to see Him for who He truly is, and we haven't come to value His holiness. If only we could see, sacrifice, and be sanctified. Jesus calls us to the same standard.
- We are your family. God is providing for you through His people. Yes, you need to be responsible on your end. However, God provides and will care for His own. We need to lay our anxieties at His feet and be content with His provision. Are we content with His provision?
- Was he sad because he lost his salvation or because Jesus' answer was unsatisfactory?

(Insert Jesus' Parable - Matthew 20:1-16)

Jesus Will Be Delivered (31-34)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*

- Mark's account informs us that His disciples "were amazed" at the time of Jesus' third revelation. They were amazed at His teaching about the wealthy having difficulty entering the Kingdom. Jesus was entering Jerusalem, where He would give His all.
- The chief priests and scribes would hand Him over to the Gentiles, who would crucify Jesus. Jesus makes this claim for the third time and clearly states He would be raised on the third day.

- *Something to meditate on:*

- Jesus didn't ask His disciples to follow a path He hadn't first taken.
- Who do you walk with? Do your friends know who you are and what you're about? Do they know to what lengths you're willing to go to for Jesus? Are we living sacrifices?

(Insert the request of James & John to sit at Jesus' side - Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45)

Jesus Heals A Blind Beggar (35-43)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*

- Mark states the name of the blind beggar was Bartimaeus. Matthew states there were two men. For whatever reason, Bartimaeus gets the attention of the gospel writers.
- Earlier in the chapter, Jesus warns about treating others with contempt. Then, we read of the children being hindered. Jesus rebuked His disciples. Now, we read about blind men being rebuked by the crowd. We shouldn't be surprised that Jesus calls for them.
- They recognize Him as the "Son of David," i.e., the Messiah. They show their faith in Jesus, and it is because of this that their faith made them well.

- *Something to meditate on:*

- *What do you want for Jesus to do for you?* Bartimaeus had limited knowledge. Don't get me wrong - he knew enough to get it right, but even Bartimaeus didn't fully appreciate who it was before Him. You do. So, think carefully. Is there anything lacking in your life? It's interesting how Matthew and Mark's accounts insert James and John's request to sit at Jesus' right hand before this miracle. Jesus asks the same question in that account. Even the closest of Jesus' disciples had difficulty grasping this one. They wanted powerful positions, and Jesus told them to become slaves to others. He's a "young rich ruler." Young can refer to anyone between 20 and 40 years old. Such type tends to rule in the Lord's body. We prefer wealthy individuals to lead because we believe their business success correlates with spiritual competence. Think again. Many times, they're being ruled by evil principalities. Such individuals don't understand the nature of the Kingdom of God, and their counsel comes with consequences. They lack wisdom and forget what it's like to struggle (thus being too harsh or unrealistic), promote materialism, and can encourage spiritual apathy.
- *Would Jesus have healed him if he said, "nothing"?* Sometimes, we say we want Jesus' help, but we're not willing to put our faith in Him. We're not ready to believe, and all that encompasses. Brethren, if you want your faith to be stronger, then you must open your eyes. If you want your marriage to improve, you must love your spouse with the same love that Jesus has. If you wish for your anxiety to decrease, Jesus must increase. If you want your anger to dissipate, then you've got to let it go. If you want to feel secure with Jesus, then you must yoke yourself to Him. He'll do the heavy lifting, but He won't force anything on you. So, what do you want?