

October 10, 2004 by Steve Brandon



Where We've Been - A Review of Matthew Chapters 1-20

Matthew 1-20

1. Witnesses to Jesus (chapters 1-4)
2. Teaching of Jesus (chapters 5-7)
3. Authority of Jesus (chapters 8-10)
4. Reactions to Jesus (chapters 11-13)
5. Ministry of Jesus (chapters 14-20)
6. Last Days of Jesus (chapters 21-28)

Several months ago, my sister-in-law called me. She's involved with the administration of Cornerstone Christian Academy in Sycamore, where her children attend grade school. She said that the school had been looking into various options for fulfilling some continuing education requirements for their teachers. She suggested to those at the school, some of whom I know personally, that I might be interested in coming and teaching the Bible. It would be six hours of actual teaching time with the teachers. When she called, I asked her if it would be possible for me to teach through the entire gospel of Matthew during that time. After investigating it a bit, they determined that would work out fine. Furthermore, the leadership of our church thought that it would be a good allocation of my time as well, as it would help me review and further understand the gospel of Matthew. So, this past Thursday, I spent my time in Sycamore, teaching through the entire gospel of Matthew. We went chapter by chapter through the entire book. We had a couple large chalkboards available and filled them with chapter summaries as we went through Matthew.

In preparation for this, I spent much of my time this week going over my old sermon notes on Matthew. The way I prepared was really pretty easy. I went to www.rvbc.cc and started reading my sermons on Matthew that I have preached here these past few years. There are about 100 sermons so far. In the process, I worked on taking each sermon and condensing it down to one 8½ x 11 sheet of paper, so I could have my complete outline, and key illustrations at hand when needed during the teaching time.

On Wednesday night, after my daughter came home from AWANA, she came to see me. I was in my bedroom, working on synthesizing the last few sermons. She asked me what I was doing. I told her that I was going to be in Sycamore the next day (at the school where her cousin attends) teaching through the entire gospel of Matthew. To prepare for that, I was going over all of my sermons. Her eyes got real big and she said, "You are going to preach all of your Matthew sermons tomorrow." I explained how that was impossible to do in 6 hours, unless I talked really, really fast.

While doing this study this week, I discovered something. I discovered that I have forgotten much of what I have taught in recent years. And if I have forgotten much, I'm sure that you have forgotten much, as well. We go week by week, taking a handful of verses as we go along. But what has been impressed upon my heart this week is that we can be so interested in the trees at times, that we forget the forest. And so, this week, I thought that it would be best for us to step back from the gospel of Matthew for a week and look at the forest through which we have been traveling. This morning, I would like to preach on Matthew, chapters 1-20. I have entitled my message, "Where We've Been."

As I have thought about it, there is yet another reason why this message might be crucial for us this morning. Only a few of you have been with us through our entire journey in Matthew. In fact, I know where some of you have picked up the journey. There is something about the way that my mind works, that I can remember when many of you came to Rock Valley Bible Church and what I was preaching on when you first arrived. Perhaps it has to do with some of our most early conversations are often centered around the truth just preached. I certainly don't remember the details for every family, but for most, I do. If I asked you, you might be able to say, "We began attending in Matthew 15, or Matthew 17." What this means is that many of you jumped into Matthew in the middle of the book. A review would be helpful to you. Additionally, For those of you who have been here the entire time, I trust that it will be a healthy review.

So, I invite you to take your Bibles and open them to Matthew, chapter 1. In the very first verse, we are introduced to the subject of Matthew's gospel, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ." This book is all about Jesus. It begins with His birth. It describes His ministry. It describes His teaching. It describes His death and resurrection. This book is all about Jesus. Your life ought to be all about Jesus. This church ought to be all about Jesus.

The first four chapters of the book of Matthew focus their attention upon who Jesus is. If you want a hook to hang your thoughts on, you could call it ...

1. Witnesses to Jesus (chapters 1-4)

Matthew begins with testimony from different sources concerning who exactly Jesus is. In the first half of chapter 1, the genealogy is given, which identifies Jesus as one who came from the kingly line of David (1:1-17). In the second half of chapter 1, the birth of Jesus Christ is proclaimed by an angel, who identifies Jesus as one who came from heaven. Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit (verse

20). He was "God with us" (verse 23).

At the beginning of chapter 2, we find the Magi from the east coming to worship Jesus (2:2). Throughout the entire chapter, we see time and time again how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scripture. For example, verse 6 tells us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as Micah 5:2 had prophesied. Verse 15 tells us Jesus fled to Egypt, as Hos. 11:1 had prophesied. Verse 18 tells us that Jeremiah 31:15 was fulfilled as the families wept for their children who were slaughtered by Herod. Verse 23 tells us Jesus was raised in Nazareth, that the "prophets might be fulfilled."

In chapter 3, John the Baptist provides testimony as to who Jesus is. John said, "He who is coming after me is mightier than I" (3:11). At the end of chapter 3, we see the baptism of Jesus. At this scene, the one who testifies is none other than God, Himself! The Spirit of God came down from heaven like a dove and rested upon Jesus (Matt. 3:16). Furthermore, the Father's voice boomed from above, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Here, we see the two other members of the Trinity giving testimony to who Jesus is.

In chapter 4, Satan Himself testified to who Jesus was. In 4:6, when Satan said, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down," there was a subtle admission that He was the Son of God. "Why don't you show off for us Jesus?"

The first four chapters introduces Jesus by giving us several witnesses to Him. His lineage testifies. An angel of the Lord testifies. The Magi testify. The Old Testament Scriptures testify. John the Baptist testifies. God Himself testifies. Satan testifies. And I say this morning, that it is true! Jesus Christ is God come into the flesh. The circumstances surrounding His life prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt. You need to listen to Him and His message, which He began preaching in 4:17, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom is near, because the King is near. Jesus Christ is the one who has authority over all things in this life. Jesus Christ is the one to whom we need to bow.

Next, in chapters 5-7, Matthew records for us a bit of the...

2. Teaching of Jesus (chapters 5-7)

These chapters contain the most famous words that Jesus ever spoke. It crystallizes the message of Jesus. Perhaps the thing that is most notable about His teaching is His authority. First of all, He comes and gives an entirely different perspective to the Law, that the Jews didn't have. He doesn't stand upon the long line of Rabbis and their traditional view of the Scripture. Rather, He takes the Scripture and presses its application deep into our hearts. His message is in contrast to one of a mere external conformity. In chapter 5, Jesus says the same thing on six different occasions. He begins with the phrase, "You have heard it said, but I say to you...." This is authority. The ancients said this, but I'm telling you this.

Rather than simply requiring that you don't murder anyone, Jesus presses the command into the heart: don't be angry with anyone (Matt. 5:21-26). Rather than prohibiting the act of adultery, Jesus prohibits the thoughts of it as well (Matt. 5:27-32). Rather than making false vows, Jesus calls us to complete honesty in all things. Jesus placed the standards of righteousness sky high. He demanded perfection: "Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

This message of perfection works itself out in chapter 6. There we read about giving without seeking the recognition of men, praying without seeking worldly status, and fasting without demonstrating your religiosity toward others. Jesus teaches us about seeking an eternal reward with your treasures, and trusting the Father in all circumstances.

His sermon closes by an amazing claim: all will account to Jesus on the final day. Jesus says that He is the judge of the world. There will be many who will stand before Jesus, who think that they deserve to enter into His kingdom, because of the marvelous works that they did (7:22). And Jesus will cast them out (7:23).

The way that you get into the kingdom of heaven is by meekness and humility as the beatitudes of chapter 5 speak. It's about being poor in spirit, spiritually bankrupt and dependent upon God (5:3). It's about mourning for your sin and your helplessness before God (5:4). It's about being meek and merciful and seeking peace (5:5, 7, 9). Those who are that way are received into the kingdom with much reward. Those who aren't that way will be cast out of heaven by Jesus, Himself. What a claim He makes! It's no wonder that 7:28-29 says, "The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." The teaching of Jesus matched up with the witnesses given about Jesus. He is God and has the authority of God. You need to listen to Him.

3. Authority of Jesus (chapters 8-10)

In chapters 8-10, Jesus demonstrates His authority in His actions. It's one thing to say that you have authority (as Jesus claimed in the Sermon on the Mount). It's another thing to demonstrate it. In these chapters, the awesome power of Jesus Christ is put on display. He heals a leprous man of his leprosy (8:1-4). He raises a paralyzed servant with a word from afar (8:5-13). He causes a fever to break (8:14-15). He calms a raging storm at sea (8:23-27). He casts a legion of demons out of a few crazed men (8:28-34). He heals a paralytic, who walks home in the presence of all (9:1-8). He raises a child from the dead (9:18-19, 23-26). He cures a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (9:20-22). He gives sight to two blind men (9:27-31). He gives speech to a dumb man (9:32-33). These miracles are only the tip of the iceberg that Matthew has chosen to share with us. There is so much more. Periodically throughout the entire gospel, Matthew gives us some healing reports. They are all similar to what is found in 8:16, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill." All who came to Jesus left healed of their diseases. The multitudes are left to marvel. In 9:33, the multitudes said, "Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel."

There is one miracle of particular interest to which I want to direct your attention this morning. I believe that it demonstrates clearly the purpose behind the miracles that Jesus performed. It is the healing of the paralytic, found in chapter 9. Perhaps you remember the story. This paralytic was brought to Jesus by his friends. He was placed at the feet of Jesus. Jesus says in 9:2, "Take courage, My son, your sons are

forgiven." At this, the scribes were furious because they knew that only God can forgive sins. They thought to themselves, "Who is this man Jesus who thinks that He can forgive sins?" They reasoned that for anyone but God to make such a claim is blasphemous! They reasoned correctly. Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- then He said to the paralytic -- "Rise, take up your bed, and go home" (Matt. 9:4). And the man did just that. Verse 7 says that "he rose, and went home." This story is crucial, because it demonstrates the link between the power of Jesus physically and the power of Jesus spiritually. As Jesus had authority over the physical ailments of the body, so also did Jesus have authority over the sin that will ruin us eternally. **All of the miracles of Jesus were pointing to the authority of Jesus.**

In chapter 10, we see the amazing authority that Jesus holds over His followers. In chapter 10, Jesus gathers His disciples to Himself, teaches them and sends them out. He sends them out on a difficult mission. They were to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (verse 6), preaching, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (verse 7), and healing people physically, just as Jesus had done (verse 8). Along the way, they would face great danger. Verses 17-18, "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake." Verse 22, "And you will be hated by all on account of My name." Verse 23, "Whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next."

Why would His disciples be willing to go on such a dangerous mission? It's pretty easy, really. Jesus has the authority. To follow Jesus means that you will go wherever He goes. You will do whatever He says. You will trust Him completely. Back in Matthew 8, there were a few disciples, who were wanting to follow Jesus. Before Jesus would accept them, He wanted to make sure that they understood what it would mean. The first one came to Jesus and said in 8:19, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (verse 20). In other words, ... to follow me is to live a life of difficulty. We won't rest, as birds and foxes do. We will keep moving. The labor will be tough. Are you willing? Another man came to Jesus and requested to bury his father first (verse 21). Jesus said, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead" (verse 22)." Those who hesitate are not worthy of following Jesus. Jesus demands His disciples to come and follow Him now. No waiting. No dilly-dallying. No pandering around. He calls us to follow Him now. Look at 9:9, when Matthew was called. Jesus saw Him and said, "Follow Me!" And Matthew's response was great: "And he rose, and followed Him." Matthew left his lucrative tax business behind him. He forsook it to follow Jesus.

This is the authority of Jesus. He demands that people follow Him now and do whatever He says. Look at the end of Matthew 10, verses 37-39, ...

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:37-39)

This is the life that Jesus calls us to: complete submission to His authority. Is this where you find yourself? Have you "lost your life"? Have you given your life. Have you submitted yourself to the authority of Jesus Christ. Matthew's gospel paints Jesus as one who is worthy of all of our honor and praise and submission. Is that your heart this morning?

4. Reactions to Jesus (chapters 11-13)

From Matthew 11-13, we see different reactions from different people. In Matthew 11:2, we find that John was in prison for his bold preaching. And he had doubts about Jesus. He sent his disciples to Jesus, asking Him "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" Jesus said to John's disciples, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. 11:4-5)

Jesus didn't say, "Yes" directly. Rather, He said, "Yes" by way of the Scripture. He quoted Isaiah 35:5-6, which tell us of what will take place when the Messiah comes. These things are what Matthew 8 and 9 are all about. Jesus gave sight to the blind in chapter 9. Jesus healed the legs of the lame in chapter 9. A leper was cleansed in chapter 8. He gave speech to the deaf in chapter 9. He raised the dead in chapter 9. And His good news was proclaimed to all! Essentially, Jesus was telling John's disciples. "Tell John that the scriptures are being fulfilled in My ministry. Tell John that if he really believes the scriptures, his doubts will be gone!"

John, while believing, had doubts. Others had different reactions. Some people flat out rejected Jesus. Look at Matthew 11:21, "Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." A similar but worse condemnation comes upon Capernaum in verse 23. Now, this is amazing. Jesus did the majority of His miracles in three cities that were situated along the north-western border of the Sea of Galilee. They were all within walking distance of each other. His miracles were numerous and undeniable. In these cities, nobody was sick. The doctors were put out of work. And yet, these cities didn't repent. They were unbelieving toward Jesus. Verse 24 says that Sodom will receive greater mercy in the judgment than these cities will. This shows the amazing hardness of their hearts.

Another response comes from the Pharisees. They hated Jesus. We see this in chapter 12. In the first 14 verses, there are two episodes of Jesus clashing with the Pharisees. Both times it has to do with a controversy over Sabbath keeping. In verses 1-8, the disciples of Jesus were hungry and picked grain and ate it. In verses 9-13, the Pharisees brought a man with a withered hand to Jesus and asked Him whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not. In both instances, the Pharisees were angered by what Jesus did. He justified the picking of grain on the Sabbath. He healed on the Sabbath. They were angered so badly, that verse 14 tells us that "the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Matt. 12:14). That Jesus could do undeniable miracles was not the issue. They affirmed that Jesus could do them. The issue was that the Pharisees hated Jesus and wanted any sort of accusation they bring against Him, even if it had to do with a technicality of the Sabbath.

The hatred of the Pharisees toward Jesus continues throughout chapter 12. When the multitudes saw a demon-possessed man healed, they began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" (Matt. 12:23). The Pharisees did what they could to divert the attention away from Jesus and His claims. They said, "This man casts out the demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons" (Matt. 12:24). So much was their hatred of Jesus, that they called Him the devil, himself.

The reaction of the Pharisees reminds me of what I did when I was a little boy. Our family was at my uncle's house. We were served liver for dinner. I was old enough to know that many people didn't like liver. As I tasted it, I wasn't particularly impressed, either. But, my younger sister sure was. She was eating the liver like it was going out of style. At one point, I turned to her and said, "Sonya, we don't like liver do we!" At that point, she pushed the liver away from her and said that she didn't like liver. This has continued to this day. The Pharisees were attempting to do a similar thing by speaking poorly of Jesus, in hopes to swing the crowds into their persuasion.

Their antagonism continues in verse 38 when they request a sign from Jesus. They didn't want a sign. They had already seen enough signs to believe. But, their hearts were hard. Jesus calls their bluff and says, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matt. 12:39). This is the sign of the resurrection which many still didn't believe.

John doubted. Cities refused to repent. The Pharisees hated Jesus. The family of Jesus had their doubts as well. At the end of chapter 12, they came to Jesus when He was in the middle of a crowd, wanting to pull Him away and speak with him. We can only guess that they weren't particularly thrilled with what Jesus doing.

In chapter 13, Jesus then explains the different responses that people will have to Him. Some souls will be like hard soil, which is so hard that the word cannot penetrate (Matt. 13:19). Some souls will be like the shallow soil, which receives the word gladly, but which is temporary due to the affliction or persecution that comes from following Jesus (Matt. 13:20-21). Some souls will be like the crowded soil, which receives the word and begins to grow, but is choked out by the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches (Matt. 13:22). Some souls will be like the good soil, which receives the word and understands it and brings forth abundant fruit (Matt. 13:23). The question of application is obvious. Which type of soil are you? Are you hard-hearted like the Pharisees? Have you seen the mighty workings of Jesus, but have simply refused to believe it? Are you good soil? Does Matthew 13:44 describe you? "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid/ and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." This verse describes what it means to forsake everything in order to obtain Christ!

That's what the first 13 chapters of Matthew are about. Jesus is introduced as "Immanuel," God with us. He demonstrated His authority in His teaching and in His miracles. The responses were varied. Some believed. Some believed a little. Some hated Jesus.

5. Ministry of Jesus (chapters 14-20)

Beginning in chapter 14, we see a continuation of the ministry of Jesus. From chapters 14-20, Jesus is (1) performing miracles, (2) revealing to the disciples who He is, and (3) teaching.

Miracles

He continues his unbelievable miracles. In chapter 14, He feeds 5,000 men, which may be up to 20,000 mouths when you include women and children. He does it all with two fish and a few loaves of bread. Immediately after this, Jesus sends His disciples away on a boat, so that He could pray. After a long struggle in the storm on the sea, Jesus walks to them on the water to help them. In chapter 15, Jesus heals the Canaanite woman's daughter and feeds 4,000 men, which may have been around 15,000 mouths that were fed and satisfied. Again, with a few fish and a few loaves of bread. Look at how awesome His miracles were...

"And great multitudes came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them, so that the multitude marveled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matt. 15:30-31)

The miracles that Matthew records are a sampling of the wonderful things that Jesus was doing. Certainly, there were many who were walking around the shores of the Sea of Galilee, who could only attribute their healing to the wonder-working miracle man.

You would think that this would have been a good thing for Jesus. And yet, through this time, Jesus is facing increasing pressure from the Pharisees. At the beginning of chapter 15, they dispute with Him, because the disciples didn't follow the ceremonial customs of the Pharisees regarding washing their hands (15:2). At the beginning of chapter 16, they demand more signs as they did in chapter 12. They asked Jesus to "show them a sign from heaven" (16:1). Jesus responded by telling them that they were great weathermen, but they were terrible theologians. When it is red at night, you know that it is sailor's delight. When it is red in the morning, you know that it is the sailor's warning. But while the Messiah is in their midst, working wondrous miracles, they fail to recognize what is happening. They should have understood everything that was going on all around them. They should have understood that the incredible miracles that were taking place were merely a sign that the messianic age was dawning.

If you take a look at the whole scope of Biblical history, you'll find that there were only three times in which God poured out miracles. It happened during the time of Moses and the Exodus (plagues, splitting the sea, provision of water and manna in the desert), during the time of Elijah and Elisha (fire coming from heaven, children raised from the dead, Naaman healed, axe heads floating), and during the times of Jesus. Times of miracles are few and far between. They should have realized that a new day had dawned.

Sadly, these Pharisees simply didn't believe what they had seen and heard. Perhaps even sadder is the fact that the disciples weren't much better. Look in 16:5, "And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread." They had forgotten to bring food, and they were worried about it. They were trying to figure out where they were going to get their next meal. Jesus, who had fed 5,000 men was with them in the boat. Jesus, who had fed 4,000 men was with them in the boat. Look at verse 8, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss

among yourselves that you have no bread?" This wasn't the only time that Jesus chastised His disciples for having little faith. They also had little faith in the boat during the storm (8:26). Peter had little faith when walking to Jesus on the water (14:31). The disciples couldn't cast a demon out of a little boy, "because of the littleness of [their] faith."

If you think about the disciples, you'll realize they had the privilege of walking with Jesus, talking with Jesus, and beholding His wondrous miracles. But they had a faith that is small. Perhaps this is an encouragement to us. I know that it encourages me. Perhaps my little faith isn't so unusual after all. I need what Peter received in chapter 16:16. I need divine help to see eternal realities. And so do you.

Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They gave various answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, another prophet. Jesus then said, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" He got it! This is what Matthew is about. It is about Jesus Christ and showing who He is. Many didn't understand. Many didn't believe. The faith of the disciples was small. But the claims of Jesus are true! Jesus is the Messiah, come to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). It wasn't Peter who figured it out. Look at verse 17, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

At this point, when Jesus began to reveal Himself more fully to His disciples, His miracles take a back seat to what Jesus reveals about Himself and the kingdom of heaven. In chapter 16, He revealed that He was the Messiah. In chapter 17, He revealed that He was God in the transfiguration. In light of this incredible revelation, Jesus does a curious thing. We see that in Matt. 16:20, He warns His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ. We see this after Peter, James and John saw Christ transfigured before them in Matthew 17. When they came down from the mountain, Jesus said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead"(Matt.17:9). Jesus was careful at this point in time not to reveal too much about Himself. The hour for His crucifixion hadn't yet come.

In the first 16 chapters, Jesus had not fully revealed Himself. He still had more revealing to do. On three separate occasions, Jesus told His disciples what the plan was going to be once they arrived in Jerusalem.

Matt. 16:21, "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Matt. 17:22-23, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."

Matt. 20:18-19, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."

He wanted make sure these disciples understood what was going to happen in Jerusalem so that they might not lose heart when He is crucified. (Though, we will find out later, they did). He still had more teaching to do. In chapter 18, Jesus taught about how to be great in the kingdom. First, you need to get in (by being converted) (verse 3). Then, you need to get down (by being humble, as children) (verse 4).

The last half of chapter 18 is devoted to the importance of forgiving others. The main lesson was this: Forgiven people forgive people. In chapter 19, Jesus teaches about divorce, marriage, singleness and the priority that children ought to have in the church. In the last half of chapter 19, Jesus confronts the rich young ruler with his covetousness. Rather than forsaking everything and following Christ, this man kept it and forsook Christ (19:22). At the end of chapter 20, we find Jesus still teaching about greatness in the kingdom.

I want to spend a few moments looking at Matthew 20:26-28, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his Life a ransom for many." These verses are great for us to ponder. Do you want to be great in the kingdom? Be a lowly servant, like Jesus was. He deserved to be worshiped by all around Him. But, He served those around Him by healing them, by feeding them, by teaching them, and by loving them. Many of whom would turn on Him and call for His crucifixion. He took that apron of a slave and washed the feet of His disciples, something that His disciples were unwilling to do. He humbled Himself to the point of death, even a despised death upon the cross. He did this, though His disciples deserted Him.

And the purpose for His death is in verse 28. He died as a ransom. When we think of a ransom, we often think about a hostage situation. Some people have been taken at gun-point and have been held against their will in an undisclosed location. The kidnappers have placed a financial demand upon those wanting these hostages to be released. Upon receiving the ransom, they will let the prisoners go. The picture with our sin is somewhat similar. As we have sinned, we have come under bondage. No longer can we fellowship with God. No longer can we be with God. But, God has wanted us back. So, Jesus was sent to die upon the cross as the ransom payment for our sins. The sin that would keep us from God, is no longer an issue because Jesus has paid the ransom price. The price was a sinless sacrifice.

In our study of Matthew, we've covered chapters 1-20. That is "Where We've Been." We have seen the

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Chapters 21-28 is "Where We'll Be." These are the ...

6. Last Days of Jesus (chapters 21-28)

Jesus is headed to the cross. In chapters 21 and 22, the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees will continue to mount. But, there will reach a point in which these Pharisees have given up trying to trap Jesus in His words. It comes in the very last verse of chapter 22, "And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question" (Matt.22:46).

In chapter 23, Jesus will curse the Pharisees with seven "woes" because of their hypocrisy. In chapters 24-25, Jesus will prepare His disciples for what will take place after His death and resurrection. In chapters 26-28, we will see the sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That's the wonderful news that transforms people!

The very last three verses of Matthew defines our mission as a church. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (verse 18). And then, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (verses 19-20).

As a church, it is our passion to be disciples who are about the business of making disciples of Jesus. May the Lord help us in our task!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 10, 2004 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
