



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Bible Study

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JANUARY

2011

MORNING & EVENING SERMONS

## MATTHEW

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## MATTHEW 4:17-22: THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED AND FOLLOWERS ARE GATHERED

### GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

## Introduction

Jesus' message had an essentially simple thought. He announced that the long-promised kingdom of God was now here and summoned people to enter it. Kingdom-entry typically required a 'u-turn' in which the egotistic kingdom of self-rule was left behind and a person accepted Jesus' kingly rule over them (v17). This kingdom message was, and is, designed to change lives. This change was radical in Simon, Andrew, James and John. It involved a leaving and then a whole new direction. We are not all called to 'leave our nets' but our lives should be changed when we enter Jesus' kingdom. What changes does he expect in us? What changes have happened in your life?

## For Study and Discussion

### 1. Preaching the Gospel v 17

'Jesus began to preach "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near'

What do the following words mean in this context?

'preach'

'repent'

'kingdom of God'

'near'

'Preach' is sometimes translated as 'to cry, or proclaim as a herald. Is this applicable here do you think?

'From that time on' or the similar phrase 'From then on ...' occurs three times in Matthew. Here, 16:21 and 26:16. What is significant about the times this wording is used? What is the event that marked 'that time' in v17? (see Matt 4:12)

### 2. Jesus began to gather followers v18ff

Who were called?

What were they asked to do, and what did they do?

Did the first disciples just follow anyone who asked them? See John 1:35-42

## Discipleship Pointers

The disciples followed Jesus before they even fully understood who He was. Are we taking every opportunity to understand the person of Jesus better so we know who we are following?

Are we following? The lives of the disciples changed dramatically when they started to follow Jesus. What changes in our lives are evidence that we are following Jesus?

Are there areas of our lives which we still need to leave behind in order to follow more closely, just as Peter, Andrew, James and John left everything behind them to follow Jesus?

## Family Moments

If you have children, try playing this game. Have an adult be the leader and move around the living room taking the difficult route – sometimes under a table, or over a chair and get the younger family members to follow. Depending on the space and furniture available be as imaginative as you want! Swap round and give them a chance to lead. Afterwards sit down and talk about being a follower – was it easy? Were you always prepared to follow even if the route was difficult? Use this as an opening to talk about following Jesus always, however much we may want to lead (rule ourselves), even when the road is hard.

## MATTHEW 8:18-27: ANYONE AND ANYWHERE TO SLEEP?

### GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

## Introduction

Sleep is the common topic in these two passages. A religious leader was all set to follow Jesus, but perhaps not prepared for the warning that Jesus had no fixed place to sleep. This is probably a reference to His poverty and the itinerant nature of His ministry. At a deeper level it may be indicative of the fact that He had no sense of earthly 'home'. Nazareth was the place He came from but He belonged everywhere and yet nowhere at all. Where is our sense of 'home'? Do we have an earthly 'home' attachment that hinders our kingdom usefulness? The storm scene exposes the kind of faith that is needed in Jesus' followers. The disciples' lack of faith is seen in sleeplessness. Does our nocturnal anxious tossing and turning reflect a failure to trust Jesus with the troubles of yesterday and tomorrow? In what ways does v27 challenge this faithlessness?

As Christians we focus much of the attention of our faith on the cross and on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But there is another aspect which must never be ignored. Jesus Christ, the teacher, teaches us what it is to be a disciple. What must we do to follow him? The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), in particular, contain many sayings of Jesus concerning discipleship. It is worth noting that Matthew 8 follows directly the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), where Jesus sets out the ethical demands which our faith in Him requires.

## For Study and Discussion

### 1. A teacher of the Law (8:19-20)

What does the Teacher of the Law say he will do? How would you understand the word 'follow' here considering the previous verse (v.18)?

Why do you think Jesus talks about foxes? For interest's sake and to sharpen our understanding of 'fox' find the only other NT reference to 'fox' (excluding Luke's parallel of this story). Who is speaking and who is he talking about? Does Jesus' choice of 'fox', as opposed to, e.g. rabbit or sheep, have any significance?

What about the birds of the air? 'The birds of the air' are mentioned in two other places by Matthew (6:26, 13:32). How do these other passages help in our interpretation of 8:20?

Jesus tells the teacher of the Law that He has no place to sleep. Is this a literal statement, or a figurative one and what does it mean to the teacher of the Law?

What does this lesson tell us about discipleship? In what ways, if at all, is this saying of Jesus relevant to your own life of discipleship? What does the word 'follow' mean to you? Discuss.

2. A disciple (8:21-22)

Do you think the disciple's father has just died?

Whilst there may be no right or wrong answer to 2.i what is Jesus telling the disciple he must do?

Who are to bury the dead? This seems like a riddle. What does this mean?

What does this lesson tell us about discipleship? In what ways, if at all, is this saying of Jesus relevant to your own life of discipleship? Discuss.

3. The disciples see Jesus' power (8:23-27)

What did the disciples do in verse 23?

How did the disciples react when it seemed that the storm would sink the boat (v.25)?

When they had woken Jesus what was the first thing He did... and the second (v.26)?

As the sea calmed what was the reaction of the disciples – how well did they know Jesus?

What does this lesson tell us about discipleship? In what ways is this story about Jesus relevant to our own life of discipleship?

## Discipleship Pointers

Discipleship requires commitment and a willingness to face uncertainty. It demands a willingness that, unlike ordinary people, we become extraordinary and are prepared to follow Jesus wherever He might lead us, even if that entails real hardship and no earthly place to call home. We must follow Jesus wherever He might go.

Discipleship requires single-mindedness to follow Jesus. Whatever the apparently reasonable commitments of this world – family, work etc. – Jesus tells us that we must not allow these to get in the way of our commitment to Him.

Discipleship of this sort requires faith that we can trust in Jesus – the disciples were unable to trust sufficiently when Jesus was sleeping and they thought the boat would sink. How strong is your faith?

The problem for the disciples was that they didn't really know Jesus. How well do you know Jesus? Or maybe they knew in their heads but not in their hearts, so when faith was needed they didn't have enough. Does that describe you?

Pray for understanding as to what Jesus wants you to do and for strength to actually do it.

## Family/Group Moment

In what ways can you as a family, or as a group, encourage one another in discipleship? Of course we can and should pray for one another. But are there discipleship activities that we can do together?

## MATTHEW 10:1-15: FROM FOLLOWER TO SERVANT

### GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

## Introduction

Real progression is marked here as the people who first became followers (see Ch. 4 above) now become servants. The Twelve become a clearly demarcated group. In what way is their mission a parallel to the mission of Jesus? What does this imply? In what ways is their mission a standing instruction to the church of all ages? Note that the instruction regarding Samaritans and non-Gentiles reflects both the 'training' nature of this exercise and also the broader priority that, while the gospel is for all people, it starts with the Jews (e.g. Rom 1:16-17). What do the instructions about what (not) to take reveal about the mission? In what ways do they translate to kingdom servants today as we spread the gospel? Vv14-15: how do we know when to persist and when to move on?

## For Study and Discussion

Sending out the Twelve

a) Who does Jesus call? What does He command them to do? How does He equip them for the work to be done?

b) How are you equipping yourself to do God's work?

Instructing the Twelve

a.) What specific instructions are given to these disciples?

b) What does 'the kingdom of heaven is near' mean? What does this mean to you?  
How are you responding to this claim?

c) What does 'freely you have received, freely give' (Job 1:21) mean? What 'physical and spiritual' things have you received freely? What 'physical and spiritual things' are you giving away freely? How are you living up to this verse in your life?



## MATTHEW 18: 1-4: THE LEAST IS THE GREATEST

### GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

## Introduction

Several Gospel passages reflect a reality among Jesus' followers. Pride and a desire to be prominent remain in our hearts. Jesus' words kick away the props of this pride. Childlike dependence is our model. Note the distinction between being childlike and childish. Indeed one measure of moving on from a childish following of Jesus is that we leave behind self-assertion and the desire for prominence and position. In what ways do we jostle for kingdom 'greatness'? What practical steps can we take to restrain pride and advance humility in ourselves and others?

## For Study and Discussion

"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (18: 1)

Why did the disciples ask this question? (see Mk 9: 33- 34; Lk 9: 46-47)

What answer were they hoping for from Jesus? (see Mt. 20: 20-21)

"become like little children" (18: 3)

We are to "change/convert/turn round" and become like a child (a pre-school age child). What does this mean?

List some characteristics of young children – What are they like? What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses?

What characteristics of a little child is Jesus referring to here? (e.g. Ps 131; 1 Cor 14: 20; Mt 6: 31)

What characteristics of a little child is Jesus not referring to here? (1 Cor 14:20; Eph 4: 14)

How about us? How childlike are we?

“the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (18:4)  
Who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of God?

What does it mean to “humble ourselves”? (e.g. Deut 8:2-3, 10-18; Isa 58:3-7; Dan 10:2,3&12; Eph 4:2-3; 1 Peter 5:6-7; some humble people: Num 12:3, Mt 11:19)

What does it mean to “humble ourselves like a child”?

## Discipleship Pointers

### **From Followers to Servants**

In the last four weeks, we have covered four passages:

Matthew 4: 17-22: The gospel is preached. We become followers and our lives are changed. What kind of changes does Jesus expect in us? What kind of changes has Christ brought to your life?

Matthew 8:18-27: Jesus did not really have a sense of an earthly home. How about us? Where is our sense of home? Are our earthly attachments hindering our kingdom usefulness?

Matthew 10:1-15: The 12 disciples were sent out to preach the gospel – for a limited period of time – very much a training experience. They were willing to go and they learnt as a result. How about us?

Matthew 18:1-4: The disciples argued about who was the greatest. They had to learn that to be the greatest in God's kingdom, they had to humble themselves and become like a child or a servant. Jesus said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- 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.” (Mt 20:25-28)  
Where are we on this journey from Followers to Servants?

## Family/Group Moment

Are we bringing our children up in this childlike simple and humble faith in God? Are we good examples for our children to follow?

What example do those of us who are ‘mature’ Christians set to the ‘younger’ members in our group? Can they detect a burning commitment to God's kingdom in what we say and, most importantly, in how we live our lives?