Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Matthew Chapter Four – Week 55: The Great Sermon, Part 4

Old Things and New Things …

Day 378. Choices

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Matthew 6:24).

"Make a choice!" We hear that time and time again. What will you watch? What will you listen to? What will you study? What job will you get? Who will you love? Where will you live? Make a choice! We always are choosing something – and our choices betray who (or what) we serve. If we love wealth (money, material things, comfort, the ability to do whatever we want whenever we want) – our choices will show that. If we love God – our choices will show that as well. This passage isn't to condemn all the good things God gives us but is rather a call for unqualified discipleship. God must be first, not money or possessions, not wealth. Else, you are not following Christ, but pursuing something you value higher than Christ. The gift can be a blessing, or the gift can become a master.

Look critically at the choices you are making today. What are you pursuing?

Where does God fit in the desires of your heart? Would your choices be different if you always had God first? If "yes" – do you really desire to change? Have a conversation with Christ about this, and then share that with your fellow explorers.

Share as appropriate.

Day 379: Don't worry

"I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't there more to life than food and more to the body than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky: They do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more valuable than they are? And which of you by worrying can add even one hour to his life? Why do you worry about clothing? Think about how the flowers of the field grow; they do not work or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these! And if this is how God clothes the wild grass, which is here today and tomorrow is tossed into the fire to heat the oven, won't he clothe you even more, you people of little faith? So then, don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So then, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:25-34)

Just talk to Him. Honour Him, do His will, be grateful, trust Him. Forgive, and walk away from temptations. Forgive. Make your life a prayer to God. Have Him be your treasure-keeper. Have line-of-sight with the Father and be filled with light. Have God be first above all in your heart of hearts.

And so, don't worry. God will give you what you need. Pursue Him, pursue His kingdom, pursue His righteousness. Adopt the mannerisms and focus of the head of your family, God Himself. "In my Father's house, we do things THIS way…" and do them. "In the family of Christ, we speak THIS way…" and speak thus. He will give you everything you need to do His will. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.…"

Write down your worries. Give them to God.

Share what you wrote as is appropriate.

Day 380: Judgment

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For by the standard you judge you will be judged, and the measure you use will be the measure you receive. Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but fail to see the beam of wood in your own? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye,' while there is a beam in your own? You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to dogs or throw your pearls before pigs; otherwise they will trample them under their feet and turn around and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:1-6)

"Don't judge me!" This seems to be a rallying cry for our society today. Yet we must make judgements. If we are to choose wisely (as per Day 378), we must judge. Judging is critical to a righteous life.

But. "By the standard you judge you will be judged, and the measure you use will be the measure you receive."

Judge yourself first and most intensely. Judge others lightly, with mercy. And put your effort where it can do good, not where your gift will be misused or harm caused. It takes discretion, thoughtfulness, talking with God, and love.

Write down your thoughts regarding what is shared here.

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 381: Receiving … and giving

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! In everything, treat others as you would want them to treat you, for this fulfills the law and the prophets. (Matthew 6:16-18)

"In my Father's house, the Father loves His children. He gives them what they need. If there is something they need and they do not have it, He will provide. In the same way, we treat each other graciously, for that is our Father's will."

Treat others the same as you want the Father to treat you. Strive to look at everyone (and everything) with your Father's eyes. Then, with good conscience, come before your Father in heaven, and ask Him for what you need, in love.

Is there anything you need that you don't have? Bring it to our Father. For everything else that you already have, give thanks.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 382: The narrow gate

"Enter through the narrow gate because the gate is wide and the way is spacious that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it!" (Matthew 7:13-14).

What is the wide gate that many find? What is the narrow gate? Why do so few find it? Which one are you walking through?

Explore with your fellow explorers.

Day 383: Integrity and deceit

"Watch out for false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are voracious wolves. You will recognize them by their fruit. Grapes are not gathered from thorns or figs from thistles, are they? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree is not able to bear bad fruit, nor a bad tree to bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will recognize them by their fruit." (Matthew 7:15-20)

Watch out for hypocrites. For false prophets. For actors. For people without integrity. Recognize them: does evil happen around them, or good? Do they take, or do they give? Stay clear of evil in all its forms, and let God deal with them. Let there be no deceitfulness.

Having integrity is extremely important in the family of Christ. How is yours? How about in your circle of acquaintances? Pray for yourself and them, that you and they may be filled with integrity, and follow Christ with all honesty.

Share with Christ.

Day 384: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God.