Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

## *Matthew Chapter Four – Week 56: The Great Sermon, Summation*

*Old Things and New Things …*

## Day 385. The fruit of hypocrisy

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven—only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many powerful deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Go away from me, you lawbreakers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

"Claim the name of Jesus, and you shall be saved!" the preacher exhorted His audience.

Except, that's not what Jesus said. Jesus *did* say that faith was necessary ("Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.", Mark 11:23-24), but also we are to express our dependence on God, acknowledge His sovereignty, and seek His will (e.g., Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 22:42). We are also taught that prayer is not a means of manipulating God but rather a way of communicating with Him and seeking His guidance (James 4:2-3). And yes, Jesus did say many provocative things, like "Believe in Me" and "The Father and I are one."

Possibly Paul comes closest to "claim the name" in Romans 10:9-10 where he wrote, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation." But if you confessed with your mouth that "Jesus is Lord" in Paul's day, you would be imprisoned, or tortured, or killed. So Paul is saying, in other words, "if you are willing to give your life in witness to Christ, believing that He is raised from the dead, you shall be saved."

Jesus is targeting one of his biggest pet peeves: hypocrisy. Don't call Jesus 'Lord' unless you really mean it – is He the one directing your life and claiming your allegiance? Do you know Him and does He know you? Is He reflected in your life, your actions and your words? What you do and say? If so, welcome to His family, His Father's Household.

Note that Jesus is targeting hypocrisy. If you don't know Jesus, or feel you don't, yet are earnestly seeking a better life, a life of love, a life where the healthiest is pursued for everyone, then He has all the time in the world for you – and time beyond the world, too.

Jesus desires you to be part of His Father's household, yet He cannot abide hypocrisy. How can you live your life with Him honestly, starting today? Is there anything you should stop doing? Start doing? Make notes of them here.

Share as appropriate, with those you trust.

## Day 386: Do and Say

"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, but it did not collapse because its foundation had been laid on rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, and it collapsed—it was utterly destroyed!"

When Jesus finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed by his teaching, because He taught them like one who had authority, not like their experts in the law." (Matthew 7:24-29)

"If you do what I've just told you, you'll be safe and secure – otherwise, all bets are off!" Jesus claimed an authority which astonished His listeners. He not only could recite scripture and expound on it, He took its basic meanings and claimed them for Himself. "*You have heard it said … but I say to you…*" It was as if He could read scripture and discern, "In my Father's house, this means 'X'". Reading about the deceitfulness of people: "in My Father's house, we are honest and have integrity." About murder, lust, etc.: "in my Father's house, we not only do not do them, we do not even *think* about them." About prayer: "just keep it simple. Just as if you're talking directly to Me." At its most basic: "have your identity as a member of the Household of God. Do and Say accordingly. You will find you have all you need."

How astonishing.

Re-read chapters 5-7 of Matthew in one sitting and write down what strikes you. Share it with God your Father, and with those you love.

Share what you wrote as is appropriate.

## Day 387: Do and Say

We've just had three chapters of Jesus Saying – now we'll have some chapters of Him Doing. Both are in sync – the doing reinforces the saying, and the saying identifies the doing. A wholistic life incorporates all your being with integrity. Say what you do and do what you say. What does Jesus to demonstrate living in His Father's household?

After He came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. And a leper approached and bowed low before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." He stretched out His hand and touched him saying, "I am willing. Be clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you do not speak to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest, and bring the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Matthew 8:1-4)

He heals. And He heals with risk – social risk, for touching a leper was forbidden, and physical risk, for He Himself could have contracted the disease. Healing takes risk.

Let us walk with Jesus as He continues His path of Doing and Saying His Father's Kingdom.

Have you experienced any type of healing in your life? Have you thanked God for it? Healing is not automatic, no matter how we may presume it will just happen. Healing, of any type, is an inbreaking of the Kingdom of God into the kingdoms of the world. Make notes of how Jesus has healed you in your life to date. Perhaps note how he has healed others your know of, as well.

Share your notes with those you trust.

## Day 388: Surprise!

When He entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him asking for help: "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible anguish." Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof! Instead, just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave 'Do this!' and he does it." When Jesus heard this he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found such faith in anyone in Israel! I tell you, many will come from the east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; just as you believed, it will be done for you." And the servant was healed at that hour. (Matthew 8:5-13)

Here is something truly astonishing – so astonishing that parts of it astonished Jesus. The first surprise is that Jesus is willing to help a non-descendent of Abraham – someone "outside the flock" so to speak. The second surprise is the great faith of that person, faith in Jesus' abilities. The third surprise is Jesus' declaration that many outsiders will be welcomed into His Father's kingdom, while many "insiders" will be rejected. This would not have sit well with many of Jesus' fellow Jews! And the fourth surprise (for many worldly people especially) is that the centurion's servant is indeed healed through the Centurion's faith in Jesus. This is the second incident described immediately after Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (which I have called "The Great Sermon"), and it is also a healing.

If someone comes to Jesus seeking help, Jesus will respond. Faith is important, honesty is important – credentials are meaningless. Those who are focused on credentials, on appearances, or are hypocritical, will probably find themselves on the outside looking in. Those who have honest need, are humble, and seeking health, will probably find themselves on the inside, often much to their astonishment. Talk to Jesus. Ask Him to help you. If your faith is small, as Him for something small. As your faith grows, let your requests grow. Our Father delights when you involve Him in your life.

Share your thoughts on faith, honesty, healing, and working with God.

## Day 389: The narrow gate

Now when Jesus entered Peter's house, He saw his mother-in-law lying down, sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to serve them. When it was evening, many demon-possessed people were brought to Him. He drove out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. In this way what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: "***He took our weaknesses and carried our diseases***."
(Matthew 8:14-17).

Now Matthew describes a third healing (the number 3 was sometimes used to represent completeness, wholeness, and perfection), this time with Peter's mother-in-law. He heals her, and she begins to serve Him. Almost as an after-thought, he heals many "demon-possessed people" as well. And then Matthew refers back to "He took our weaknesses and carried our diseases," a reference to a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 53:4.

Matthew is making a deliberate point here. We have just heard Jesus give a lengthy sermon focused on how to live according to the will of God. And now, we have three descriptions of healing. Jesus has said, and now Jesus does. First, He heals an outcast, a leper. Second, He heals an outsider, in fact, an enemy – the servant of a soldier of the occupying power! Third and finally, He heals a close loved one, who immediately begins to serve Him. The Kingdom of God is for the outcast. The kingdom of God is for the enemy. The Kingdom of God is for the loved one. The Kingdom of God is for anyone who will believe, and accept the healing it offers. Christ provides the healing, for He does what He sees the Father asking Him to do. Jesus is the Messiah, the One Anointed to incarnate the Kingdom of God here on earth. This is so radical that all will reject it, except those who have the humility, the honesty – to believe.

As mentioned, in some Jewish mystical traditions, the number 3 holds symbolic significance, representing completeness, harmony, or balance. This could be seen as indirectly related to the concept of shalom, which also connotes completeness, wholeness, and harmony. Jesus is the way to shalom.

When Jesus said He was the way, He meant it – He is the way to healing, to wholeness, to completeness – to shalom. His Kingdom, His Father's Kingdom, is the Kingdom of healing, of wholeness, of health. Believe in Him and come into the Kingdom. That is Matthew's point.

Is anything preventing you from fully entering the Kingdom of God? Make note of it here, and then discuss with Jesus.

Share with your fellow explorers as you feel led.

## Day 390: Direction

"Now when Jesus saw a large crowd around Him, He gave orders to go to the other side of the lake. Then an expert in the law came to Him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have dens, and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead." (Matthew 8:18-22)

When Jesus sees the large crowd …

He runs away.

*What?*

That's what it says! He goes to the other side of the lake. Jesus isn't seeking fame. He isn't seeking fortune. He isn't even trying to convince people as we think of it – He's trying to let the Father do that and be open when it happens (as He said to Peter, "You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven!" (Matthew 16:17)). He warns people away: "I don't know where I'll be sleeping tonight frankly – are you ready for that?" And He upbraids people in a manner which seems quite harsh: "You have life – follow Me (the authour of life), and let the dead bury the dead – value me higher than your father, your mother, your other loved ones."

Jesus was not trying to please people. He wasn't seeking fame, fortune, or power. He wasn't interested in being "a nice guy."

He was interested in speaking and doing the Kingdom of God.

When you pursue the Kingdom of God, you don't always know where you will sleep, what you will eat, or where you will go. You do know, however, that Jesus will be with you. Seeking health does not mean pleasing people or pleasing yourself – it means faithfully displaying the aspects of God which He has filled you with (as His Image), and pursuing health, wholeness, completeness: love.

Describe your adventures in pursuing life in the household of our Father, being true to God.

## Day 391: 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.