

Reading Schedule for October 15-21, 2018

Thank you for being a participant in daily reading of God's Word. I took a little survey of some of the people I know on their involvement in daily reading. I was surprised that a number of people are not engaging in God's Word on a daily basis. This rhythm in my life has made a big difference, so I congratulate you on displaying your discipline to absorb God's Word daily. I am sure it is making an important difference in your life.

October 15 – Matthew 19:1-12: “The disciples said to him, ‘If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.’” (v.10) This whole section elevates the significance of marriage in the sight of God. It is impossible for us to have such a high view of marriage when our culture has diminished it in so many ways. It is easily discarded. It has been redefined and most couples today are engaging in marital relationships before their commitment in marriage. This is not the way it was from the beginning, just like Jesus said. Even the disciples struggled with Jesus' definition of marriage. There is no way you can take God seriously and have a casual view of marriage. Obviously, there are some situations where the behavior of a spouse is so detrimental that it severs the relationship, as he refers to marital unfaithfulness. But by and large, marriage is meant to be a lifelong commitment. How do you respond to Jesus' teaching on marriage?

October 16 – Matthew 19:13-30: “Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’” (v.21) The word “perfect” jumps off the page because we often say, “No one is perfect.” That is obviously true. But what is the meaning here? He is challenging the man about the strong grip his possessions have on his life. This man's wealth had become the sign of his identity, power and sense of meaning. In this way, it was idolatrous. The word “perfect” means complete. If he really wanted to be complete, he would surrender the idols of his life and experience the treasure of heaven. He was trying to earn his way to heaven externally, but he needed an internal transformation. This is a fascinating story that is so relevant today. How do you respond to Jesus' challenge to this rich man?

October 17 – Matthew 20:1-16: “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” (v.16) This wraps up this interesting parable about how God gives grace from beginning to end. Too often we compare ourselves to others. We think our relationship with God and our efforts on His behalf are of more worth than someone who responds in the “11th hour.” No matter how we look at it, God is more gracious to us than we deserve. If we had the mind of God on the spiritual needs of people, we would be delighted with anyone and everyone responding to the gift of life before they die. It seems to me that the response that the Lord desires is one of gratitude. The Lord is generous to those of us who have known him for a long time, because we don't deserve it any more than the person who responds later in life. How do you respond to this interesting parable?

October 18 – Matthew 20:17-34: “—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.” (v.28) This is a very significant verse because it summarizes Jesus' mission. His attitude was to give himself to us, even though it would mean sacrificing his life on our behalf. Ransom is the word for payment. It was connected to the amount needed to release slaves. Jesus forecasts his death on our behalf as our substitute. But also, we read that

Jesus did not come to be served, even though he deserved it, but rather his life would be one of servanthood. He gives of himself. This is an example that should motivate us to do the same. The life of following Christ is one of service. Not serving is never an option. What stands out to you in this relevant reading?

October 19 – Matthew 21:1-11: “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” (v.5) Do you remember how often I have mentioned that Matthew uses the Old Testament more than any other Gospel writer. He was primarily writing to Jews, wanting them to understand that Jesus was the Messiah. This prophecy was connected to the coming of the Messiah. Zechariah wrote about this 500 years previously. It comes from Zechariah 9:9. Jesus' action is an open declaration that he is the righteous, Davidic Messiah that all the Jews were anticipating. The prophecy can read “on a donkey and on a colt,” indicating two animals, consistent with Matthew's account. Having another donkey move alongside her unbroken colt would be the best way to calm it during the noisy entrance into Jerusalem. Isn't the Word of God fascinating?! The connection between the Old and New Testament is powerful, always highlighting the one and only Son of God. How do you respond to this familiar story of the triumphal entry?

October 20 – Matthew 21:12-32: “Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.” (v.12) You know this story is recorded several times in God's Word. Even John records a time when Jesus went to the temple early in his ministry to confront the worldly practices of the religious leaders of that day. According to Mark, this event took place on Monday morning of the final week of Jesus. Within the temple there was sort of a market where commercial activity enabled pilgrims from throughout the region to participate in temple activities, exchange their own currency for temple currency, and purchase animals and other items for sacrifices. Jesus called this practice “a den of robbers.” Verse 13 uses a reference from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 to affirm Jesus confronting the practice of selling and exchanging money in the temple courts. What stands out to you about this repeated story of Jesus cleansing the temple?

October 21 – Matthew 21:33-46: ““Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.” (v.33) I use the introductory verse as the launch into this parable. Jesus spoke in parables so often. This is another interesting teaching about how the religious people of that day were missing God's kingdom in their self-righteous behavior. In verse 43 we see that the transition of the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jewish leaders and given to the church. Jesus would be the foundation of the church, which would consist of disciples who had responded in faith, whether Jew or Gentile. Matthew quotes Psalm 118:22 & 23, pointing to the fact that Jesus would be a cornerstone, which is a title that the Apostle Paul used for Jesus' role in the church. The kingdom of God advances through the church as we are his people. What stands out to you in this parable?

PRAYER: Pray for our After School Ministry, as well as our Food Bank, which are our primary ways of reaching out to our community.