

Week 19: "The Ministry of Reconciliation"

Memory Verse

"Looking at his disciples, he said:

'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets" Luke 6: 20-23

Day One

Sunday, February 23, 2003

"The Ministry of Reconciliation"

Read: Leviticus 3 (p. 112) and Commentary (p. 113)

Reflect: What images come to mind when you think of reconciliation (can you think of incidents in your life, movie scenes, etc.)?

What are some synonyms of reconciliation (e.g. restore, unite...)?

Dig: Why did God require blood sacrifices in the First Testament age?

See "Freedom Point" on p. 128 and also read Lev. 17:10-12 (p. 129).

See also Hebrews 9:22 (p. 1430).

What might this drastic measure (of animal sacrifice) tell you about the seriousness of sin and the value of the glory and honor of God?

Apply: Turn to Romans 12:1-2 and form a prayer based on that text. Be sure to ask God that you become a "living sacrifice" in your life today.

Day Two
Monday, February 24, 2003
"Be at Peace With Each Other"

Read: Mark 9:50 (p. 1139) and Commentary (p. 1139)

Reflect: Make a list of all the things that we use salt for:

Dig: What is the immediate context of this verse? (see verses 42-49) Therefore, what is at least part of the motivation for being salty?

How does Leviticus 2:13 (p. 112), contribute to your understanding of verse 49?

How might the first part of the last sentence, "have salt in yourselves," be understood by the second part: "and be at peace with each other."?

Apply: The commentary states "...bringing light into a dark world is what makes life meaningful, and it doesn't matter what size light you have because there is not enough darkness in the world to put out the light of even one small candle." How is God calling you to light your candle today and thus become the salt that he called you to be?

Day Three
Tuesday, February 25, 2003
"Seeking the Forgiveness of Others"

Read: Luke 7:36-50 (p. 1165) and Commentary (p. 1165)

Reflect: What does a true and deep realization of our sin have to do with our sense of gratitude and our appreciation of the gospel?

What weakness or sinful lifestyle can you have special insight into because you yourself have experienced this same trap?

Dig: How is the conclusion to the teaching just previous to this story helpful in understanding the point of this story? See verses 33-35.

What does verse 49 tell you about whether those who were watching understood

what Jesus was teaching? What does their reaction tell you about the heart of the listener as it relates to hearing God's message?

What does the last line of verse 47 tell you about our desire to love others more (what is the connection to other issues)?

Apply: Think of someone who you need to seek forgiveness from. Study the steps (1-9) outlined in the commentary on page 1165. Seek God for an opportunity to put those steps into practice.

Day Four
Wednesday, February 26, 2003
"Forgiving Others"

Read: Ephesians 4:29-32 (p. 1361) and Commentary (p. 1360)

Reflect: Is there anyone who remains unforgiven in your life? Is there any hurt that you continually remember and feel bitterness over?

Dig: What does unforgiveness do to the Holy Spirit? (see verse 30)

How does forgiveness make us God-like? (see chapter 5:1)

Since we are to "forgive just as in Christ God forgave you," how might we have to forgive?

Look through the commentary and notice how carefully forgiveness is distinguished from setting healthy boundaries for the future. Why is this important?

Apply: Make a list of those things that God has repeatedly forgiven you for. Ask God for a spirit of gratitude about this forgiveness.

Day Five
Thursday, February 27, 2003
"Forgiving from the Heart"

Read: Matthew 18:21-35 (p. 1102) and Commentary (p. 1103)

Reflect: Think about why God's forgiveness of us is tied to our forgiveness of others. Why is there this close connection?

Dig: What question from Peter got this story from Jesus going? (see verses 21-22)

What is the point of the dramatic difference between what the two servants owed? (see footnotes *e* and *f* to note the differences)

Go to Romans 2:1-4 (p. 1280) to understand further the truth of this parable. What more do you learn about our need of forgiveness and God's mercy from this passage?

Apply: If you are ready to do so, please pray as follows:

Lord, I forgive _____ (person), for _____ (verbally express every hurt and pain the Lord brings to your mind and how it made you feel.)

After you have forgiven every person for every painful memory, finish by praying the following:

Lord, I release all these people to You, and I release my right to seek revenge. I choose not to hold on to my bitterness and anger, and I ask You to heal my damaged emotions. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.