



Were You There Lenten Devotional

Friday, February 23, 2024

Submitted by Nona Culpepper

Based on Matthew 22: 34-40

Matthew 22: 34-40

The Greatest Commandment

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[c] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[d] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Devotion by Nona Culpepper

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Which is the greatest commandment in the law?”

Jesus answered, “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul and your mind.”the text explains that you should honor God, the divine, almighty, omnipotent, powerful and loving God. Do not take the Lord’s name in vain. This is blasphemy. To take the Lord’s name in vain, is the most offensive expletive of any other poorly chosen words.

The 10 commandments is a list of laws they are supposed to be commanded. One meaning for Command is to order or direct authority. Some good synonyms are: direct, instruct, dictate, do,

Adherence and imperative. Do we follow these commands? Are they imperative?

God gave us the option to make choices but he made it easy because he gave us laws to go by:

HOLLOWED BE THY NAME.

Lenten Devotional Saturday, Feb 24, 2024

Matthew 23:1-39

Submitted by Patti Lyle

Matthew 23:1-39

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: **2** “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. **3** So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. **4** They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

5 “Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries[a] wide and the tassels on their garments long; **6** they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; **7** they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

8 “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. **9** And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. **10** Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. **11** The greatest among you will be your servant. **12** For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

13 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. **[14]** **[b]**

15 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

16 “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ **17** You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? **18** You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ **19** You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? **20** Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. **21** And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. **22** And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. **24** You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

25 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **26** Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

27 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. **28** In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

29 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. **30** And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ **31** So you testify against yourselves that you are the

descendants of those who murdered the prophets. **32** Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

33 “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? **34** Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **35** And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **36** Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **38** Look, your house is left to you desolate. **39** For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’[c]”

Devotion:

v. 11-12: “The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be

humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Servant. Humility. These are not words we like to think about a lot. But these words are red in

my Bible. Jesus spoke to them so I need to pay special attention. In the verses leading up to these

two, Jesus was pointing out how many of the teachers and Pharisees like to strut around with

showy robes and other adornments that brought extra attention to how important they were in

the temple. Jesus’ point in this discussion? Don’t be like them. Jesus modeled service and

humility for the disciples on a daily basis. That’s who we need to be like. Humility doesn’t

mean we have to think less of ourselves, but to think of ourselves less. We must follow Jesus’

example of serving those who need to see God's love in action, in our actions. And in doing this,

we can't show off what we are doing. Pray that God will show you where He wants or needs

you to serve. Do what you feel led by the Holy Spirit to do. Thank God for the opportunity to

serve. No selfies. No posts to boost your "like" count. Just serve with a humble spirit and

Thank God for His provision that allows your service. Any praise of gratitude you do receive,

take it graciously and pass it on to the Father.

Were You There Lenten Devotional

Sunday, February 25, 2024

Submitted By Bro, Jaimie

Based on Matthew 13:1-13

Scripture

Matthew 13:1-13

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. **2** Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. **3** Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. **8** Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. **9** Whoever has ears, let them hear."

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11 He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. **12** Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. **13** This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

Devotion

The parable of the sower asks each of us a serious question: on what type of ground am I standing? Even if you hear the good seed, it may not bear any fruits in your life. That is, just because you listen to your pastor every service does not mean that you will live a victorious Christian life.

The Scripture tugs at us, telling us that it takes more than just hearing God’s words. If we have no roots, no prior knowledge of God, then we must be diligent to build roots or we will fade away. The cares of the world, our jobs, the bills, and all the daily tasks can choke out Christ in our life.

Jesus is warning that we must take care to allow the seed, the Word of God, to grow in our lives. How do we do this? By simply hearing, reading, and understanding the Word of God.

I am amazed at how simple God’s plan is. When we take God at His word, believing that what He says is true, then all things will work out. We may not understand at first, but if we acknowledge that God’s words are true, then we will not be offended at something we read or hear in a sermon. If we do not understand, then we can ask God for understanding, and He will liberally give us wisdom (James 1:5). God does not want to withhold any good thing from us. If we want to understand Him, He will help us to do so.

Do not make the words of God more complicated than it is. Let it seep into your mind and heart. In time, it will bear wonderful fruits of peace, joy, longsuffering, love, and eventually godliness.

Prayer:

Faithful Lord, Thank you for your word of Life. May your word take root in my heart as I learn more about you. It is in your Holy Name that I pray, amen