

Freedom in Faith February 9, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Book of Matthew:

The Gospel of Matthew was most likely written sometime in the decade of 50 A.D. The Gospel narratives were probably written to help people remember the story from actual witnesses. Most likely, decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the stories about Jesus had morphed into half-truths. Each Gospel had many similar stories but with a unique perspective from the eye witness. The author, Matthew, was most likely one of the disciples and worked as a tax-collector. Matthew, because of his vocation, would not have been held in high esteem. Much like how we view the IRS in the U.S., we love the IRS, right? Matthew's Gospel appears to have the Gospel of Mark as a basis of his writing. Matthew's writing distinctively reveals Jesus as one coming from the Jewish line as seen in the opening genealogy and other statements throughout the Gospel. The writing was directed to the Jewish Christians and tried to help the community see Jesus as the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Matthew 6:24-33 (NIV)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Questions to Ponder:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

What is a “master?”

Why is it, no one can serve two masters?

Why do you think Matthew choose to speak of these two particular masters?

Who do you think the readers are? Their profile?

What is Matthew encouraging his readers to do?

Commentary:

To understand this passage, we must look at the context and setting. Jesus is speaking to a large group of new followers. They were hearing a message from Jesus that was foreign to the culture of the Romans who ruled the land. The passage, highlighted today, is set in the middle of Jesus’ sermon on the mound. In chapters 5 and 6, Jesus is teaching the people how to live radically in the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus started chapter 5 with what we call the “Beatitudes.” Chapter 6 highlights Jesus teaching on giving to the needy, prayer, fasting, treasures in heaven, and then our text on not worrying. The prayer you said today in the worship service is found in Matthew 6:9-13.

In our text today, Verses 32 and 33 hold the overarching principle of the message Jesus was speaking. It all comes down to how we are to live as God’s people in the Kingdom of God that comes through the work of Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. In the Greek text, verse 32 states that “For these things the nations seek.” Interesting how Matthew juxtapositions the Kingdom of God in the next verse with the nations in vs. 32. If we identify with God’s Kingdom, then this is how we are to live, not in worry and doing the things written previous in the text. So, when you read vs. 32 in the NIV translation, “run after all these things”... is a description of how fast the pagans seek to hold on to something they think has depth of meaning and fulfillment, but does not. Our culture is like that, as it runs after a lot of things (seeking fulfillment, pleasure, eating too much cake at lunch, not wanting to miss out, etc.), the faster it moves into depression, burnout, and meaninglessness. The way to have meaning is to live as people of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

Realistically speaking, what are your masters?

Where is God on your master list?

What are you running too?

What are you worried about? Why do you worry so much?

To whom do you compare yourself too? How do you not have what they have?

What does it mean to live in God's Kingdom here on earth?

What do you need to do to let go and have God as your master in every facet?

What does verse 33 mean to you?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Matthew 6:33, "33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."