

Journey Through the New Testament

Matthew 20-24

Series: God's Assumptions

"Love Actually"

2-3-19

Introduction

In Matthew's readings this week, there were a variety of parables and some miracles, but more difficult events occurred as Jesus' arrest and trial drew nearer. Jesus' authority was questioned again by the chief priests and elders and all eyes were upon him as he rode into Jerusalem through the shouting crowds. The temple scene with the money changers showed a side of Jesus that is seldom seen. But despite the drama of the unfolding story, the heart of the gospel and the life of Jesus is summed up in Matthew 22—The Greatest Commandment: Love God. Love neighbor.

The truth is so clear when we see Jesus point it out to the Sadducees and the Pharisees. And yet, like them, it is difficult for us to recognize our own blind spots, hypocrisy, and pride. We too need Jesus' truth-telling tough love when we judge and condemn those whom we are called to love. Once again, we are challenged by what it means to live as one who belongs to the kingdom of God, a kingdom of love.

Bible Study Selected verses from Matthew 21, 22, 23 (CEB)

Lesson Notes: Divide into groups of two or three people and assign each small group one of the following passages from Matthew. Ask the groups to review the passage and identify the issues(s) the disciples were grappling with in each scenario. (Example: belief, disobedience, hypocrisy...)

Love Actually

- a. Parable of two sons, 21:28-32*
- b. Parable of the tenant farmers, 21:33-46*
- c. Great commandment, 22:34-40*
- d. Ways of the legal experts and the Pharisees, 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29*
- e. Crying over Jerusalem, 23:37-39*

Lesson Notes: Regroup and briefly discuss the following as a whole group.

What?

1. What was happening in the passage your group read?
2. What ongoing issue do you see in these passages regarding the Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests and elders?
3. What is Jesus' response to them in the various encounters?

So What?

1. So what do these passages teach us about entering the kingdom of God?
2. So what actions on our part reveal the kingdom of God in the world?
3. So what challenges come with a commitment to kingdom living?

Now What?

1. Now that the truth of Jesus' teaching is before you, what step(s) can you take in order to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind?" To "love your neighbor as you love yourself?"

Group Sharing

1. In week six we will be finishing the Gospel of Matthew and begin reading the Gospel of Mark. How has the group time helped you in your learning?
2. In what ways are you growing through regular reading and reflecting on scripture?

Closing Reflection

*Release me
from being possessed
by riches I do not need
and grievances that weary me
when you call me to share
my very self
with neighbors
and to reflect for the world
the light of the kingdom
within me.*

Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace*