

Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 2:15 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 20

"And whoever wishes to become great (be first!) among you shall be your slave ("servant"); just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve; and to give His life a ransom for many! (Matthew 20:27-28)

Last week's lesson on Matthew 19 closed with a somewhat surprising statement by Jesus: "But many who are first now will be last then, and the last first!" (Philippi's translation) apparently speaking of how things will be in the kingdom of heaven! This idea is picked up and more fully explained in last nite's lesson on Matthew 20! Along with a clear and powerful revelation of why Jesus came into our world! It all begins with the parable of the "Laborers in the Vineyard" (which is even more surprising)!

You know the story! The "landowner went out early in the morning (into the market place) to hire laborers for his vineyard," agreeing to pay each a "denarius" (a normal day's wage), but then returned later in the day at the third hour (9 a.m.), then later at the sixth, and the ninth, and even at the eleventh hours (noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m., respectively), when he found others "standing idle in the market place" and hired them too, to "go into the vineyard"! Then, at the end of the day, he called all the laborers together and paid them all the same amount (one denarius!), "beginning with the last group to the first" (the last first!)! This was obviously viewed as unfair by those hired early in the day, who had labored more hours in the "scorching heat of the day"! (You can imagine how this might be received, and lambasted by the media, in our culture!) And yet the landowner justified his actions, noting that it was "lawful for him to do what he wished with what was his own," and that those who were chosen first should not be "envious" that he was "generous" with those hired last! Jesus concluded His parable with His observation (in verse 16): "So the last shall be first, and the first last!"

So, what's the point Jesus is making? It's best viewed as a demonstration of God's grace and eternal life, for all those who receive God's offer of salvation! David Platt (Pastor of McLain Bible Church) summarizes it this way: "God's grace is wonderfully surprising and gloriously sovereign!" The same eternal life is offered to all those who receive Christ, whether early in their lives, or even at the end, like the "thief on the cross"! ("Rewards" for service are a different matter, not dealt with here!)

It's also another call for "humility" as modeled by Jesus! The apostle Paul would later write: "Have this attitude in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!" (Philippians 2:5-11)

Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for what's to come, as they are "about to go up to Jerusalem" by foretelling them again of how He will be "delivered to the chief priests and scribes...and condemned to death...and crucified (first mention of that term), but be raised up on the third day" (vs. 17-19). The third time He has shared this with His disciples, all of which again apparently "went over their heads," because we next see James and John, along with their mother (according to Mark's account) conspiring to "sit on the right, the other on the left, of His throne in the kingdom"! Missing entirely not only the "timing" for the kingdom, but Jesus' example, and teaching about "humility," and the idea that the "first will be last and the last first"!

"Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" He asks them! (Speaking of the "wrath of God" which would be poured out on Christ as He bears, upon Himself, the sin of the world, on the cross!) And He says it again, to all His disciples: "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servants! And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many!" (Matthew 20:26-28)

And here it is! The heart of why Jesus came in this world! To "give His life a ransom for many!" It speaks (to us!) of the great doctrines of the Christian faith tied to this term! Beginning with the doctrine of "redemption"!

And it "just so happened" that Jesse spoke of this very connection in his sermon this past Sunday, taken from Ephesians 1:7-8, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished on us..." Referring to the "ransom," or the price that was paid by Jesus as the penalty and payment for our sin! The shed "blood of Christ"! His "substitutionary atonement"! The doctrine of "imputation"! His grace and mercy! And more! (Interestingly, it was 88 years ago, on March 2, that the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped, with the kidnappers requiring a "ransom" of \$50,000 which, as it turned out, was actually paid, but to no avail, as it did not save the life of the baby! What a contrast with the ransom paid by our Savior!)

1 Peter 1:18-19 says: "Knowing that you (we) were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ!"

2 Corinthians 5:21 says: "He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (on our behalf), so that we might be made (or become) the righteousness of God in Him...! (Our sin was "imputed" on Him, and His righteousness was "imputed" on us!)

Galatians 4:4-5 says: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

And speaking of grace! Romans 3:24-25, "Being justified as a gift of His grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (or satisfaction!) in His blood through faith!"

And, of course, Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast!"

But we're not done with Matthew 20! Jesus, on the way to Jerusalem and the cross, "just happened" to come across two blind men who illustrate conclusively how people are brought from "darkness to light" (spiritually speaking)! They recognized Jesus as "Lord" and "Son of David," and "cried out to Him for mercy," fully recognizing their need; and having faith to believe that He could give them sight! And Jesus heard their cry and "moved with compassion" restored their sight! And, guess what? They "followed Him!" That's the pattern!

And so, we close our lesson highlights with the recognition that God's grace is "wonderfully surprising and gloriously sovereign"!

Have a great week, men and expect a possible "surprise" from the God of all wonders!

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