

## GH 09 September

September 1 T — Reading 175 — Matt. 19:23-30; Mark 10:23-31; Luke 18:24-30

### Matthew 19

<sup>23</sup> *And Jesus*

*said to his disciples,*  
"Truly, I say to you,  
only with difficulty will a rich  
person enter the kingdom of  
heaven.

<sup>24</sup> *Again I tell you,*

*it is easier for a camel to go  
through the eye of a needle  
than for a rich person to enter  
the kingdom of God."*

<sup>25</sup> *When the disciples heard  
this, they were greatly  
astonished, saying,  
"Who then can be saved?"*

### Mark 10

<sup>23</sup> *And Jesus looked around*

*and said to his disciples,*

*"How difficult it will be for those  
who have wealth to enter the  
kingdom of God!"*

<sup>24</sup> *And the disciples were  
amazed at his words.*

*But Jesus said to them again,  
"Children, how difficult it is<sup>[fn]</sup> to  
enter the kingdom of God!"*

<sup>25</sup> *It is easier for a camel to go  
through the eye of a needle  
than for a rich person to enter  
the kingdom of God."*

<sup>26</sup> *And they were exceedingly  
astonished, and said to him,<sup>[fn]</sup>*

*"Then who can be saved?"*

### Luke 18

<sup>24</sup> *Jesus, seeing  
that he had become sad,  
said,*

*"How difficult it is for those  
who have wealth to enter  
the kingdom of God!"*

<sup>25</sup> *For it is easier for a camel  
to go through the eye of a  
needle than for a rich  
person to enter the kingdom  
of God."*

<sup>26</sup> *Those who heard it said,*

*"Then who can be saved?"*

#### ESV Footnotes

(10:24) Some manuscripts add *for  
those who trust in riches*

(10:26) Some manuscripts *to one  
another*

Matthew 19 (cont.)

<sup>26</sup> *But Jesus looked at them and said,*  
"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."  
<sup>27</sup> *Then Peter said in reply,*  
"See, we have left everything and followed you.  
What then will we have?"  
<sup>28</sup> *Jesus said to them,*  
"Truly, I say to you, in the new world,<sup>[fn]</sup> when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.  
<sup>29</sup> *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake,*  
will receive a hundredfold<sup>[fn]</sup>

and will inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup>  
But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

ESV Footnotes

(19:28) Greek *in the regeneration*  
(19:29) Some manuscripts *manifold*

Mark 10 (cont.)

<sup>27</sup> *Jesus looked at them and said,*  
"With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."  
<sup>28</sup> *Peter began to say to him,*  
"See, we have left everything and followed you."  
<sup>29</sup> *Jesus said,*  
"Truly, I say to you,  
  
there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,  
<sup>30</sup> *who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time,*  
houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands,  
with persecutions,  
and in the age to come eternal life.  
<sup>31</sup> *But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

Luke 18 (cont.)

<sup>27</sup> *But he said,*  
"What is impossible with man is possible with God."  
<sup>28</sup> *And Peter said,*  
"See, we have left our homes and followed you."  
<sup>29</sup> *And he said to them,*  
"Truly, I say to you,  
  
there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers<sup>[fn]</sup> or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,  
<sup>30</sup> *who will not receive many times more in this time,*

and in the age to come eternal life."

ESV Footnote

(18:29) Or wife or brothers and sisters

**Impossible?** — After watching the sad and unrepentant rich young ruler leaving, Jesus emphasized the great need of surrendering to God for salvation. It applies to everyone who resists coming to God but the example of this rich man makes the point in a striking and understandable way. Wealth is addicting; almost every rich person wants more. It is a priority problem, which applies generally to choosing God over anything else considered valuable to us. Jesus used a hyperbole (exaggeration for the sake of emphasis) to make the point. Trying to poke the largest animal in Palestine (a camel) through the smallest hole normally encountered in life (a needle's eye) is a humorously ridiculous picture. Impossible! With man, gaining salvation is impossible but not with God. God can save the worst of sinners and the most resistant of people but the real emphasis here is more on the human difficulty—being willing to give up what is holding one back. That is surrender. Although the focus here is on entering the kingdom of God for salvation, the same principle applies to us as believers.

There are higher-priority things that keep us from doing what we know we should do, like praying and spending time in God's Word. What are the things that hinder us from doing that? Are we willing to make adjustments in order to put God first? Again, I am reminded of Henrietta Mears' motto: "No Bible? No breakfast!" Simply, don't make breakfast a higher priority than your Bible. It is not impossible; God will help you to make the adjustments that you know you should make.

**Meditation:** Did you notice in Mark's Gospel that Jesus left out one word in comparing what one gives up to what one receives in return by being in the family of God?

What is left are house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, and lands (Mark 10:29).

What is gained are houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and lands (v. 30).

What is missing? Fathers. Why? Was it intentional? If so, why? Could it have something to do with Jesus' later direction to "*call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven*"? (Matt. 23:9). Something to think about.

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September 2 W — Reading 176 — Matt. 20:1-16

<sup>1</sup> *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius<sup>[fn]</sup> a day, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' <sup>5</sup> So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. <sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' <sup>7</sup> They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' <sup>8</sup> And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' <sup>9</sup> And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, <sup>12</sup> saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' <sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. <sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?<sup>[fn]</sup> <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first last."*

#### ESV Footnotes

(20:2) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

(20:15) Or is your eye bad because I am good?

**Fairness or Compassion?** — Today's parable is tied very closely to Jesus' teaching at the end of Matt. 19 about the difficulty of entering the kingdom. In fact, the last verse of that chapter is the same as the last verse of this parable (v. 16). This story is a sandwich between those expressions, so the focus is on being first or last. One's first impression of this parable is probably to think that the vineyard owner was unfair. His pay to the workers was equal but the amount of their work was not. The perspective of the early workers is that it seems unfair to them because they are thinking about what is earned versus what is deserved. Jesus then brought out what is not so obvious: the compassion of the vineyard owner. He was concerned about the needs of the workers, so he chose to pay them all a full day's wage. Only the first workers to enter the vineyard deserved their wages; the rest received more than they deserved. Isn't that grace? It is undeserved favor. No believer deserves the gifts of God, including heaven. We cannot graciously grumble about someone who surrenders to Christ on their deathbed because we don't deserve being saved either. Yes, working in

the vineyard of the kingdom can be troublesome but it is also filled with blessing. We didn't miss out on anything good by coming to Christ early in life.

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September 3 Th — Reading 177 — Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34

Matthew 20	Mark 10	Luke 18
<p><sup>17</sup> <i>And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem,</i></p> <p><i>he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,</i></p> <p><sup>18</sup> <i>"See, we are going up to Jerusalem.</i></p> <p><i>And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death</i></p> <p><sup>19</sup> <i>and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified,</i></p> <p><i>and he will be raised on the third day."</i></p>	<p><sup>32</sup> <i>And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.</i></p> <p><i>And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,</i> <sup>33</sup> <i>saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem,</i></p> <p><i>and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death</i></p> <p><i>and deliver him over to the Gentiles.</i> <sup>34</sup> <i>And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him.</i></p> <p><i>And after three days he will rise."</i></p>	<p><sup>31</sup> <i>And taking the twelve, he said to them,</i></p> <p><i>"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.</i></p> <p><sup>32</sup> <i>For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.</i> <sup>33</sup> <i>And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."</i></p> <p><sup>34</sup> <i>But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.</i></p>

**Tragedy on Purpose** — This is the third of four times Jesus told the Twelve about His coming death. They didn't know how to handle it because it didn't fit into their understanding of God's plan. Throughout the OT, God had predicted the coming Messiah, and it sounded like He would be a conqueror and a mighty ruler. The Jewish people latched onto that idea with joy and anticipation. What was not so positive was the prediction by the prophets of His necessary suffering, like in Isaiah 53, so those ideas retreated into the back corners of their thinking. When the Messiah came, He began to reveal the tragedy involved in His coming, and that didn't fit the preconceived picture of the peoples' hopes. They were living under the oppressive control of the Romans and they wanted God to deliver them. Jesus revealed the full purpose of God: *"everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished"* (Luke 18:31). Everything. The back-corner stuff, too. Why does God permit tragedy? Part of the reason is that there is purpose in the tragedy—a good purpose. Jesus needed to be the sacrifice for our sins. If you have lost a loved one or your job

recently, you know the agony of tragedy. But God promised to make all things work out for good to those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). Trust Him and look for the good results!

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September 4 F — Reading 178 — Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45

Matthew 20

<sup>20</sup> *Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.*

<sup>21</sup> *And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."*

<sup>22</sup> *Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?"*

*They said to him, "We are able."*

<sup>23</sup> *He said to them, "You will drink my cup,*

*but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."*

<sup>24</sup> *And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.* <sup>25</sup> *But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.*

<sup>26</sup> *It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*<sup>[fn]</sup> <sup>27</sup> *and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,*<sup>[fn]</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**ESV Footnotes**

(20:26) Greek *diakonos*

(20:27) Or *bondservant*, or *servant* (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface)

Mark 10

<sup>35</sup> *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."*

<sup>36</sup> *And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"* <sup>37</sup> *And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."*

<sup>38</sup> *Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"*

<sup>39</sup> *And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,*

<sup>40</sup> *but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

<sup>41</sup> *And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.* <sup>42</sup> *And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.*

<sup>43</sup> *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*<sup>[fn]</sup> <sup>44</sup> *and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.*<sup>[fn]</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**ESV Footnotes**

(10:43) Greek *diakonos*

(10:44) Or *bondservant*, or *servant* (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface)

**Ruling vs. Serving** — There is some who-asked-what confusion as this mother and her sons came to Jesus, Matthew and Mark probably reporting different parts of a long interchange. The content of the request and of Jesus' reply was clear, however. The request was about gaining an advantage. James and John should already have considered themselves to have an advantage over the other ten disciples. They were likely cousins of Jesus, so they had a family advantage, and they had been chosen by Jesus to be part of the inner core of three disciples, along with Peter. Now, they wanted to even edge Peter out as they requested the two highest places of honor—to the right and left of Jesus' throne in what they were still thinking would be an earthly Messianic kingdom. Human striving is in our system; sinful nature wants to elevate self. But Jesus' response turned that idea upside down; one should have a willingness to serve. Rulers in the spiritual kingdom would be servers, as Jesus demonstrated later in the upper room by washing the disciples' feet. We still have an innate desire for self-elevation because we have not lost our sinful nature but we also have the indwelling Holy Spirit that enables us to be humble. So, this edged-out Peter later wrote, "*Humble yourselves ... under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you*" (1 Pet. 5:6). If you catch yourself wanting to be exalted today, remember Peter's command and voluntarily step down a notch.

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Matthew 20	Mark 10	Luke 18
<p><sup>29</sup> And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.</p> <p><sup>30</sup> And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that</p> <p>Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord,<sup>[fn]</sup> have mercy on us, Son of David!"</p> <p><sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"</p> <p><sup>32</sup> And stopping, Jesus called them</p> <p>and said, "What do you want me to do for you?"</p> <p><sup>33</sup> They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."</p> <p><sup>34</sup> And Jesus in pity touched their eyes,</p> <p>and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.</p>	<p><sup>46</sup> And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside.</p> <p><sup>47</sup> And when he heard that</p> <p>it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>48</sup> And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>49</sup> And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you."</p> <p><sup>50</sup> And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.</p> <p><sup>51</sup> And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight."</p> <p><sup>52</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.</p>	<p><sup>35</sup> As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.</p> <p><sup>36</sup> And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. <sup>37</sup> They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."</p> <p><sup>38</sup> And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>39</sup> And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>40</sup> And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him.</p> <p>And when he came near, he asked him, <sup>41</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight."</p> <p><sup>42</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well."</p> <p><sup>43</sup> And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.</p>

**ESV Footnote**  
(20:30) Some manuscripts omit *Lord*

**All the More** — Does social pressure shut you up? Often it does but sometimes the subject is just too important for silence. That was the case for Bartimaeus and his blind friend. They were desperately blind. They had heard about Jesus, although most of His ministry was far north in Galilee. From what they had heard, they came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah,

revealed by their cry, “Son of David!” When the crowd tried to shut them up, they cried even more desperately “*all the more*” (Mark 10:48). The majority had a different standard of what was important. Like the disciples’ rebuking the parents who brought “unimportant” children to Jesus (Mark 10:13), this crowd rebuked these two “unimportant” blind men who were interrupting Jesus’ progress. Did the social pressure shut them up? No, they were too desperate; the need was too great. The message of the gospel that we have is that important. Most of us are hesitant to say anything to people about the Good News because of our fear of the social pressure of a general rejection of the message. Even the anticipation of their rebuke is enough to silence us. Which is more important to you, the acceptance of man or the acceptance of God?

**Meditation:** Only Matthew tells us that “*Jesus in pity touched their eyes*” (20:34). In several other situations in Jesus’ ministry, we are told of His compassion. There seems to be something different about this example, however. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. He was facing death on a cross, yet He touched the eyes of these blind men “*in pity*.” When you are in pain, are you moved by the pain of others? When you are in need, are you concerned about the needs of others? Normally, our all-about-me orientation blocks out concern for others. Not Jesus. Knowing that He would be killed a little over a week later, He reached out to two men who needed to see. Think about that kind of unselfish compassion!

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September 8 Tu — Reading 180 — Luke 19:1-10

<sup>1</sup> *He entered Jericho and was passing through.* <sup>2</sup> *And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.* <sup>3</sup> *And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.* <sup>4</sup> *So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.* <sup>5</sup> *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."* <sup>6</sup> *So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.* <sup>7</sup> *And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."* <sup>8</sup> *And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."* <sup>9</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.* <sup>10</sup> *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

**Seek and Save** — This story ends with Jesus summarizing His ministry: “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*” It expresses not only God’s desire to save sinners but also His effort to bring it to pass. His invitation is open to all—the rich or poor and popular or shunned. Actually, Zacchaeus represented two unlikely kinds of people who might be eligible for salvation. First, he was rich. Jesus had just stated in the previous chapter that “*it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God*” (18:25). Nothing is impossible with God and here is an example of a rich man who did come to salvation. Secondly, Zacchaeus was considered to be an outcast by his surrounding culture, therefore, in their minds, one who was not worthy to be saved. He symbolized the worst of sinners, considered to be a traitor by the Jews because he cooperated with the oppressive Roman government to take money from the people. Yet, Jesus “*came to seek*” even those kinds of people. But we must also notice that Zacchaeus was a seeker: “*...he was seeking to see who Jesus was*” (v. 3). He was apparently seeking only on a physical level but he had heard about Jesus and now he wanted to see Him. But on another level, his immediate reaction to Jesus’ attention suggests that he had also been seeking spiritually, knowing that he was a sinner and wanting to be freed. People around us also have that deep longing for discovering a higher purpose of life. They have an innate hunger. Why don’t you invite someone to have dinner at your house and tell them about the eternal life you have found?

**Meditation:** You probably noticed in our previous reading that Matthew and Mark say that the healing of the two blind men happened on Jesus' way out of Jericho (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46), while Luke suggests that they were healed as Jesus was entering the city. Now, we read that after that healing, Jesus "entered Jericho and was passing through" (19:1). Is there a discrepancy here? Is there an error? When we come to problems like this in Scripture, we must remember what Jesus said in His prayer about God's Word: "...your word is truth" (John 17:17). We need to look for a possible explanation that allows for the apparently conflicting statements to be true. One good explanation is the fact that there were actually two nearby cities called Jericho. The ancient one was conquered by Joshua when the walls fell down (Joshua 6). Then, about two hundred years before Jesus' time, a new Jericho was built a mile south of the old city. Later, Herod the Great significantly enlarged its palace and added many other buildings, so that in Jesus' time, it was a thriving city. It is likely that Jesus first went through the old city of Jericho, encountered the blind men as He left, and then arrived at the new city of Jericho.

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September 9 W — Reading 181 — Luke 19:11-28

<sup>11</sup> As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. <sup>12</sup> He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. <sup>13</sup> Calling ten of his servants,<sup>[fn]</sup> he gave them ten minas,<sup>[fn]</sup> and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' <sup>14</sup> But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' <sup>15</sup> When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. <sup>16</sup> The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! <sup>[fn]</sup> Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' <sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' <sup>19</sup> And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' <sup>20</sup> Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; <sup>21</sup> for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' <sup>22</sup> He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? <sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' <sup>24</sup> And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' <sup>25</sup> And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' <sup>26</sup> 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>27</sup> But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

<sup>28</sup> And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

#### ESV Footnotes

(19:13) Or bondservants; also verse 15

(19:13) A mina was about three months' wages for a laborer

(19:17) Or bondservant; also verse 22

**Current Stewardship** — Jesus told this parable for two stated reasons: 1) "...because he was near Jerusalem" and 2) "...because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (v. 11). Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish people and their religion and the crowd at Jericho was anticipating that if Jesus were the Messiah, He would soon be setting up His earthly kingdom. Not true. There would be a long delay before the return of Jesus at His Second Coming. The symbolism of the parable suggests that the nobleman is Jesus, the servants with the minas are the Christians left behind after Jesus' ascension, the citizens are opposing unbelievers, the far country is

heaven, the accounting with rewards and slaughter is the final judgment. Although the purpose of the parable was to emphasize delay, the meat of the teaching for us stresses the importance of our faithful stewardship while we wait for Christ's return. What are you doing with your mina? Many Christians take this lounge-chair attitude: "As long as I make it to heaven, that is all that matters; I don't care about rewards." That was the attitude of the servant who wrapped his mina in a handkerchief. God wants us to be busy in His kingdom's work. We don't know what it will be like to "have authority over ten cities" (v. 17). It is only a symbol but it refers to something very satisfying. God has gifted each of us with natural abilities and spiritual gifts to serve Him while we wait. Step it up a notch! Later, we will be very glad that we did.

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September 10 Th — Reading 182 — John 11:55-57

<sup>55</sup> Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup> They were looking for<sup>[fn]</sup> Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" <sup>57</sup> Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

**ESV Footnote**

(11:56) Greek *were seeking for*

**Ready for Worship** — It is because of John's Gospel that we know the length of Jesus' ministry was just over two years. Only John mentions three annual Passover celebrations, with the other three Gospels focusing only on this final one. The first Passover mentioned by John, just after Jesus' first miracle of changing water into wine at Cana, was when He used a whip of cords to clear the merchants out of the temple (2:13). The second Passover was mentioned at the time Jesus fed the 5,000 in Galilee (6:4). So, here we are reading in early September about the description of the last two weeks of Jesus' life. One-fourth of the Gospel accounts concentrates on this important time. Thousands of pilgrims from throughout Israel came early to go through ceremonial procedures to "purify themselves" before the official week began. That reminds me of Paul's purification process for Christians as we prepare to worship God at the Lord's Supper: "*Let a person examine himself ... and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup*" (1 Cor. 11:28). Purity before worship. That would also be good to remember at the beginning of our regular prayer time with the Lord, confessing our sins as God brings them to our minds.

**Meditation:** Let's think about the expectant atmosphere at this final Passover. First, we have already read about the anticipation of Jesus and His disciples. Jesus knew He was approaching His final week on earth and He had pre-warned the Twelve several times in advance. Thomas had yieldingly concluded, "*Let us also go, that we may die with him*" (John 11:16). It was an anticipation of death. There was also the anticipation of the crowd of people already forming in the temple: "*They were looking for Jesus*" but wondering if "*he will not come ... at all*" (v. 56). If they had not seen His miracles and heard Him teach at a previous Passover, they had heard about Him and wanted to see Him. We might think of that as ministry anticipation. Why did the crowd doubt that Jesus would show up? The reason is explained in vs. 57: The leaders of the Sanhedrin planned to arrest Jesus. They had already decided what they would do with Jesus. They would not assassinate Him but would have Him killed legally through a trial and compelling the Romans to crucify Him. This was also an anticipation of death. There is one more subtle anticipation involved in the final act of this drama—God's plan. Jesus was "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29)—the Passover Lamb. It was all planned from the beginning and it was finally falling into place. Perfect plan ... perfect timing ... perfect result!

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Matthew 26	Mark 14	John 12
<p><sup>6</sup> Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,<sup>[fn]</sup></p> <p><sup>7</sup> a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."</p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (26:6) Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13</p>	<p><sup>3</sup> And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,<sup>[fn]</sup></p> <p>as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? <sup>5</sup> For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii<sup>[fn]</sup> and given to the poor." And they scolded her.</p> <p><b>ESV Footnotes</b> (14:3) Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13 (14:5) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer</p>	<p><sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound<sup>[fn]</sup> of expensive ointment made from pure nard,</p> <p>and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said,</p> <p><sup>5</sup> "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii<sup>[fn]</sup> and given to the poor?"</p> <p><sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.</p> <p><b>ESV Footnotes</b> (12:3) Greek <i>litra</i>; a <i>litra</i> (or Roman pound) was equal to about 11 1/2 ounces or 327 grams (12:5) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer</p>

Matthew 26 (cont.)  
<sup>10</sup> *But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman?"*

*For she has done a beautiful thing to me.*  
<sup>11</sup> *For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.*  
  
<sup>12</sup> *In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.*  
<sup>13</sup> *Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."*

Mark 14 (cont.)  
<sup>6</sup> *But Jesus said,*  
  
*"Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her?"*

*She has done a beautiful thing to me.*  
<sup>7</sup> *For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them.*  
*But you will not always have me.*  
<sup>8</sup> *She has done what she could;*  
  
*she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.*  
<sup>9</sup> *And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."*

John 12 (cont.)  
<sup>7</sup> *Jesus said,*  
  
*"Leave her alone, so that she may keep it<sup>[fn]</sup> for the day of my burial.*

<sup>8</sup> *For the poor you always have with you,*  
  
*but you do not always have me."*

<sup>9</sup> *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus<sup>[fn]</sup> was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.* <sup>10</sup> *So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,* <sup>11</sup> *because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

#### ESV Footnotes

(12:7) Or *Leave her alone; she intended to keep it*

(12:9) Greek *he*

**Beautiful Waste** — With a theme in mind, Matthew and Mark arrange this event nearer the end of their Gospels but John keeps it in chronological order. A different, but similar, earlier event with the sinful woman at the Pharisee's house is described in Luke 7:36ff. The event we read about today happened "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1), so about a week before Jesus' death. People at this formal dinner had three completely different views about what happened. First, was the perspective of Mary, which was radical devotion. She expressed it by using very valuable perfume to anoint Jesus' head and feet because He was more valuable to her than all material things. Washing another's feet was a job for a lowly slave but Mary did it willingly. Do we love Jesus enough to give

sacrificially and worship humbly? A drastically different perspective was shown by some disciples, especially Judas. Their view was that Mary's act was a waste. What was their focus? Money. They pretended to make the excuse of wanting to help the poor instead. Their perspective was critical, selfish, and deceptive. Did you find yourself siding with them as you read? The third perspective was Jesus' view. He said, "*She has done a beautiful thing to me*" (Mark 14:6). It was not only "*beautiful*" because it showed her generous sacrifice and deep devotion but also because unknowingly, "...*she has anointed my body beforehand for burial*" (vs. 8). Her act predicted Jesus' death. Such different perspectives of the same event—devotion, criticism, symbol! What "*beautiful*" thing will you "*waste*" on Jesus today? Time? Money? Worship?

**Meditation:** Who was "*Simon the leper*" (Matt. 26:6) who lived in Bethany? If he was a leper, why was he hosting a dinner at his house? Lepers in Israel were required to live separated from society. There is an information-hole in this story. Simon apparently inherited the title of "leper" because he used to be a leper but had been healed by Jesus. Why were we not told that story in any of the Gospels? How many other stories like that don't we know about? We will probably meet Simon in heaven and we can get the whole story from him. How many other stories will there be waiting for us to discover? We can fill in all the "holes" in our available Gospel accounts. We will have all eternity to piece together the full story of Jesus' life and ministry on earth.

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Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 19	John 12
<p><sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." <sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt,<sup>[fn]</sup> the foal of a beast of burden.'" <sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.</p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (21:5) Or donkey, and on a colt</p>	<p><sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus<sup>[fn]</sup> sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'"</p> <p><sup>4</sup> And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it.</p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (11:1) Greek he</p>	<p><sup>29</sup> When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'"</p> <p><sup>32</sup> So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them.</p>	<p><sup>12</sup> The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.</p>
			<p style="color: red;">(Compare Mt.21:4-5 with John 12:15)</p>

**The Humble King** — We will read about Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem in three parts in order to concentrate on the great importance of this event. Here, we are given a wonderful picture of who Jesus really is: the promised Messiah. Although Jesus had revealed to several individuals that He was the Messiah, this was His grand, public announcement of that fact. The prophet Zechariah had predicted that when He came, He would be "*humble and mounted on a donkey*" (9:9). Notice that it is "*your king*" on that donkey (Matt. 21:5). The crowd was expecting a political king but Jesus was far more than that. He was the "*king of glory*" (Psa. 24) ... the LORD ... Yahweh. A "*humble king*" almost seems like an oxymoron, but to God, greatness has many dimensions. In human eyes, it is great to be king; in God's eyes, it is great to be humble. Sometimes we are humbled by glaring mistakes we make but God is more interested in our intentional steps toward humility. Godly humility doesn't broadcast one's own accomplishments. Are you pleased with some strengths you see in your own personality or abilities? Then, thank God for them instead of emphasizing them to others. Let others discover them on their own. Get on the donkey!

**Meditation:** Was Jesus' knowledge of the tied-up donkey and colt the result of His divine omniscience or was the connection prearranged? We saw that He had been at the dinner in Bethany the day before (John 12:1) and was now heading toward Jerusalem, about two miles (3 km) away. The exact location of Bethphage is not known but it was between Bethany and Jerusalem. There is no indication that Jesus had been there earlier in the week. If He had arranged it earlier, why would the two disciples have to tell the owner that "*The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately*"? (Mark 11:3). Wouldn't that already be known if it had been prearranged? On the other hand, Jesus told them to say only that the "*the Lord*" had requested the donkeys. How would the owners know who "*the Lord*" was? Does that suggest prearrangement? The statement that the two disciples "*found it just as he had told them*" (Luke 19:32) seems to suggest surprise or wonder. How might Jesus' foreknowledge of seeing Nathanael under the fig tree (John 1:48) two years earlier be similar to "seeing" these donkeys in advance? What conclusion did you end up with? Let me know.

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Matthew 21	Mark 11 5 <i>And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"</i> 6 <i>And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.</i> 7 <i>And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it.</i>	Luke 19 33 <i>And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"</i> 34 <i>And they said, "The Lord has need of it."</i>	John 12
<p>7 <i>They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.</i></p> <p>8 <i>Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.</i></p>	<p>8 <i>And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields.</i></p>	<p>35 <i>And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.</i></p> <p>36 <i>And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.</i></p>	<p>13 <i>So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him,</i></p>
<p>9 <i>And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"</i></p> <p><i>Hosanna in the highest!"</i></p>	<p>9 <i>And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! <sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"</i></p> <p><i>Hosanna in the highest!"</i></p>	<p>37 <i>As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"</i></p> <p><i>Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"</i></p>	<p><i>crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"</i></p>
<p>(Compare Mt. 21:4-5 with John 12:14-15.)</p>			<p>14 <i>And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, <sup>15</sup> "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"</i></p>

**Hosanna!** — The Triumphal Entry happened at the beginning of the Passover week celebration, which remembered Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. This crowd surrounding Jesus as He descended toward Jerusalem was likely anticipating another deliverance from political oppression, that of the occupying Romans. They were shouting, "Hosanna," which means "save." They saw Jesus as the promised Messiah who would be their political king, saving them from Rome's domination. They quoted the messianic statement in Psa. 118:26 by calling out, "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!*" They not only believed that Jesus was the king they expected but they also felt that Yahweh had sent Him. He was "*the son of David*" (Matt. 21:9), the one who would set up the "*kingdom of our father David*" (Mark 11:9). Many paid homage to Him as they spread their cloaks across the road to allow the donkey carrying Jesus to walk over them. The Triumphal Entry happened on the Sunday before the resurrection of Jesus. We celebrate it today as "Palm Sunday." Children in our churches often march across stages and down aisles waving palm branches. They should also be shouting, "Hosanna!" because that Messiah who first came to introduce salvation as the Paschal Lamb will come again to bring salvation—complete victory over sin and our eternal reward in heaven. Say it out loud: "*Hosanna!*" The Lord saves!

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September 16 W — Reading 186 — Mt. 21:10-11, 14-17; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:39-44; Jn. 12:16-19

John 12

<sup>16</sup> *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* <sup>17</sup> *The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.* <sup>18</sup> *The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.*

<sup>19</sup> *So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."*

Luke 19

<sup>39</sup> *And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."* <sup>40</sup> *He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."* <sup>41</sup> *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,* <sup>42</sup> *saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.* <sup>43</sup> *For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side* <sup>44</sup> *and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

Matthew 21

<sup>10</sup> And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup> And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

—temporarily skipped vv. 12-13—

<sup>14</sup> And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup> But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, <sup>16</sup> and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

"Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?"

<sup>17</sup> And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Mark 11

<sup>11</sup> And he entered Jerusalem

and went into the temple.

And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

**Crowd Control** — The four Gospels are more independent than parallel in their accounts of what happened near the end of the Triumphal Entry. It is interesting to note the frustration of the Jewish leaders as they saw this crowd entering Jerusalem. They were so aggravated because of the size of the crowd, that they exclaimed in exaggeration, "Look, the world has gone after him" (John 12:19). They were losing control over the people. Then, they heard the children crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matt. 21:15). They complained to Jesus, "Do you hear what these are saying?" (v. 16). Why were they so upset with that? It was because the children were acknowledging that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David. The children were praising God while the religious leaders were rejecting the Messiah. No wonder Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem and declared that it was "because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44). The leaders lost control because the crowd believed that Jesus was the prophet promised by Moses and was the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament. Do some of your friends think you are "out of control" when you are "too committed" to God? Keep on praising God loudly, in your words and in your life!

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Matthew 21

<sup>18</sup> *In the morning,*  
as he was returning to the city,  
he became hungry.  
<sup>19a</sup> *And seeing a fig tree by the wayside,*  
*he went to it and found nothing on it but*  
*only leaves.*  
*And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come*  
*from you again!"*

Mark 11

<sup>12</sup> *On the following day,*  
*when they came from Bethany,*  
*he was hungry.*  
<sup>13</sup> *And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf,*  
*he went to see if he could find anything on it.*  
*When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves,*  
*for it was not the season for figs.*  
<sup>14</sup> *And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from*  
*you again."*  
*And his disciples heard it.*

**Sacrificial Fig Tree** — This is another example showing that Matthew's writing was oriented more toward themes than chronology. Here, he directly connects the cursing of the fig tree (v. 19a) with the subsequent lesson taught by Jesus (v. 19b), whereas Mark shows that the cursing of the tree happened on Monday and His teaching about it was on Tuesday, events separated by the second cleansing of the temple. There are several questions that came to mind while reading this story. The first is why Jesus left Bethany in the morning without eating breakfast. Matthew says that it was morning and both Gospels say that Jesus was hungry. Did He get up and leave with His disciples before sunrise? Did Martha have a headache? Did they eat an early breakfast and it was late in the morning by the time they came to the fig tree? The text does not supply an answer. The second question is why Jesus didn't know in advance that the fig tree did not have fruit. We are told that "*by him all things were created...*" (Col. 1:16), so He created the fig tree with its many varieties. We read recently that He seemed to have supernatural knowledge of the location of two donkeys in Bethphage. Was Jesus in His humanity sometimes limited in knowledge? Mark says that "*it was not the season for figs*" (11:13). That should have been common knowledge for most people. Or, was it all done in order to teach the disciples a lesson? Was the sacrificial tree used as an intentional object lesson? That makes sense to me. Let's hold off our questions and answers until we read about the fig-tree lesson Jesus taught his disciples, after considering the story of another cleansing of the temple and other events in Jerusalem that day.

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Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 19
<p><sup>12</sup> And Jesus entered the temple<sup>[fn]</sup> and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."</p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (21:12) Some manuscripts add of God</p>	<p><sup>15</sup> And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.</p> <p><sup>16</sup> And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.</p> <p><sup>17</sup> And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."</p> <p><sup>18</sup> And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.</p>	<p><sup>45</sup> And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold,</p> <p><sup>46</sup> saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."</p> <p><sup>47</sup> And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.</p>

**A Place for Worship** — This is the second of two cleansings of the temple by Jesus. John 2:13-17 records the first one. The Jewish leaders and merchants had not learned Jesus' earlier lesson and were again using the Court of Gentiles as a convenient religious marketplace. The lesson was the same in both instances: God's house is holy. The first time, Jesus emphasized the obstacle to worship, what was causing it to be unholy, i.e., they were making it "a house of trade" (John 2:16). At the second cleansing, Jesus added that the purpose of the temple was to be "a house of prayer" (Mark 11:17). What was *wrong* had to be removed and what was *right* needed to be inserted. Prayer was to be more important than profit. Not only was it to be a place for prayer but Mark adds, quoting from Isa. 56:7, that it was to be a place "for all the nations" (Mark 11:17), referring to the Gentiles ("foreigners" in Isa. 56:6), who were not allowed to enter the inner courts of the temple. This market atmosphere was their place for worship! That is like trying to have your prayer time without muting the TV news. Don't destroy the atmosphere! Worship is serious business and it deserves being done without distraction and without competition.

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<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

<sup>27</sup> "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup> The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." <sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. <sup>34</sup> So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" <sup>35</sup> So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. <sup>36a</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

**Now is the Time** — John recorded several times that Jesus had told others that His time had not yet come (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20) but here He said, "*The hour has come...*" (v. 23). This is a turning point in Jesus' life and ministry. He had come to the point of death; now was the time to die since Passion Week had arrived. It was a necessary step for His longer, greater ministry to continue. As a seed needs to be buried in order to sprout new life, so Jesus had to die in order for His Church to spring forth. Jesus taught something else here that is very important to us believers: Now is the time to die—in a different way. Yes, we did die to self when we surrendered our life to Christ to enter the kingdom of God, but surrender is not a one-time thing; it should be our lifestyle. Perhaps you have gradually slipped back a bit into loving your life on earth so much that you have softened your surrender to Jesus. Jesus tells us to do two things here to keep that commitment strong. The first is, "*Walk while you have the light*" (v. 35) and the second is, "*While you have the light, believe...*" (v. 36). Walk and believe. Fellowship and faith. Now is the time. Don't put off time with the Lord because there seems to be something more important to do! Now is the time. Surrender! Serve!

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September 22 Tu — Reading 190 — John 12:36b-50

<sup>36b</sup> When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. <sup>37</sup> Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, <sup>38</sup> so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

<sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

<sup>40</sup> "He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their heart,  
lest they see with their eyes,  
and understand with their heart, and turn,

*and I would heal them."*

<sup>41</sup> *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.* <sup>42</sup> *Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;* <sup>43</sup> *for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

<sup>44</sup> *And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.*

<sup>45</sup> *And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.* <sup>46</sup> *I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.* <sup>47</sup> *If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.* <sup>48</sup> *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.* <sup>49</sup> *For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.* <sup>50</sup> *And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."*

**Loving Whose Glory?** — For a Jewish religious leader to intentionally do something that would cause him to be “*put out of the synagogue*” (v. 42) would be social suicide. Some of them believed that Jesus was the Messiah but they would not publicly declare it because of the fear of the social consequences. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were both in that category, not showing public support for Jesus until time for his burial (John 19:38-39). Their deep reason for hesitancy was because “*they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God*” (12:43). That touches on our experience, doesn’t it? Don’t we sometimes hesitate to stand openly for Christ because of our fear of people’s reactions? At the root of the problem is what we value the most. It is hard to admit but sometimes we put more value on the praise of mankind than on the praise of God.

**Meditation:** We saw in our previous reading that there was a significant turning point in Jesus’ ministry: “*...the hour has come...*” (12:23). In today’s reading, we see another kind of turning point when Jesus “*hid himself from them*” (:36b). Why would He intentionally do that? Had He lost hope for them? His action was a deliberate step of separation and the stated reason was that, even after seeing the miracles, “*they still did not believe in him*” (:37). Judgment is the ultimate result of continued rejection but is not God’s desire. He is “*not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*” (2 Pet. 3:9). The compassionate heart of Jesus ached when He cried, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often would I have gathered your children together...*” (Luke 13:34). When rejection is continuous and determined, judgment will follow.

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Matthew 21

<sup>19b</sup> *And the fig tree withered at once.*

<sup>20</sup> *When the disciples saw it,*

*they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?"*

<sup>21</sup> *And Jesus answered them,*

*"Truly, I say to you,  
if you have faith and do not doubt, you will  
not only do what has been done to the fig  
tree,  
but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be  
taken up and thrown into the sea,'*

*it will happen.*

<sup>22</sup> *And whatever you ask in prayer, you will  
receive, if you have faith."*

Mark 11

<sup>19</sup> *And when evening came they<sup>[fn]</sup> went out of  
the city.*

<sup>20</sup> *As they passed by in the morning, they saw  
the fig tree withered away to its roots.*

<sup>21</sup> *And Peter remembered and said to him,  
"Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has  
withered."*

<sup>22</sup> *And Jesus answered them,  
"Have faith in God.*

<sup>23</sup> *Truly, I say to you,*

*whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and  
thrown into the sea,'  
and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that  
what he says will come to pass,  
it will be done for him.*

<sup>24</sup> *Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in  
prayer, believe that you have received<sup>[fn]</sup> it, and it  
will be yours.*

<sup>25</sup> *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if  
you have anything against anyone, so that your  
Father also who is in heaven may forgive you  
your trespasses." <sup>26</sup> [fn]*

**ESV Footnotes**

(11:19) Some manuscripts *he*

(11:24) Some manuscripts *are receiving*

(11:25) Some manuscripts add verse 26: *But if you do not  
forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive  
your trespasses*

**Faith Without Doubt** — Although Matthew compresses this story chronologically, Mark shows that the cursing of the fig tree and the lesson taught by Jesus were actually a day apart. What is the lesson of the withered fig tree? It is clearly that we should "have faith and ... not doubt" (Matt. 21:21). Faith even to wither a fig tree? Even to move a mountain? Yes, to both. These are not things of great importance that would cause us to desperately beg God for an answer. Jesus apparently cursed the fig tree just to teach a lesson. We are told to not ask for things selfishly (James 4:3) or for things outside of God's will (1 John 5:14) but Jesus teaches us that we *should* be asking God for things that we want to happen. There is a strong tendency to dismiss this lesson of faith since we don't know God's will, but it is of much greater importance that we learn to bring more faith and less doubt into our prayers. Jesus wants to answer our prayers. Later, He said, "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). We need to be growing in this area of Christian living. Learn His lesson: Believe without doubting!

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September 24 Th — Reading 192 — Matt. 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8

Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 20
<p><sup>23</sup> And when he entered the temple,</p> <p><i>the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"</i></p> <p><sup>24</sup> Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.</p> <p><sup>25</sup> The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?"</p> <p>And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup> But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet."</p> <p><sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."</p> <p>And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."</p>	<p><sup>27</sup> And they came again to Jerusalem.</p> <p><i>And as he was walking in the temple,</i></p> <p><i>the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him,</i></p> <p><sup>28</sup> and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?"</p> <p><sup>29</sup> Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me,</p> <p><i>and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.</i></p> <p><sup>30</sup> Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me."</p> <p><sup>31</sup> And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>32</sup> But shall we say, 'From man?'"—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet.</p> <p><sup>33</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."</p> <p>And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."</p>	<p><sup>1</sup> One day, as Jesus<sup>[fn]</sup></p> <p><i>was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel,</i></p> <p><i>the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up</i></p> <p><sup>2</sup> and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority."</p> <p><sup>3</sup> He answered them, "I also will ask you a question. Now tell me,</p> <p><sup>4</sup> was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" <sup>5</sup></p> <p>And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?'" <sup>6</sup> But if we say, 'From man,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet."</p> <p><sup>7</sup> So they answered that they did not know where it came from.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."</p>

ESV Footnote  
(20:1) Greek *he*

**Challenged Authority** — On Sunday of the Passion Week, after entering Jerusalem at His Triumphal Entry, Jesus healed "*the blind and the lame ... in the temple*" (Matt. 21:14). On Monday, He cleansed the court of the temple by driving out the merchants. Now, on Tuesday, Jesus returned to the temple and was teaching and preaching there (Luke 21:1). He was challenged about His

authority for “*doing these things*” (healing, cleansing, and teaching) by the chief priests, elders, and scribes (members of the ruling Sanhedrin). What was His authority and where did it come from? He certainly didn’t have *their* authority and they refused to believe that it came from God. It is interesting that Jesus didn’t argue with them but only asked a question: What was the source of John the Baptist’s ministry? They didn’t think it was from God but they couldn’t admit it in front of the crowd, so they lied, saying, “*We do not know.*” Don’t you wish that you had the wisdom of Jesus when you are confronted about your faith? Asking questions about what others believe would probably be a better approach than trying to prove that we are right and they are wrong. Maybe their attempts to answer our sincere questions will reveal to them the emptiness of their position.

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September 25 F — Reading 193 — Matthew 21:28-32

<sup>28</sup> *“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’*<sup>29</sup> *And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went.*<sup>30</sup> *And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go.*<sup>31</sup> *Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.*<sup>32</sup> *For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.*

**Admitting Sin** — After the Jewish leaders challenged Jesus’ authority, He stopped them in their tracks with a question about the source of John the Baptist’s ministry. Jesus then told three parables that applied directly to their hypocrisy. The first parable is about an openly defiant son whose heart is changed vs. his outwardly compliant brother who remains disobedient. Uncovering the meaning of the parable, Jesus said that the first son was like tax collectors and prostitutes—open and obvious sinners but willing to change; the second son was like the Pharisees—pretending to be obedient but refusing to change. Probably the hardest kind of person to bring to Christ today are those who refuse to recognize and admit that they are sinners. To them, sin is relative—it is not lying, gossiping, and cheating the government but is murdering, committing adultery, and robbing jewelry stores at gunpoint. They also think of sin as external, not internal. The religious leaders in Jesus’ day appeared righteous on the outside but were rotten on the inside. We also need to be careful about that kind of attitude. Are we being honest about our sin? Are we willing to look at our inward motives and desires? Do we hide any of our activities from our Christian friends? Admitting sin is the first step of repentance.

**Meditation:** Jesus told the leaders that “*even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him*” (John the Baptist). What was the “*it*” that Jesus referred to? It referred to the tax collectors and prostitutes mentioned earlier in the same verse. But wasn’t it more about their *actions* that Jesus referred to? In the contrast presented at the end of v. 32, there were two actions involved: to “*change your mind*” and to “*believe.*” Notice that Jesus said that those leaders “*saw it*”; they “*saw*” the change of mind and belief of the sinners. How did they see that? The change was revealed by their actions. It was like the first son who changed from being defiant to being compliant. His action of going to the vineyard to work was evidence of the inward change. Unbelievers see evidence of change in our lives as well. What they do with it is up to them.

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Matthew 21	Mark 12	Luke 20
<p><sup>33</sup> "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country.</p> <p><sup>34</sup> When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants<sup>[fn]</sup> to the tenants to get his fruit.</p>	<p><sup>1</sup> And he began to speak to them in parables.</p> <p>"A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country.</p>	<p><sup>9</sup> And he began to tell the people this parable:</p> <p>"A man planted a vineyard</p>
<p><sup>35</sup> And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.</p> <p><sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them.</p>	<p><sup>2</sup> When the season came, he sent a servant<sup>[fn]</sup> to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.</p>	<p><sup>10</sup> When the time came, he sent a servant<sup>[fn]</sup> to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.</p> <p>But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed.</p>
<p><sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'</p> <p><sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.'<sup>39</sup> And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.</p>	<p><sup>5</sup> And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> He had still one other, a beloved son.</p> <p>Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'</p> <p><sup>7</sup> But those tenants</p>	<p><sup>11</sup> And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do?</p>
<p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (21:34) Or bondservants; also verses 35, 36</p>	<p>said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'<sup>8</sup> And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.</p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (12:2) Or bondservant; also verse 4</p>	<p>I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'</p> <p><sup>14</sup> But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.'<sup>15</sup> And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.</p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b> (20:10) Or bondservant; also v. 11</p>

<p>Matthew 21 (cont.)</p> <p><sup>40</sup> <i>When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"</i></p> <p><sup>41</sup> <i>They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."</i></p> <p><sup>42</sup> <i>Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,<sup>[fn]</sup> this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"</i></p> <p><sup>43</sup> <i>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.</i></p> <p><sup>44</sup> <i>And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."<sup>[fn]</sup></i></p> <p><sup>45</sup> <i>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.<sup>46</sup> And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.</i></p> <p><b>ESV Footnotes</b>          (21:42) Greek <i>the head of the corner</i>          (21:44) Some manuscripts omit v. 44</p>	<p>Mark 12 (cont.)</p> <p><sup>9</sup> <i>What will the owner of the vineyard do?</i></p> <p><i>He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.</i></p> <p><sup>10</sup> <i>Have you not read this Scripture: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,<sup>[fn]</sup> this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"</i></p> <p><sup>12</sup> <i>And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them.</i></p> <p><i>So they left him and went away.</i></p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b>          (12:10) Greek <i>the head of the corner</i></p>	<p>Luke 20 (cont.)</p> <p><i>What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?</i></p> <p><sup>16</sup> <i>He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.</i></p> <p><i>When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!"</i></p> <p><sup>17</sup> <i>But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?<sup>[fn]</sup></i></p> <p><sup>18</sup> <i>Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."</i></p> <p><sup>19</sup> <i>The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.</i></p> <p><b>ESV Footnote</b>          (20:17) Greek <i>the head of the corner</i></p>
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**The Son...the Stone** — After the Jewish leaders questioned Jesus' authority in the temple, He stopped them with the question about John the Baptist. Then, He continued talking to them, telling three parables aimed at them. The first one was about the two sons asked to work in the vineyard.

Today's story of the absent vineyard owner is the second one. It challenged their spirit of rejection of God and the messengers sent to them—the prophets in the OT ("servants") followed by Jesus the Messiah ("beloved son"). The members of the Sanhedrin suspected that the wicked tenants represented them and that Israel was the vineyard. That understanding was shown in their response after Jesus said that the owner (God) "will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others" (Luke 20:16). They replied, "Surely not!" (v. 16). They felt that Israel was secure in having been chosen by God and that the position of its leaders was secure as well. Then, after quoting Ps. 118:22 about the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone, Jesus unavoidably applied it to those leaders: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits" (Matt. 21:43). God's focus would broaden from Israel to the Gentiles as He formed the Church. Did they take it to heart? No, their reaction was that "they were seeking to arrest him" (v. 46). An aimed warning. A direct challenge. A vengeful response. We should be cautious about how we react to the commands and warnings we read in Scripture. Does the prick of our conscience by the Holy Spirit humble us or do we respond with some version of "Surely not"? God's way is always the best way, even when it hurts.

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September 29 Tu — Reading 195 — Matthew 22:1-14

<sup>1</sup> And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup> "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup> and sent his servants<sup>[fn]</sup> to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."'<sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.<sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.'<sup>10</sup> And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup> And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'<sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen."

#### ESV Footnote

(22:3) Or *bondservants*; also verses 4, 6, 8, 10

**Wide Call ... Narrow Choice** — This third parable is also aimed at the ungodly Sanhedrin rulers who resisted Jesus and would be destroyed in judgment, along with Jerusalem, in A.D. 70, by God's use of the Roman army. The first wave of servants sent out to summon the invited guests in this parable might represent the OT prophets who called out to Israel repeatedly. The second wave of servants may be the NT apostles who repeated the same invitation to Israel and their leaders but the invitation was ignored because of having higher priorities (v. 5) or rejected with violent persecution (v. 6). The call then got wider with the universal spread of the Christian message to "as many as you find" (v. 9) "both bad and good" (v. 10). It was a general call. Don't discriminate! Call everyone! But there is another side: "few are chosen" (v. 14). The man at the feast without wedding clothes was not properly dressed because he apparently thought his street clothes were good enough. No, he must be clothed with "the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10). Many people around us are hoping to get to heaven because they are "good enough." They are wearing the garments of self-righteousness. The

expression “*had no wedding garment*” (v. 11) is passive in Greek, implying that it was to be put on him by someone else. The NASB and CSB have “...was *not dressed*...” The king provided the wedding garments as the guests entered; God clothes with Christ’s righteousness those who respond to Him in faith as they enter the kingdom of heaven. The call was broad—to everyone—but only those who accepted the wedding garment were chosen. Few are chosen because so many eliminate themselves by indifference, by resistance, or by pretense.

Matthew 22

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words.

<sup>16</sup> And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying,

"Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances."<sup>[fn]</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

<sup>18</sup> But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?"<sup>19</sup> Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius.<sup>[fn]</sup>

<sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"

<sup>21</sup> They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

<sup>22</sup> When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

**ESV Footnotes**

(22:16) Greek *you do not look at people's faces*

(22:19) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

Mark 12

<sup>13</sup> And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk.

<sup>14</sup> And they came and said to him,

"Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances,<sup>[fn]</sup> but truly teach the way of God.

*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?*

*Should we pay them, or should we not?"*

<sup>15</sup> But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius<sup>[fn]</sup> and let me look at it." <sup>16</sup> And they brought one.

And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"

They said to him, "Caesar's."

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

*And they marveled at him.*

**ESV Footnotes**

(12:14) Greek *you do not look at people's faces*

(12:15) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

Luke 20

<sup>20</sup> So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

<sup>21</sup> So they asked him,

"Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality,<sup>[fn]</sup> but truly teach the way of God.

<sup>22</sup> Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"<sup>23</sup>

But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them,

<sup>24</sup> "Show me a denarius."<sup>[fn]</sup>

*Whose likeness and inscription does it have?"*

They said, "Caesar's."

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."<sup>26</sup>

*And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said,*

*but marveling at his answer they became silent.*

**ESV Footnotes**

(20:21) Greek *and do not receive a face*

(20:24) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

**Silenced Hypocrites** — The evil orientation of Jesus' opponents is really revealed in this passage. First, they were evil *schemers* in that they “*plotted how to entangle him in his words*” (Matt. 22:15). The Pharisees even joined with their frequent opponents, the political Herodians, in this plot. They met together and planned what they could do to trap Jesus so that the people and the Roman government would turn against Him. Secondly, they were evil *hypocrites*. They “*pretended to be sincere*” (Luke 20:20) and Jesus rightly addressed them as “*you hypocrites*” (Matt. 22:18). They tried to set Him up with compliments, unaware that they were confronting the Creator who knows the hearts of men and is infinitely wise. Little wonder that they marveled at His reply—it was perfect. When Jesus asked for a Roman denarius, they had them in their pockets, evidence that even they were submitting to the hated government. But they were not rendering “*to God the things that are God's*” (Matt. 22:21). Are you willing to look for yourself in this parable? Don't we sometimes scheme in order to try to manipulate others for our selfish purposes? Don't we also sometimes pretend to be better than we are in order to communicate a false impression to others? Do we always render fully to the government what they require of us? Are all of our tax-related decisions strictly pure? Do we always render to God what belongs to Him? We belong to Him. He deserves our attention, our worship, and our obedience. Let's render it today.