

Hear, Reflect, Speak.

OCTOBER 2021 | ISSUE NO.18
FREE



WHOEVER TAKES THE LOWLY POSITION OF THIS CHILD IS THE
GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. **MATTHEW 18:4**



Hear, Reflect, Speak.

DAILY BIBLE REFLECTIONS
OCT 2021 • PART II

BY TRINITY CHURCH MODBURY

This volume of daily Bible reflections has been prepared by lots of members of Trinity Church Modbury to help us all:

1. Hear the voice of God daily
2. Reflect on what he's personally saying to us &
3. Speak to God our Father, Jesus our Saviour, & the Holy Spirit our Comforter.

We'd love this to be a year where we all grow in our passion for God.

[Special thanks to John Cronshaw for helping to enable this project]

Monday 11/10/2021

By Chris Kastelein

Hear God's word to you

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Matthew 17:1-3

Reflect with me on God's word

In the days and weeks leading up to this event, Jesus' disciples have been faced with the question of Jesus' identity.

In Matthew 16:1-4 the disciples witness the Pharisees demanding a sign from Jesus to prove His identity. Jesus' response, though somewhat puzzling to them at the time, served as a signpost which pointed directly to his coming death and resurrection, by which Jesus' identity would be perfectly revealed through the completion of his mission on the cross.

Then in Matthew 16:13-20 the disciples share with Jesus the rumours of Jesus' identity that are going around the community. Some suggesting, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. Then Peter declares Jesus' identity as "the Christ, Son of the living God".

Then Jesus foretells his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection in Matthew 16 21-23. Reiterating to his disciples his identity as inseparable from his mission.

"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him." Matthew 17:1-3

Here three of the disciples had the privilege of a very sensory experience that confirmed Jesus' true Identity. Jesus stood in radiant glory alongside both Moses and Elijah. Whilst similar in appearance, Jesus was clearly separate from them, revealing to the disciples that Jesus was not Elijah, nor was he Moses. Then to cement it in their hearts and minds, came the unmistakable voice of God declaring that "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him"

Whilst the disciples may not have appreciated it at the time, we, through the benefit of hindsight and through the rest of the Bible can see that this transfiguration event demonstrated what Jesus said of himself in Matthew 5:17-20; "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them". Moses, the representative of the Law and Elijah the representative of the Prophets stood united with Jesus. All three arrayed in glory within the radiant cloud. Jesus' ultimate fulfilment of both the Law and the Prophets took place on the cross where he was sacrificed to atone for the sins of his people. Jesus' identity is confirmed by his mission.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Consider the reactions and responses of the disciples to all that Jesus had said and done in this period. How would you have reacted?
2. God said of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him." How will you go about listening to Jesus?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Tuesday 12/10/2021

By Barb Page

Hear God's word to you

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

Matthew 17:4-8

Reflect with me on God's word

Five short verses. What are they about? Peter seems pretty confused. "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for each of you, Moses and Elijah". Was he thinking of the festival of Tabernacles when the Israelites had a week of celebration for the harvest? Living in booths and offering sacrifices in memory of the journey from Egypt to Canaan. After all, we are told that Moses and Elijah had rocked up. Moses, the lawgiver who represented the Old Covenant and God's promise of salvation. Was Peter just so excited to see Elijah the prophet and he wanted to keep him there longer? Or, are these verses about encouraging the disciples who'd been discouraged by news of Jesus' upcoming death?

What do these verses teach us about Jesus? There is something somehow familiar about this scene. We read that a bright cloud covers them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, who I

love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" I can't help thinking of Matthew 3 when Jesus was baptised and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him and a voice from heaven saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Now here in Matthew 17 once again the Father is affirming who Jesus is. This is no mere man. This is God's own son whom he loves and with whom he is well pleased. Listen to him!" God's own Son. Were the disciples encouraged? Are you encouraged? I am. This is the one who died for you and me. God's own dear son, whom he loved, who died a horrific death rejected by all and rose to life again so that we could have new life in Him. God commands us to listen to him. Let's ask God for his help to do so each and every day.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. What do you learn about God the Father, Son and Spirit from these few verses?
2. Is there anything new you learn about Jesus?
3. How will these verses affect your life today?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Wednesday 13/10/2021

By Bron Cooper

Hear God's word to you

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." 10 The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" 11 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. 12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Matthew 17:9-13

Reflect with me on God's word

In the first part of chapter 17 we peek into the spiritual reality of Jesus, and indeed our world. We see Jesus in glory. What a truly awesome spectacle to witness. Later the apostle Peter reflects on this turning point in history "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father" (2 Pet 1:16-17).

Then vs 9 seems such a contrast, four men talking as they walk down the mountain. It seems like such a pedestrian scene after such an event! However, imagine after seeing it, how you would see and perceive Jesus. How carefully you would listen to his words! So when he tells them not to tell anyone what they have seen until he has been raised from the dead, do you notice there is no argument from them, unlike Peter in 16:22! There is a new realisation on the part of the three disciples who Jesus really is. They jump straight away to asking him questions on how this situation fits in with the prophecies of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:5) (vs 10).

So in verses 11 and 12 Jesus answers them. It is very brief (perhaps Matthew gives us a synopsis rather than the whole conversation?) but

from this the answer is very clear. John the Baptist was one like Elijah. The day of the Lord is approaching, his way has been cleared. Jesus is the Messiah. This is a real moment of awakening. What their eyes have seen confirm what their treasured scriptures have told them. It's hard to overstate the significance of this occasion.

Yet look at verse 12: "The Son of Man is going to suffer". Here we see Jesus as the humble servant, knowing he will suffer at the hands of wicked men. Here we see the greatness of Jesus, the eternal Son of God and the suffering servant.

"There is glory on the mountain of transfiguration, but it is a glory that meant suffering for John the Baptist and would mean suffering for Jesus" (Morris, 1992).

Here we see how great the Lord Jesus is. The Son of God who humbled himself to save.

Have you heard the early 20th century hymn "Turn your eyes upon Jesus"? I think the refrain is so fitting to this passage.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of his glory and grace"

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Spend some time reflecting on the glory of Jesus at the transfiguration and humility of his humanity and his suffering in verses 9 to 13. What does this tell you about his character?
2. Does this deepen your trust in both his humility and also his determination to save? In what ways?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Thursday 14/10/2021

By David Foley

Hear God's word to you

When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." 17 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Matthew 17:14-20

Reflect with me on God's word

I have known people with epilepsy, and it is devastating. Their family are on edge, worried a seizure might occur. The person with epilepsy is aware of all the things that might trigger a seizure or anxious that unexplained sensations might herald an approaching seizure. After recovering there is embarrassment at what occurred.

If this man's son had seizures as he described it must have been very distressing, causing burns and injuries suddenly and without warning. These convulsions may have been followed by unconsciousness and his father might have thought his son had

died. It seems that these were frequent. The father in desperation takes his son to be healed, he tries the disciples first, but they fail.

Then he comes to Jesus with a desperate, clear, and simple request – “have mercy on my son”. He believes Jesus is the only one who can heal his son and immediately his son is healed. Jesus is frustrated with the disciples’ lack of faith “You unbelieving and perverse generation...how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?”

The disciples seem to be troubled that they could not cure the boy. So, they privately ask Jesus questions about what they did wrong. This private conversation with Jesus and his disciples seems to be important as this style of private teaching is described elsewhere in Matthew 24:3, Mark 9:29, Mark 13:3 and Luke 10:23. It is in private prayer and conversation that Jesus instructs. Here he tells them that they lack faith. The faith he wants is not the size of a great mountain but the size of the smallest mustard seed. I don’t know about you, but to me the disciples have plenty of faith; after all they had enough faith in him to give up their jobs and accommodation. Perhaps their faith fluctuated and for me this is reassuring. When our faith fades, we can admit our failure and come privately to Jesus.

Personally reflect on God’s word to you

1. What is the quality of your relationship with Jesus, – do you really trust him – do you spend much time in his company? If you don’t spend much time with Jesus, why do you think this is so? Speak to Jesus now, privately; he will listen and care for you.
2. What does it mean to “have faith as small as a mustard seed”? How can you have this faith?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Friday 15/10/2021

By John Smyth

Hear God's word to you

When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. 23 They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

Matthew 17:22-23

Reflect with me on God's word

When we reflect on this passage, Jesus makes it very clear - the Son of man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.

The disciples were filled with grief and greatly distressed hearing this news and were only able to focus on his death. It can be likened to an oncologist telling you that you have stage four cancer, and you are not expected to live much longer. No one wants to hear such news - it would be such a shock.

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection is worth repeating and these verses in Matthew 17:22-23 are the second time Jesus predicts his death. Take time to look up the others. They can be found in Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:21.

Jesus himself makes it quite clear what is going to happen telling his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem. There he would suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and would be killed, but praise God, raised to life after three days.

Matthew wants to ensure that we understand that the time of Jesus' final days and his death are fast approaching. He describes how

Jesus was increasingly revealing information to his disciples about what was going to occur. In 17:9 he specifically describes the time when Jesus and the disciples were descending from the mount of transfiguration following the vision of his majestic glory which had been given to Peter, James, and John. Jesus commands them, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead".

In the gospel of Luke Chapter 9:44 we read about Jesus speaking to his disciples in a way that we rarely hear. He said, "Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men". Clearly, Jesus was very serious about making sure that the disciples had heard and understood what he was repeating to them.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. We have the hindsight post the cross, do you realise the implication of what Jesus has done for you right now? Take time to reflect!
2. Let us come with thankful hearts, giving HIM the praise, honour to his Glorious name for what God has done through Jesus to give us new life in Christ.

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Saturday 16/10/2021

By John Cronshaw

Hear God's word to you

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" 25 "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?" 26 "From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him. 27 "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Matthew 17:24-27

Reflect with me on God's word

I imagine that Matthew would have had a particular interest in this passage, having previously been a tax collector himself.

The two-drachma tax was a temple tax required by Jews to be paid at a set time to the tax collectors. It followed on from the atonement money paid by Jews for the upkeep of the Tent of Meeting used before the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. (See Exodus 30:13)

The two-drachma was worth about two days wages for a worker. (William Barclay "The Gospel of Matthew") It is important to note that despite Jesus being entitled to claim an exemption from the tax,

being the Son of God, and the temple being the House of the Lord, he told Peter to pay the tax so as to avoid offending the tax collectors. The tax collectors could have used a refusal by Jesus to pay the tax as another matter for accusation as the Jewish authorities built their case against Jesus.

We too must pay our proper taxes in full as an example. Jesus knows our actions and thoughts just like he knew the conversation between Peter and the tax collectors. In all our actions and speech, think first as to what Jesus would do in the circumstances. You may not pay your taxes from the mouth of a fish, but you will avoid many tribulations and stumbling blocks.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Are there any areas of your life where you do the wrong thing, such as fibbing, cutting corners, avoiding taxes, taking advantage of people, or generally doing things that you would not like, if it was done to you?
2. Confess to the Lord. Pray to the Lord for wisdom in everything you do and act on his Word.

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Monday 18/10/2021

By Coops

Hear God's word to you

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Matthew 18:1-5

Reflect with me on God's word

Chapter 18 begins with Jesus' words explaining what it means to live for and enter the kingdom.

Notice he doesn't actually answer the question of who is the greatest. Jesus is not interested in any ranking. He addresses the more important issue of entering the kingdom in the first place and which is perhaps the more concerning issue evidenced in the question.

Jesus says that unless they change and become like little children, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

This change is in the sense of turning. Turning to God.....turning in repentance, trust and dependence, like one might see in a small child who is utterly dependent and trusting of their parents.

Greatness in this kingdom is defined by humility. Adults tend to grow to rely on their own strength and independence, yet Jesus says that humbling themselves to be like a little child is what greatness really

is. A lack of pride and little concern for status are the marks of greatness in the kingdom of Jesus.

We see that greatness in the kingdom of Jesus is quite the opposite of earthly kingdoms and Jesus' message is quite counter cultural for both the disciples and for us.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. If we have faith in Jesus then we know that we have been brought into his kingdom, but what Jesus says about greatness and humility is still relevant for us as Christians. What for you defines greatness and is it the same as how Jesus speaks of it?
2. In what ways could you rely on God more and less on your own strength and wisdom?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Tuesday 19/10/2021

By Nathan Barden

Hear God's word to you

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! 8 If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Matthew 18:6-9

Reflect with me on God's word

Jesus is the one speaking here and he is warning us clearly to be radical in dealing with our moral failings (sins) which cause us, and others, to trip up. There is no getting around this passage, it paints Jesus in the harsh light of judgment. (Although, perhaps the only real alternative is a god who is indifferent to sin and its consequences, but that would offend God's justice). In fact, Matthew's gospel contains the lion's share of the occurrences of the word 'hell' and all of those are ascribed to the lips of Jesus. Any of us who fail to heed Jesus' warnings here are in very real danger.

Jesus presents us with a dichotomy. We are either going to enter life or be tossed into the eternal fire of hell, seemingly based on whether

we do something about inclination to sin or not, so we can't afford to be complacent about sin. While exhorting us to never take a break from fighting sin, John Owen, in *Of The Mortification of Sin In Believers*, wisely warns us "be killing sin or it will be killing you." Heaven is not for those who lay down their arms and make peace with sin but for those who violently oppose it, who wage war against it. I hope and pray that we will take our battle with sin seriously. Our sin meant Jesus had to die, so it's not something to be trifled with. It turns out that if we are to have any hope in overcoming sin then we are in need of Jesus, his cross and his victorious resurrection.

Although God is stern, that isn't the whole story, he is also kind (Romans 11:22). The same, then, is also true of Jesus and verse 6 displays Jesus' kindness in his concern for the vulnerable. Jesus' care means the moral-derailment of impressionable Christian children will be met with fierce judgment. So much so that tying a large weight around your neck and being dropped in the deep-blue would be preferable to leading them astray.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Do we also, like Jesus, have a heart for the vulnerable? What kind of example are we setting for children, whether our own or those belonging to others?
2. Are we taking drastic measures to curb our moral failings? Are we seeking the Spirit's help to weed out ingrained sin?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Wednesday 20/10/2021

By Neptune Tang

Hear God's word to you

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. 12 "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 18:10-14

Reflect with me on God's word

When I was in Year 3 and my sister in Year 1, we commuted by train to get from home in inner Sydney to school in Lakemba. One morning, I got off the train and then realised that my sister was not with me. I was devastated. Should I get on the next train to follow? Who do I tell? I was so upset I just stayed at the station in tears. I was in charge of looking after my sister, and I was bearing the weight of losing her. The details are a bit fuzzy now, but we were reunited after a short time as someone must have realised, and accompanied her to get off at the next station and return back.

This passage talks about the "little ones" that God cares for. Since they are valuable to him, he is willing to leave the ninety nine for the one. We are also told that angels are charged with looking after them. Who are these 'little ones' that God cares for? On first reading, I thought that this verse was about how Jesus loves children and

wants us to care for them. We do see how Jesus cares for children in the next chapter, but that isn't the focus here. Looking back at the start of Matthew 18 we see that the disciples have asked Jesus 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Jesus then responds by telling them that it is whoever becomes humble like a child in trusting and depending upon God. The 'little ones' spoken of in our passage are childlike followers of Christ. They may be people who have just started trusting in Jesus or who have known him for a whole lifetime. We are told that God rejoices when Christians who have strayed turn back to him, so likewise, he grieves when we turn away from him.

As a body of believers, we are told in verse 10 that we should not despise or look down on other followers of Jesus. Sometimes we might feel let down by other Christians. Perhaps they don't meet our expectations, they may be immature, not pulling their weight or seem to be fixed in their ways. Our response should not be to 'despise' them. If we are to be Christlike, we should remember that they are a child of God and that God cares for them. He grieves for ones who wander off and he rejoices for the ones who turn back to him.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Is there someone at church you find hard to get along with? What would be a helpful way to think about them?
2. If you feel that you are straying from God because your devotion is not what it once was, or perhaps you are a new believer and you feel childlike – what does this passage say to you about your worth and how God sees you?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Thursday 21/10/2021

By Val Smyth

Hear God's word to you

LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. 2 Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. 3 Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. 4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. 5 My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. 6 I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. 7 My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. 8 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. 9 All my longings lie open before you, Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. 10 My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes. 11 My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away. 12 Those who want to kill me set their traps, those who would harm me talk of my ruin; all day long they scheme and lie. 13 I am like the deaf, who cannot hear, like the mute, who cannot speak; 14 I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply. 15 LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God. 16 For I said, "Do not let them gloat or exalt themselves over me when my feet slip." 17 For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. 18 I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. 19 Many have become my enemies without cause ; those who hate me without reason are numerous. 20 Those who repay my good with evil lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good. 21 LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. 22 Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.

Psalm 38

Reflect with me on God's word

Psalm 38 is made of two sections and David is clearly feeling desperate and asking God to remember him in his distress.

The first section outlines God's displeasure at sin and then in the second half we see how David is suffering. He senses God's displeasure and cries out to him and describes in a very expressive way how he feels the hand of God pressing

down on him, recognizing that this is because of his sin. At Calvary Jesus was made the target of the same agony, but for our sins, not for his own.

David confessed and repented and while he acknowledged that he deserved to be punished he asked God to be merciful to him. Just like David we need to recognize our sins, repent, and seek forgiveness.

Praise God we are free to ask for mercy.

Sin can have a great physical and mental effect on us and cause great suffering as it did for David, but God promises to forgive us and deliver us from sin's eternal consequences if we repent and turn to him.

In verses 13 and 14, David was silent when he was under attack which is not an easy thing to do. Likewise, Jesus was silent when he was before his accusers – he left it all in God's hands – he did not seek revenge – and that's just where we should leave our concerns as well – in the hands of the Almighty. When things go wrong and we are hurt by others, we do not need to lash out or seek revenge, we can trust God to protect us.

As the psalm unfolds, we read that David feels forsaken by friends and hunted by enemies, but as the psalm comes to its conclusion, we see a glimmer of hope arise in David. He knows he needs to place his hope in God, and he does. He asks the Lord to stay close to him, not to forsake him and to help him.

In our lives today we still fall into sin, none of us is immune and adversaries still surround us, but praise God in Christ we have full and complete salvation, and our God is merciful and kind to us and walks with us in every aspect of our lives.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Have you realized that you, like David, are a sinner? We all are, but praise God we can come to him and acknowledge our sins and he will forgive us. If you have never come to him before – don't delay – seek him today.
2. When things go wrong in your life, who do you turn to? Like David – ask the Lord to stay close to you.
3. Do you have confidence in Christ? – in him we can have complete and full salvation.

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Friday 22/10/2021

By Stephen George

Hear God's word to you

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17

Reflect with me on God's word

A few years back I went to a training day that was all about conflict. It was about being a peace-maker, but first we looked at peace-faking and peace-breaking responses to conflict. Peace-faking includes things like cutting people off or refusing to admit there's a problem. Peace-breaking includes things like slander and gossip, verbal or even physical abuse. Most of us hate conflict, but this training day said that conflict can be an opportunity.

In these verses Jesus tells us what to do when someone sins. He's just said that if someone has one sheep that wanders off they will leave the 99 to retrieve it. It seems that the heart of what he is saying here is not about forcing someone to admit they have done the wrong thing by you. The heart of this is all about reconciliation. It's all about peace-making and not peace-faking or peace-breaking. Compassion drives us to speak with them first alone. Then compassion drives us to speak with them with a couple of relevant parties. Then compassion drives us to get the church family involved.

If none of that succeeds to win reconciliation, then we are to treat them as a pagan or a tax collector. What exactly does Jesus mean by this? When we consider how Jesus treats tax collectors we can understand his meaning. Matthew who wrote down this Gospel was a tax collector that Jesus won over! Jesus' point is that someone who will not acknowledge and deal with their sin when it is pointed out to them by a concerned brother or sister, by a small group, and even by the whole church family is actually not a believer. We are to treat them as someone who needs to come to know the love and lordship of Jesus. We treat them with love and kindness and we evangelise them, but we do not see them as a brother or sister.

This says two things to us. 1) Unrepentant sin is serious and so we need to deal with it in our lives and we can't be peace-fakers, we need to help each other take it seriously because it can cut us off from Jesus, and 2) These verses are not about getting justice for ourselves or seeking revenge on someone for what they've done to us or looking to be vindicated in the eyes of others. These verses are actually about lovingly, sacrificially, desperately seeking the wanderer to try and win them back to Jesus.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. When you see sin in the life of a brother or sister, are you more likely to be a peace-faker (and look away) or a peace-breaker (judging them and wanting to see them dealt with)?
2. How do you make sure that you don't be a peace-faker and just ignore sin? How do you make sure you don't be a peace-breaker and seek to see people 'dealt with'?
3. Is there someone wandering in sin you need to talk to this week?

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter

Saturday 23/10/2021

By John Cronshaw

Hear God's word to you

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Matthew 18:18-20

Reflect with me on God's word

These three verses need to be read in context with what went before in Matthew 18:15-17. People have all sorts of disputes, and have faults, and sin against one another. This applies to Christians as well. What I do as a Christian may still offend another Christian.

Jesus taught his disciples that if a brother sins against another then the offended brother should point out the sin and win over the brother. If that fails, then bring the sin before two or more other witnesses, and if that fails tell it to the church, the body of Christ. Now if that still fails to resolve the sin of the brother then he or she is to be cut off, that is treated like an unbeliever, a pagan or a tax collector.

If a person is reconciled and turns from his or her sin, in faith then that person will be saved not only on earth but in Heaven. If a person continues to sin despite having the matter brought before the church and is cut off from the church, then by the authority of Jesus he or she will be banished. There will be no place in Heaven for that person. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven.

But Jesus will do everything in his power to turn that sinner to Christ. We also must do all we can through Jesus and the Spirit to turn that sinner from his or her sinful ways. The Parable of the Lost Sheep shows the attitude of Jesus and likewise we must not readily give up on a lost soul given the dire consequences of that person's sin and unbelief.

We can have every confidence that Jesus is with us all the way whenever we get together in his name. He is our great comforter. In him we can be bold to step up and shine despite all the ridicule and opposition we face in this world. But without Jesus we will fail. We cannot make it on our own.

So, if a person sins against you, forgive and forgive again, and prayerfully and gently bring that person before Jesus to acknowledge their sin so that he or she may receive that ultimate forgiveness, and salvation won by Jesus on the cross. As James says (5:20), whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Personally reflect on God's word to you

1. Do you have an issue with a fellow Christian that you need to resolve? Bring it before Jesus.
2. Do you have trouble forgiving? Remember we are all sinners. We all fall short, but are saved by grace. Praise the Lord.

Speak to God your Father, Jesus your Saviour, & the Holy Spirit your Comforter