KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 13:53-58, 14:1-12

Week of 4th to 10th of November

Rejection of God's Messengers & God's Message

Leader Preparation

Welcome back to the study of Matthew! We pray that this year's studies will be a blessing and a growth point for you and your community group members. Thank you for all you do to help with making disciples.

If you didn't spend time as a group talking about "great faith" and "little faith" last week, you might like to include some of that discussion this week – it is a theme that comes up all through the book.

There are 2 aspects to the study this week:

- People who did not recognize who Jesus was and were offended by him.
- The persecution of God's messengers in John the Baptist and Jesus (yes, he is much more than a messenger) – all the way down to Christians today.
    - You might find this article about prophets useful in preparation: https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sam-storms-what-does-scripture-teach-about-office-prophet-gift-prophecy/

Group Time:

He's famous???

There are many celebrities who relish being known and recognized. Surprisingly, sometimes you might come across someone very influential, powerful or gifted who does not broadcast it to the world. Even when people are very successful, sometimes their family still sees them as the little boy or girl of no consequence that they grew up with.

- Have you ever met someone very famous and been surprised at how they came across?
- Have you ever realized that someone you know is highly regarded in a field, and you hadn't known?
- How might it be an advantage to be in the friendship circle of someone influential? How might it be to your detriment?

Exploring the Passage

Read Matthew 13:53-58

Who is he?

The last section of chapter 13 rounds off a section of parables talking about different ways that people respond to Jesus.

As a group, make a quick summary of what you learned from each of these:

The parable of the sower (vv 1-23)	
The parable of the weeds (vv 24-30, 36-43)	
The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast (vv 31-34)	
The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl (vv44-46)	
The parable of the net (vv 47-52)	

- Verse 57 says that the people in Jesus' home town took offense at him. What were the things he did that caused this? What was it about his actions that **astonished** them in this offensive way?
- If you think about the parables above, how would the people in Jesus' home town who rejected him be described in the stories?
- In the sermon on Sunday, Richard described two errors people may make in responding to Jesus:
    - The ordinary man trap – people know who Jesus is, but do not recognize his extraordinary identity.
    - The refusal to accept the extraordinary man trap – people recognize the extraordinary nature of Jesus, but deny his identity..
- As Christians, do you think we can recognize which of these categories those who don't follow Jesus fall into? Is it possible that someone we think has rejected Jesus might still change their mind?
- What is your belief about Jesus? Does he amaze you / astonish you / offend you?

Read Matthew 14:1-12

Jesus and John are both described as prophets. What does the term “prophet” mean to you?

A prophet receives messages from God, mainly concerning events that will take place in the future, and conveys them to a certain group of people or singular person, whom God intends to hear the delivered message. In some ways, a prophet is an advocate or mediator between God and a group of people.

God assured Moses, “I will raise up for [my people] a prophet like you . . . and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him” (Deut. 18:18)

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute?” (Acts 7:52)

What do these verses tell us about the role of prophets?

Although Jesus was a prophet, that is only one of his roles. Which of the aspects of his Christology are roles that extend beyond being a prophet?

What other similarities do you see between John and Jesus:

- In the response of people to them?
- In the opposition they faced?
- In the ways that they suffered?

- **Read Matthew 16:24-25**

How is this passage real for you? How do the examples of John and Jesus encourage you as you live as a Christian?

Prayer

Following Jesus is not easy. Pray for one another:-

- To have faith to believe in the amazing person that Jesus is, and all he has already finished doing to save us.
- To hold on to that faith even when we face opposition.