KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 17:1-13

Week of Sunday 7th April

Unveiling the Son of God

Leader Preparation

- Please have a look at the leader notes for this week: pages 21-23, and also 28-29 contain some useful approaches to some of the tricky questions that might come up. Also find Richard's notes attached. These notes try to focus a little more on the heart – the other notes may be more helpful for answering specific questions about the passage.

- This week is a great opportunity to speak a little more deeply with those in our groups. Don't forget to start by looking in the mirror, asking God to work in your own heart first of all! We'd like to make sure we include three critical components in our discipleship – Care (of the whole person), Prayer (for them and the things that touch their lives), Share (equipping them to reach out).

- Let's spend some time asking some questions about:
    - How do you respond to the promise of Jesus' glory
    - How do you make sure that the clearest voice you hear is the voice of Jesus – and do you then listen to, and obey him?
    - Are you sure that your life focus points to "Jesus only"
    - What is the connection between the cross and glory – for Jesus and for ourselves.

Group Time:

Ask the members of your group to share about some of the voices and opinions that feed into their lives. Some questions that might help:

- What is the first thing you turn on in the morning? A podcast? A news bulletin? Social media?
- Who do you regard as a "trusted voice" to guide your opinion:
    - Regarding solar power to your house
    - Regarding what car to buy
    - Regarding medical treatment
    - Regarding investments or other financial advice
    - Regarding cooking or entertaining
- How much time does Jesus have in your day to influence you?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 17:1-13

The response of the disciples

We all know from others or from our own experience the kind of responses that people sometimes have to understanding the truth of Jesus for the first time. What are some of the emotions and responses that sometimes happen when people encounter him?

(perhaps thinking about things like repentance or an awareness of sin, rejection of Jesus, joy in a new understanding, expressing new faith, life changes)

What responses do we see from the disciples to the events of the transfiguration?

- v4 – what do you think Peter thought was GOOD about this experience? Do you think he understood what he was seeing?
    - It seems that Peter wanted to find a way to honour Jesus, Moses and Elijah. God's instruction though was to LISTEN to him. Do we sometimes busy ourselves with things that we think are important tasks, but neglect to LISTEN to Jesus, or to obey him?
- v6 – why do you think the disciples responded in this way?
- v10 – after this amazing supernatural encounter, the disciples seem to focus on some rather dry academic issues! Do we sometimes do the same thing? How does Peter describe his understanding of this event later? (2 Peter 1:16-18)

(It almost seems that the 3 disciples "banked" this experience and only understood or acted on it later. For such a profound revelation, it seems peculiar that it did not have more effect on them at this time, as if the Holy Spirit only "activated" its lessons later on)

Compare some of the images of what happened at Easter to Jesus, contrasted with this moment with his disciples.

- How might this have prepared the disciples for what was to come?
- Does this give you hope to hold onto when you experience suffering in your life?

Delving deeper

You might want to play a song like "I can only imagine"

https://open.spotify.com/track/1G5S1rEr4L57ftizRHcYDP?si=e6e5406b2e92432f

Allow people to meditate on it. It focuses on how we might respond when we finally encounter the fullness of God's glory in heaven one day.

- Share together something of how you think you would react to seeing Jesus, with his glory fully unveiled before you.
- Thinking through Matthew, and all the evidence we have heard about who Jesus is, all he has done, and all we hope for in him, are there areas of your life that should be more changed by him?

- Paul, someone else who had an amazing encounter of Jesus' glory, speaks of the way God reveals this glory even to us – 2 Corinthians 4:6. How can we hold onto this hope, and how should it turn our lives around?

- How does this little "taste" of Christ's glory give us hope to persevere when life is hard?

Closing off

This week we would really like to take out some thoughts about:

How should our view of Jesus' glory transform our lives?

How do we turn into people who LISTEN to Jesus more than to any other voice from our world?

How do we reorientate our lives so that we "see no one but Jesus only"

Oh God of Splendour and Glory

Thank you for the amazing reality of Jesus as he was unveiled and revealed to the disciples at the Transfiguration. Thank you that he now sits, full of glory, at your right hand, and that we will one day see him. Will you open the eyes of our hearts by your Holy Spirit to start to grasp an understanding of that glory, and to hold tightly on to that reality rather than the temporary trials around us.

Jesus, will you remind us that the way to your glory was through the cross at Calvary. Help us to lay down our lives before you, knowing that as we share in your suffering, you invite us also to share in your glory.

Will you walk closely with us this week. Help us to LISTEN to your voice, and to SEE only you on the path before us.

We praise you and worship you, glorious Son of God.

Amen