KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 20:17-34

Week of Sunday 2nd June

The Shadow of the Cross

Leader Preparation

Read through the passage in Matthew, and the notes on pages 16-18.

There are 2 important things coming up for CGs:

1. LEAD TABLE at 8am on Sunday 9th June for all leaders.
2. The church-wide course UPSTREAM on 12th, 19th and 26th of June. Decide as a group whether you will be taking a break to join in at church.

Over the next couple of weeks, think about your Community Group and how it is going. After a meeting think about:

- What distractions were there during your group meeting? How could they be avoided?
- Were people encouraged to participate? Were some people overly dominant or withdrawn?
- Was the sharing and discussion focused more on the mind, will or feelings?
- Did the time together feel warm or cold? Dull or dynamic? Academic or practical?

If there is something that is not working well, maybe you would like to share something about it at the Lead Table next Sunday to get some ideas from other leaders about how they would handle it.

Group Time:

Continue asking group members to share a verse from the section of Matthew that we have read that has been significant to them.

Share as a group:

- One way I saw God at work in my life this week was. . . .
- What are three qualities you admire in your friends?
- I feel peaceful inside when. . . .

Exploring the Passage

Matthew 20:17-34

Verses 17-19

There is more detail about Jesus' death in this description than the previous ones. What is significant to you about how much Jesus knew about what was going to happen to him?

Try to imagine how Jesus must have felt knowing what lay ahead for him. What do you think helped him to keep going?

What is the final focus of Jesus' prophesy? Do we sometimes forget to focus on this?

Verses 20-24

Jesus' description of his suffering to come is followed by this moment of James and John (represented by their mother) requesting a place of glory in his kingdom. This is another example of how the kingdom of God is completely upside down.

To understand Jesus' description of the cup he will drink, have a look at these verses:

- Isaiah 51:17, 22
- Jeremiah 25:15-20

These passages describe the wrath of God as this cup of wine, dark and bitter, that will make people drunk and helpless. It will be given to all who are evil in the world as punishment. What does it mean to you that Jesus says **he** will drink of this cup?

What kind of experiences can we expect as we follow Jesus?

Verses 25-28

In this passage, how does Jesus describe his purpose in coming to earth?

How does he set an example for us?

How can we adjust our ambitions to be more like him? What do we need to turn upside down?

Verses 29-34

So often, people's needs seem to pop up at times that seem "inconvenient.

- How do the people in the crowd respond to these blind men? How do you find yourself reacting to the needs of others, especially at inconvenient times?
- What kind of help were the blind men most likely used to receiving on the road?
- How did Jesus reach out to them in a more meaningful way?
- Can you think of some ways that you could respond with more compassion in difficult situations?
- When we're with Jesus, we often focus on our superficial needs rather than the things we think are too big to ask God. What would you ask God for if you were really open with him?

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Closing off

Pray for one another and for any needs in the group.

End with the words of celebration of this prayer:

> *If you were not risen, Lord Christ, to whom would we go to discover a radiance of the face of God?*
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> *If you were not risen, we would not be together seeking your communion.*
>
> *We would not find in your presence forgiveness, wellspring of a new beginning.*
>
> *If you were not risen, where would we draw the energy for following you right to the end of our existence, for choosing you again and anew*
>
> Brother Roger of Taizé
