

# Jesus Beside Me

Meditations on Matthew  
Volume 2

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## Foreward

Unapologetically, I pray for myself this earnest plea found in the beloved hymn *Come Thou Fount*: “Bind my wandering heart to Thee!” For the Christian there remains a deep desire to live out our days closely tied to the heart of our great, gracious King Jesus. To daily live aware of his presence, to commune with him, and to enjoy him. The paths and ways in which we draw close to Christ are innumerable, diverse, and divine, but one so sweet to the heart and soul is that of the reading and soaking in of his very own words to us through scripture.

The act sounds too simple, sometimes even elementary for the seasoned Christian, including myself, but if the cliché holds true—that the Bible is God’s love letter written to us—why would we want to nonchalantly dismiss or put it away? After all, who’s ever heard of a lover, who upon receiving a letter from their significant other, toss it aside, never reading their words? Reading the words found in scripture illuminates who our Savior is as well as his character, wisdom, good commands, and wonderful grace. It’s through the meditation of these same words that Christ comes near to the heart of man that we may know and love him, and be known and loved by him.

The book you’re holding does just this: Marrying the art of reading God’s word then meditating upon it. In doing so, David gets you up beside the Savior so you may know Him all the more. And it’s my hope that through this book that your heart may be tethered a bit more to Christ... that you would cry out to him, “Here’s my heart, take and seal it!”

~**Natalie Grimm**  
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## One From His Garden

### Matthew 7:15-20

*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every good tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

Notice that wolves are not defensive creatures. They seek out their prey and come to you. Our best defense is a holy wisdom, grounded in a living word and living savior.

By their fruit – there is no clearer way. If you are unclear about a food you taste it, a scent you smell it – likewise the odor of sin and the flavor of wrongdoing are immediately recognizable by those who have trained themselves in the freshness of grace and mercy.

The bounty of this passage exceeds what any sole soul could harvest. Yet there is one line you must take hold of, a good tree cannot bear bad fruit. Beautiful. If once rooted in Christ you begin to bear and allow the Holy Spirit to prick and prune, then even as our tree is merely a branch of his vine our fruit, that is his production both in and through our lives, will be good. And not just good, but exceedingly good to the point where onlookers will speak – that tree bears no bad fruit. Why? Our bark may be fragile, our leaves thirsty, but every plant wails or wins due to its roots. Bad roots will not be hidden for long, their fruit will bear testimony to their decay. But rejoice in good roots, in the foundation of salvation, because they must bear good fruit.

And so you will be recognized, child of God, as one from His garden.

## A Knowing That Moves

### Matthew 7:21-23

*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

If you love me you will obey my commands.

Doing, even with the correct intention, does not always guarantee the desired result unless your action falls in line with the desire of the one for whom you are doing. As is seen, there are some who in intention, acted towards God, and in action, did the works of God, yet remained outside his will.

How can this be – is there something outside of intention and action which govern the good of a thing? Yes, relationship.

Even the best gift from the wrong person will be seen as a curse. So it is with those who will call our Lord, Lord. Without reconciliation they are enemies calling across the fence, were we not on your side, and Jesus answers plainly, away from me. Be one who does because he knows, not one who claims to know because of what he does.

## Our Work And His Foundation

### Matthew 7:24-27

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*

The situation is the same for both. Both have heard the words and a storm approaches. The storm is one in the same for both, whether hearer or non-hearer, practicer or non-practicer, wise or foolish – all are caught in the single storm.

Notice it is not what they did during the storm which determined their success or failure, but before it. Both men built, laboring with difficulty for a goal and sanctuary. There is no evidence that the fool did any less work than his wise neighbor. The only difference stated in Scripture is their foundation, rock or sand.

*These words of mine.* A foundation is rarely seen but it is constantly felt. God has offered us a rock to build on, a foundation we must labor at. Few will notice the rock, but they will see the practice and they will feel the sturdiness. That is the incalculable security of an immeasurably great God.

## A Place At His Table

### Matthew 8:3-4

*I am willing. Be clean!*

*See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.*

There are few words more beautiful than these spoken by our Savior. In three short words he reveals his heart and then in two more he transforms ours. Meditate upon these – for even if I could play for you the loveliest song as you sat in the most beautiful garden, I would still be unable to convey the sweetness of His statement.

The core of the Christian life is to love these words.

I have heard a number of explanations for why the later part states what it does, many are very helpful and I encourage you to seek them out. However, my purpose is different. Watch the actions in use: do not tell, but go show, and offer. I have never heard a light speak. Faith comes from hearing, but the focus here is upon the apparent cleanliness of a once dirty woman. Our faith is meant to be shared and our righteousness is meant to be seen, not as Pharisees – think candles, not spotlights.

The difference between two children, one who has washed for dinner and the other who has spent the whole afternoon outside, can be clearly seen. The clean one will be allowed to sit at the table. So it is with us. Cleanliness is its own testimony and it affords us a place at His table.



## Lord And Servant

### Matthew 8:7, 10-13

*I will go and heal him.*

*I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*Go! It will be done just as you believe it would.*

There is a beautiful dichotomy present which illustrates the authority of Christ. He is approached as Lord, as one more worthy than should be entering the house of a centurion. Yet he responds as a servant, I will go. The centurion exposit the privilege and weight of authority. In response Christ elevates the conversation, clarifying his supernatural role.

Lord yet servant, this man Jesus lays his authority plain before men. The table of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at his table. The feast is for his wedding and the kingdoms throne his seat. Some, indeed some who are close, will fail to accept his authority and will find themselves in darkness – away from his face but never outside of his reign.

Go! My authority is true, as you have believed. And because you believed in my authority fist, the request has been granted. Both Lord and servant, God and man, our savior reigns completely. His sovereignty glories in service.

## Bid Him Come

### Matthew 8:32

*Go.*

God does not waste breath. As the author of wisdom, He says what he desires, what he deems as sufficient and then no more.

There is no power in mere words but instead the power lies in what God gives. If he says light, the darkness hides; if he says breathe, the dead bones rise; and if he says go, demons must flee.

It was the demons who approached Jesus and the demons who begged for mercy. After the scene unfolded, and the pig owners heralded the news, the town approached Jesus. The demons knew he would tell them to go, yet they came. The people told Jesus to go, though he came for them.

Mourn the town's fate, even the pigs who were possessed and water logged, even they had a kinder end than those who tell Jesus to leave. Do not reject the one who came for you, though he devastates your livelihood and frightens you. He is good. And if he will answer the request of a demon, how much more will he for his child.

## So That You May Know

### Matthew 9:2, 4-6

*Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.*

*Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...*

*Get up, take your mat and go home.*

Our God cannot be put into a box. 'Some men brought,' this was their act of faith, 'a paralytic lying on a mat' and this was his. We must obey in accordance with the abilities afforded us to the degree of faith awarded us by his power for his glory.

They, like evangelists, brought one who could not bring himself. Look at what Christ did, your sins are forgiven. He saw fit to address the eternal before the temporal. There is no mention of the men moving at this point. His fate had just been transferred from ruin to glory and yet he was still lying on the mat paralyzed. Don't judge eternal outcomes by immediate circumstances. He is the invisible God who does invisible things – when we begin to see him we will also begin to see them more fully.

It was not the words, but simple evil thoughts which brought about at two. It was not their logic which argued against Christ, not their history, not even their evidence, but their hearts. They possessed empty knowledge void of a love for God so they remained blind. However, Jesus is drawn to issues of the heart and asks them – which is easier to say. If it was based purely on syllable count, the latter for it is shorter. But, truthfully, is anyone more possible than the other? Can a man, void of power to forgive sins, enable a paralytic to walk? Either would be extraordinary, though their worth is far apart. But so that you could know, Jesus did both. The latter only to confirm the former.

The crowd is silent while the man is lame, they don't worship at God's first miracle because they, like us, have no concept of the internal decay at work. They see outer troubles. Jesus came for the internal, the invisible – to cure the sickness we did not even know we had.

Think on this – would the man have been healed if others did not doubt his forgiveness? Is the only reason a drunkard is cured of his addiction to show that indeed it was the inner bond of sin which has been broken? We must come to see outer ailments and cures as visible statements of our invisible wealth in Christ. And when such things are absent, either the trial or treatment, we are no poorer in Christ for it, and no less forgiven, and no less loved.

## Follow

### Matthew 9:9

*Follow me.*

Jesus what do you require of me? Follow me.

Jesus who am I? Follow me.

Jesus what is my purpose? Follow me.

Where should I go? Follow me.

Can you ever forgive me for this? Follow me.

Lord, I am exhausted, I cannot make it one more day. Follow me.

This is impossible. Follow me.

To follow: keep Jesus in view and move in that direction.

To keep him in view is to be saturated in his word. And to move in his direction includes everything from quiet prayer to nation building, but is always found underneath the umbrella of obedience which comes from loving God.

## To Fill The Empty

### Matthew 9:12-13

*It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. But go and learn what this means 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*

It is those who are without who need, even more importantly they understand their need, for what they are without. The first group is without health. The last is without righteousness. In both cases this is what Jesus has made available, healing for the broken and forgiveness for sinners.

The Pharisees are blind to what they are in need of. That is why Christ tells them to go learn something they certainly were already familiar with, Hosea. Jesus gave health to the sick, that is what they did not have. He gave forgiveness to sinners, that is what they did not have. For the Pharisees he had two gifts, for in their pride they lacked most.

He desires mercy, since that is what he has shown to all peoples. He does not desire sacrifice, why? This was the second gift – himself. I am the satisfying sacrifice, yours are over because mine is complete.

Your lack is nothing less a place for God's glory to inhabit. He fills in the empty holes in your life with himself. (Matt 5:6) He has called the empty that he might fill them.

## Old Versus New

### Matthew 9:15-17

*How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.*

*No one sews a patch of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.*

John's disciples and the Pharisees approach Jesus with a question about fasting. The first reason for Jesus' disciples is clear – he, the bridegroom, is still with them. The reason is one of miracles, rejoicing and action. There will come a time to mourn the absence of Christ, those reading this are in it.

The second reason is more elusive. The objects presented are an un-shrunk cloth, wine, an old garment, and an old wineskin. What occurs when the new and old are pieced together? The patch rips the garment and the wine bursts its skin.

Jesus is the new. He is the un-shrunk patch for our covering, the wine poured for our offering. Those who still cling to the old will be damaged by trying to adjust the new to fit. The Pharisees love the law of old – they are wise enough to know Jesus would burst their way of life. John's disciples are in danger, they hold on to fasting as a requirement of the old, while pursuing the Jesus who rocks such sandy foundations.

What can they do? The same as the disciples – new wine can only enter new wine skins. They must be renewed in body, in heart, and in mind. Only then can you accept Jesus for what he is and be preserved, rather than destroyed, by his indwelling. If you reach for Christ with one hand, and hold onto your old life with the other, you will be like the garment. Stubbornness only serves to makes the tear worse.

## Faith Interrupts

### Matthew 9:22, 24

*Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you.  
Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.*

It's about faith. It's about faith when you find yourself between a rock and a hard place. It's about faith when the burdens balloon into too much to bear. It's about faith when your prayers seem dark and the room feels empty.

Jesus was interrupted by people with faith. First, by the man whose daughter was ill. And again by the bleeding woman. Faith turned Jesus' face toward them. Faith moved them closer to Jesus. Both stories culminate in a touch.

The woman had no power in her own, or those twelve years would have been much shorter. No, it was faith which moved her legs, faith which caught his gaze, faith which reached, and faith that touched.

The dead girl could not walk or reach or touch. But Jesus could. The faith of the father brought Jesus close enough so he could do the touching, *took the girl by the hand*.

Faith receives what it hopes and always more than it invests, *the woman was healed...the girl got up*. Jesus welcomed the interruption of faith. Do our lives do the same?

## He Is Able

### Matthew 9:28-30

*Do you believe that I am able to do this?  
According to your faith will it be done to you;  
See that no one knows about this.*

Is he able? Do you bother asking a doctor to void a speeding ticket? Or do you ask a police officer if they could diagnose your illness? No. Those examples are outside of their skillset and power. You only ask of them what you believe they can do according to what they say.

Why then are we so weak in prayer? The two blind men carried enough faith by way of their ears that their eyes opened. They heard about Jesus, believed, sought him out, requested and found mercy. Perhaps we shy away from prayer because we do not believe he is able. Clearly we are wrong.

Jesus then makes a request of his own, *do not tell* anyone. His reasons are not clear. Perhaps it was simple as he was exhausted and needed time to rest. Regardless, they did not listen.

But something beautiful comes of this, it shows that Jesus' mercy is not conditional. The men were not re-blinded when they told others. His mercy cannot be earned, and once received, cannot be lost. When we stumble and fear 're-blindness' our Father aches that we know so little of his mercy, and trust so little in his love.



## Harvested To Harvest

### Matthew 9:37-38

*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field.*

How many of us have the issue of too big a harvest? Which of us has more income than we can gather? Instead we are on the opposite end of the spectrum: we lack, and even what we gather seems to disappear right through our fingers.

First, be thankful that our own wealth has not distracted us from the innumerable riches of God. Second, rejoice that those, however innumerable they may be, are now ours in Christ. It was compassion that gave us these. The same compassion which healed and taught and hurt and died. The same compassion which moved God to raise such a large harvest. And the same compassion which will collect it.

Therefore, since his compassion was the harvest's cause, let it become ours also. For when we pray 'send out workers,' we are coming into agreement with God's compassion, our very saving grace.

However, beware because his compassion is not tame. I doubt that there was ever a person who truly prayed that prayer and, once coming so close to the compassion spoken of, did not themselves enter the harvest field.

Under the Lord, there is either the harvest or the worker. Once you have been harvested your duty, rather your joy, is to harvest others.

## Empty-Handed Endurance

### Matthew 10:5-10

*Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*

I can only image the frustration the disciples must have felt. This message is huge, yet we are confined to our own backyards. On top of that Jesus has told them to do the impossible – heal, drive out, resurrect. Furthermore, they are supposed to go and do with no resources – no gold, no bag, no staff or tunic.

God what are you doing? How will this be possible?

Their hope, their authority and their resources were in the message – the kingdom of heaven is near. It is the message which moved 12 men, who in turn moved the world. It was a message freely given, freely received, but carried an immense cost to its bringer; first the Son and then his followers.

If we accept the message we are accepting a free gift. And once we begin to grasp its value, we will work as one worth their keep. Such work will burn in our bones and empty our coffers. But can continue in rest knowing the message, his kingdom grows nearer every day.

That is the key to endurance in ministry: a mindset raptured by the increasing closeness of Christ – both now and to come.

## Mercy Before Judgment

### Matthew 10:11-16

*Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the house is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.*

*I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like a sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*

We must consistently make it a habit when studying Scripture that we approach it with an openness and expectation. God has endowed his words so that in all the millennia of reading they might target the hearts of countless billions, each one uniquely. A small portion of his infinite immensity is captured in Scripture, and yet even a fraction of infinity is an infinity in itself.

Here the message is clear, God is the judge of man. Jesus sent his disciples out with a glorious mission but did not award them false hope. As many doors as will be opened to you, that and more will be closed. You are like sheep, frail and defenseless, and the wolves which prowl are merciless. But there will be a day of judgment. Every foul wicked deed will be judged, especially those done against my children.

Still Jesus sent them out, so that his mercy might reach them before his judgment. And to show his forgiveness is even for the wolves.

## From Dust To Divinity

### Matthew 10:17-20

*Be on your guard against men, they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

What are men before God? They are nameless grains of sand scattered and walked upon. But to his glory He chose a few and gave them names. Those he named he then bought, those he bought he then adopted, and those he adopted he glorified.

How? By placing on their heads a crown of divine wisdom which no intellect could discover, let alone sand on the ground. It is the wisdom of salvation which exalts us to place of kneeling before Christ, whereas before we would have died in his presence. It is this God who sends us out equipped with this glorious knowledge.

Still we must be on guard against what men can do to us and for us. Like quicksand they can swallow us up if we stray off the path. Or by their praise they can erect a grand platform for us to stand upon – albeit an unstable one, ready to fall at the first storm.

When men flog you, rejoice in what Christ suffered for the world. When they honor you, weep at how far our hearts are from true glory. Because it is on His account that either should come our way and we are to be witnesses of his in both scenarios.

How can a man brought low or a man raised high honor the same God? By the power of the God who has stooped lower than any man and rose higher than any god. Although you stand before others as dust to dust, you speak from God to man. This is the mystery of the Spirit, to do in dust and through dust what is plainly the voice and hand of God. In this confidence, speak – so others may witness a glory no man can claim.

## To Worship

### Matthew 10:21-23

*Brother will betray brother to death and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

Worship is a product of familiarity and respect. As you grow in the knowledge of the object of your affection your respect follows and your worship improves. Theology feeds doxology. What is also true is that our focus must in some way delight in us or award us something.

Worship in its most basic form is thankfulness. Therefore we will not truly worship something which hates us or has done nothing for us.

Jesus tells the disciples to guard their worship. What is more familiar than family? What relationship can model the respect between good parents and their children? But this will cease as the name of Jesus is brought forth and the idols of men are exposed. To choose family over God will be your eventual death, but to choose God over your family will be your eventual life.

Neither should you worship the status of man or their opinions of you. By God's grace the hard truth of Christ's reality will stir up hate, it is the scent of death to the perishing. Be glad that you will have all the more reason to rely on God, and all the more reason to worship him as he proves himself faithful.

The time is short between now and then; between us being tempted by the glory of men and when we are finally crushed by the glory of God.

## Maturing

### Matthew 10:24-25

*A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household?*

It seems this message aims itself as those who lead with their minds rather than their hearts. The best theology in the world does not, in fact cannot, bring you one centimeter closer to the true God. Faith not knowledge, love not logic, are the attributes measured in the growing student.

Of course one needs knowledge, as a servant needs action. But no matter how much responsibility the servant is entrusted with, he still must answer to the master; likewise a student is not above the teacher. No man can know the full works of God or judge the peculiarities of his actions. He is God. And as much as they misunderstood and hated him, so they will us who have committed ourselves as students and servants for his kingdom.

Rejoice in the hardship, it announces your place to the world as being a member of the very household of God, the teacher and master.

## Terribly Strong and Close

### Matthew 10:26-30

*So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.*

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

We are given three reasons not to fear and one reason why we should. First we are told not to fear men because we will bear the very words of God. He will whisper in the dark, unveiling the glorious mysterious of our riches in Christ, and we are to take these to the roofs by the day and disclose the mercy of God.

Second, we should not fear how men may harm us. They may come to our roofs and destroy our body, but we are more than flesh! We remain alive in Christ, for he has kept our soul.

The third reason not to fear is coupled with the one reason why we should. In Job 38, God reveals his nature to Job, 'Where were you...' The greatness of God is magnified so as to put even the righteous men in his place. But then Job 39 appeals to the attention of our God, 'Do you know when the mountain goat gives birth.' In all his indescribable might and authority, he remains an imminent God – caring for the smallest of things. He sees both what we cannot imagine and what we do not value.

The one thing we are to fear is his greatness. Tremble in the knowledge that the entire earth is his footstool, and he is the only one who can destroy both body and soul.

The final reason not to fear is the truth of God's attention, as seen in Job. His eye is on the sparrow, the eye of God! Yet we are worth more than many sparrows – how much more is his attention on us? How terrible his power, how imminent his presence.

## Has He Taken Notice

### Matthew 10:32-33

*Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.*

It is painfully easy to be distracted, especially when we turn our attention to spiritual things. All the insignificant sounds and scenes rush into our heads and we drift away in thought.

Two things assist us in our battle for concentration. First the remembrance that God's attention is never distracted away from us. As his eye is on the sparrow, so his loving grace seeks us out constantly. Second, the mission of our existence, the pressure of our purpose, when known and remembered is a powerful tool to set us aright. Namely, that we are here to acknowledge God before men

In what manner? The glorious needs present is meant to make the best of our selfish natures. You see, Jesus promises to acknowledge those who have acknowledged him. Though his mercy will always be infinitely greater than our repentance I cannot help but see a proportionary idea. If you want Jesus to merely give his Father a nod and wave you in, then by all means hide your faith and share it only in the safest of circumstances. However, if you want Jesus to praise your faith and reliance on the father, then your acknowledgement must bear such flame that it warrants the notice of the Almighty.

There is no proportion in disownment, only sorrow. No gradations of knowledge are present in emptiness. I can think of no worse fate than to hear from the Son, *Father I have not known this person.*



## The Tempest

### Matthew 10:34-36

*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'*

I doubt anyone will ever know the full damage that has come by the assumptions of man. Those of us who think quick thoughts and speak with untamed tongues do a great disservice to the depth of glory planted in the Scriptures. So when you hear of Jesus do not suppose you know him so well – he is violently truthful, disturbingly merciful, and consistently opposed to our expectation.

The real Jesus makes no apologies for his message – he knows it is our only hope. But such a hope has not been birthed in quiet rooms and safe discussions. Our hope was straddled across a tree, stained in blood. The only quiet our hope had was in the dark cold grave where they lay his body. There were no debates as the stone was rolled away, no arguments as he ascended. Our hope was forged in a tempest, indeed he is the tempest.

Rather than destroying the ship he wishes to change its course, 'I have come to turn.' As his waves of grace pound upon our hulled hearts we have two choices – pull down our sails and let the storm carry us or fight it, only to find ourselves broken and drowning.

Inevitably our ship affects others beside ourselves and we will find enemies in our own household; they warn us that submitting to a tempest is foolishness. And it is by every measure of human wisdom, but we are Christ's. Whether sailing or stranded, we trust the one who came for us.

## A Worthy Life

### Matthew 10:37-39

*Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

You are not defined by your position in life or by the relationships you have on this earth anymore than by the color of your skin or the size of your body. White or black, short or tall – these are characteristics but they do not define your character. Your job and family are parts of your life, but not the whole of your life.

Along the same line, your love for people and causes does not define your love for God. They are the recipients of your affections not the source. Only your love for God shows your love for God.

That is why this verse has to deal with idols. Most idols are very good things loved to an unworthy degree. To love your family is a good thing, but it is not the first thing. The first thing is to take up your cross and follow the Lord who saw fit to leave his own Father and household that he might make true the phrase '*worthy is the lamb who was slain.*' In that phrase we find our hope and worth in Christ.

You can find many good lives to live on this earth and many good things to love. But a worthy life can only be given. We are filled with His life to the proportion we are emptied of our own.

## Reception and Sonship

### Mathew 10:40-42

*He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.*

'To as many as received him he gave the right to become children of God.' Do you see the glorious implications of such a truth. Though not a prophet you may receive what they have earned simply by receiving them. And so with the righteous man what is his by God's hand can become yours by the opening of your house to him.

But even that is merely a shadow. If you are sent by the grace of God then by his promise those who receive you are themselves receiving in some form the Christ.

Is this how seeds are planted? Further, to receive the son is to receive the one who sent him, God the Father. That is salvation. And now, by virtue of the promise of the words of Paul – him who receives Christ, sent by God, now also receives the prize earned by Christ – sonship. Which is life and glorification.

Anyone, anyone, anyone – these promises are for anyone, the rewards of a prophet and righteous man are available to all and now even the very preciousness that is to be in God's family, all merely by the act of receiving.

And the gift is sealed through giving. The act itself is not measured, only the heart of the giver because 'even a cup of water' seals the certainty of the reward. A gift received in the full knowledge that it was not deserved invites so many more gifts.

## On Account of Me

### Matthew 11:4-6

*Go back and repent to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.*

This is a strange text. Jesus responds to the question of his identity with the history of his actions. Healings abound: sight, movement, health, hearing, life, and hope are being given to people. Surely our God is an active God and wants to be known for what he has done. To have character is to show character, to have love is to do.

So then the beginning of the section reveals a God who wants to be known.

This adds to the peculiarity of the final sentence. Both a blessing and a warning it concerns those who will fall away. I am reminded of the parable of soils: some were choked out by desires, some lose it through lust, some through pain, others have it snatched away. Here another category is added, those who fall away because their expectations of Jesus did not match reality. This should cause you to take pause, some who claim to be Christian will fall away on account of or because of Jesus himself. How does that change your view of salvation?

Jesus is and will forever be the only way, the only truth and the only life. You do others a disservice by trying to disguise him. Second, do not be deceived yourself about who Jesus is and the reality of his character. He is not your genie, nor your friendly neighbor. He is not manifested in any political leader, he does not even resemble your pastor. He is God, the worthy lamb, the unapproachable light, the sovereign, the just-judge, and the passionate lover of creation.

## Desert God

### Matthew 11:7-10

*What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in king's palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'*

Expectation. We all possess it, but towards different things. We expect a paycheck after two weeks of work. We expect to feel better after taking medication.

We act in accordance with our expectations.

The people had acted, they had moved and Jesus is asking them why? What did they expect to find. Reeds and wind are everywhere. You don't have to move very far, or at all, to find a reed being swayed. They were not searching for something common.

To find a well-dressed person you have to do a little more work. They reside in places of power, and to get in you need power as well. Simply, you cannot see the well-dressed unless you are well-dressed also.

They came for neither. Instead, they came to see a prophet in the wilderness, a man of God.

People of God don't just happen. They are molded by the hands of God. They are sought out because of their communion with God and their insight from God. Prophets are for God, in body, mind, geography, title, hope and soul. John found himself in a desert. A place of no means or communion, and that is where Jesus came to him. That is where many people find themselves on their way to seeking God.

Do not be surprised when you find yourself confused and running low on spirit and supplies. God often waits in the desert because that is the only place quiet enough to hear his voice. The only place empty enough to feel his presence. The only place open enough to see the expanse of his glory at work.

God asks you, what do you expect to see in your desert?

## Pointers and Builders

### Matthew 11:11-15

*I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear.*

This is it. The kingdom has arrived and we are called to fall in step with its forceful advancement. John was that last announcer of its arrival before its king arrived. The Prophets and the Law spoke about the kingdom. Over and over again they tried to point to a thing they could not see or explain. They knew it was coming, but in a way they could not imagine. John was the final one before Jesus, he saw most clearly the impossibility that was at hand.

But we are on the other side. The coming has come and we are in the midst of an advance. Is our job smaller than John's? No, it is greater. While he announced the coming kingdom, we are adding to it. The prophets were pointers, we are builders.

Even though the world at large may never know our name, Christ does. Because as his fingerprints are on us, so ours are on the bricks of the kingdom.

## Complexities of the Almighty

### Matthew 11:16-19

*To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 'we played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." But wisdom is proved right by her actions.*

The wisdom of God is not the wisdom of man. How God chooses to do things, his means and methods, are like stumbling blocks to men. Because he chooses to do the unexpected.

The generation was feeble and young in their expectations: if we play a happy song, you will dance, a sad one and you will cry. But God is not manipulated. He knows the heart with which we sing and rather than build our pride with simple answers he smashes it with complexities.

John and Jesus were opposites. One ate and drank, the other did not; one was in the desert, the other swarmed by people; one was a servant, the other a master. And yet both were God's. God used both to accomplish his plan. How do we know? Because we have salvation, and therefore the unexpected action of God, a reflection of his higher thoughts, was proved right.

What God is doing in you does not have to make sense to you. We are to place confidence in his character, not in his explanations.

## A Hard Distance

### Matthew 11:21-24

*Woe to you, Korazin, Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.*

*And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.*

They were so close. Jesus not only did miracles in their sight but also in their person. People they knew were changed by him. Things they never thought they would see happen, happened by his touched. It says he did more miracles near them and for them than for anyone else. But they did not budge. They didn't break. They were so close.

Jesus knows our hearts our hard, some more than others. But when he comes at us he doesn't dial in our level of hardness, he always shows up with everything he is – paralyzing mercy, blinding glory and silencing love. Sodom, Sidon and Tyre – they would have turned, not because the call was louder or the miracles greater or the Jesus more real. But because they were softer.

Here soft does not mean weak. It means they had not given up hope in their hearts that a loving God could be a reality. These cities had given up. They became hard by trading hope for false security. They thought, I do not know if God is real, only what I see I is real. Which is why it will be so unbearable for them on that day, they saw miracles but did not hope in them. They were so close to Jesus, but their hardness kept that closeness from becoming more than physical.

Judas was close. Hardness blinds us.



## Yoke of Intimacy

### Matthew 11:25-30

*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.*

*All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom he chooses to reveal him.*

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

In this short passage we see two revelations. They are revelations because these cannot be searched, they must be shown. And it is God's pleasure to do it this way.

He does not follow the logic of man or of this world so those who have been cheated by men and wronged by the world may overcome and outshine all their afflictions when the foolishness of the cross becomes their crown of glory.

The first revelation is of the son, to whom all things have been committed. Jesus is the son who came, the Savior who stayed, the man who died, the king who rose and the God who reigns. All things are for him and he can do with them as he wishes. The great of those is his knowledge of the Father. And like so much of him, he gives this away to the undeserving.

The second revelation is of the Father, the one who gives you rest. Jesus is the walking revelation of his heavenly Father and he makes it a point of displaying the sort of heart he has. For God is gentle and humble. He is aware of your weariness and wants desperately for you to fall into his arms, where there is rest. You learn this by looking at Jesus.

Take his yoke but not his burden. The yoke attaches you to him, so as one moves the other also moves alongside. But the statement of the burden is not a call to trade yours for his. His burden is that all would be saved. He sees every suffering circumstance and hears every painful prayer. His burden is not light for us, but it is for him.

Instead, the reason he tells you his burden is light is so that you would cast yours completely on him. You and the father are now yoked, you will walk in step and carry great loads together. You do not need to carry your own burden anymore. It's impossible to be about your things and about God's things completely simultaneously.

Cast off your burden that you might enjoy his yoke, the comfort of his carrying closeness.

## Our Desecrated Delight

### Matthew 12:3-5

*Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread – which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.  
Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?*

God is not bound by rules but we are. There are laws upon laws we can break with the slightest misstep. But God's movements and words are laws in themselves. In this verse one sees the intersection of laws and needs.

David was hungry. His need was so immediate, so real, that laws blurred. When there are no options there is little apprehension. We do what we must to move forward. And so David ate holy bread.

The priests, who have even a heavier set of rules to follow and also a greater freedom to enjoy, are not excluded from this truth. When the need arose to sacrifice on the Lord's day they went forward, even when it was considered desecration.

They counted the need greater than the cost.

Christ is our law-breaking satisfaction. When we were hungry, he fed us his own holiness. When we were in need of sacrifice, he substituted himself in our place. He considered the need for salvation of all men great enough to leave his position. Great enough to be clothed in shame. Great enough to be desecrated, that the need might be met.

He is our Sabbath rest, the holy desecration for our salvation.

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