

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 20 (PART 2)

Matthew 20:17-19 - Arrest, Suffering, Death and Resurrection Foretold

This is Jesus' third explicit passion prediction (cp. 16:21; 17:22–23). Each one grows more detailed. Here, for the first time, he includes:

- Gentiles will be involved in his death (Romans).
- Mocking, scourging, crucifixion—specific humiliations.
- The resurrection on the third day is again promised.

Historically, crucifixion was the most degrading punishment in the Roman world — reserved for rebels and slaves. The disciples likely heard the “mock, flog, crucify” and couldn't even process the “rise again.”

Also notice that the text says “Jesus was about to go to Jerusalem...” (v.17) and then “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (v. 18). The next place the disciples are heading with Jesus is Jerusalem, a place they have been before, but this time is different. It's not just where they are heading, but what is now going to happen when they get there.

Q - Why do you think Jesus kept repeating these predictions?

Q - What might the disciples have struggled to hear or accept?

Matthew 20:20-23 - Who Sits Next To Christ?

The telling of his approaching death and resurrection serves as the backdrop for this conversation with James and John's mom.

“The cup that I am able to drink” is a metaphor for suffering that is used in the Old Testament (ex: Isaiah 51:17 and Jeremiah 25:15). Jesus is about to suffer and is mindful that the path he is walking is first of suffering, than glory.

James and John do actually drink of this cup - James will later be martyred (Acts 12:2), John exiled (Rev 1:9).

Sitting in the place of honor with Jesus is not simply reserved for the best and brightest students, but for those who are willing to suffer with and for him. For those who are willing to endure the sometimes difficult road that is walked when following Christ. And it's not even promised to James and John, but instead Jesus says that His father is the one who decides.

The only other time Matthew uses the phrase “one on his right and one on his left” is at the crucifixion (**Matthew 27:38**) — where two criminals are crucified beside Jesus. The positions

Salome sought for her sons turn out to be positions of suffering, not glory. But because of the suffering, glory will come.

Matthew 20:24-28 - How To Be Great

The conversation with Mrs. Zebedee serves as the backdrop for this teachable moment with Jesus and his other disciples.

The other ten disciples are “indignant” (v. 24) — not because they understood, but because they wanted the same honor. Jesus contrasts Gentile rulers (“lording it over others”) with the greatness of his kingdom: “Whoever wants to be great must be your servant...slave.”

The climax is v. 28: “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.*” Jesus about to show them why he is the greatest leader, because he will serve/sacrifice in the greatest way. He uses the phrase “**ransom**” (*lytron*), which echoes OT language of redemption, especially through sacrifice (Exodus 21:30; Isaiah 53:10–12).

v. 28 - Son of Man - if you remember, this title is rooted in Daniel 7:13-14, where the “son of man” receives the everlasting kingdom from the ancient of days. This vision evokes themes of power, glory, rulership, dominion and the like. And yet, Jesus says here something remarkable. “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve” (**v. 28**)

Matthew 20:29-34 - Blind men healed

The conversation with Jesus and his disciples about serving serves as the backdrop for this healing moment.

“Son of David, have mercy on us!” - As we have seen throughout our study, this is a messianic title. What’s amazing is that even though they are physically blind, they see who Jesus is more clearly than some who had physical sight.

Jesus, “moved with compassion,” heals them — again showing the king’s heart is for mercy and restoration. Matthew highlights contrasts here. The disciples and crowds “don’t see” Jesus’ mission, but the blind do. The disciples seek glory; the blind seek mercy.

Jesus *should* be focused on preparing for the most difficult and pivotal moment in his life and yet he has the capacity for compassion. His life is not so consuming that he has no room for others. The crowds don’t have time for this - but the son of David does!

“As They Were Leaving Jericho”

Matthew says this happened “**as they were leaving Jericho.**” Jericho was a well-known city near the Jordan River, about 15 miles from Jerusalem. It was the first city that the children of Israel conquered when they first entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua.

This is strategically important because it ends up being the final event recorded before what we call the “triumphal entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem (starting in the very next chapter). In other words, based on Matthew’s biography, the healing of the blind men is the final miracle before the Passion Week, and it happens on the road to the city where Jesus will be crucified. This is what Jesus is doing as he moves towards his death - showing compassion, noticing the marginalized, and healing the broken. Even in his final days, his life is focused on others.

Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. While others are journeying to Jerusalem to celebrate God’s Exodus deliverance, Jesus is heading there to fulfill God’s plan for eternal deliverance.

In Matthew 20, we see two kinds of vision. The disciples and their families look for honor, position, and greatness as they imagine it. The blind men, though physically unable to see, cry out for mercy and recognize Jesus as the Son of David. And Jesus — though walking toward suffering and death — embodies true greatness by serving, healing, and giving his life as a ransom for many. This chapter invites us to examine what we’re seeking: recognition or mercy, power or service, our will or his.

As Jesus walked the road to Jerusalem, he carried the weight of what lay ahead — betrayal, arrest, suffering, crucifixion. The shadow of the cross was already upon him. Yet Matthew tells us that when two blind men cried out to him, Jesus “was moved with compassion” and stopped to heal them. This is remarkable. He had every reason to be consumed with his own burden, but instead he chose to see, to listen, and to love. His mission of salvation did not crowd out the simple, personal acts of mercy along the way.

And as we close Matthew 20 and prepare to begin looking at the final chapters of this book which focus on Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection, we are reminded of the first chapters of this book in which the voice of God declared over Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (**Matthew 3:17**). It was the Father’s love that grounded Jesus, so he didn’t need to grasp for approval or protect himself. Secure in that love, he could pour himself out freely for others — even in his final days, when the cost was highest.

We often excuse ourselves from compassion because of our own struggles — we’re too busy, too stressed, too distracted, or hurting too much ourselves. But Jesus shows us another way. Even in his darkest hours, he made space for people, and his love flowed outward when we might expect it to turn inward. That’s the invitation for us: to let God’s Spirit form in us a heart that doesn’t wait for perfect circumstances to show kindness, but finds ways to serve and love even when life feels heavy. The world will see the power of Jesus in us not just when we are strong and free, but when grace overflows from us in our weakness, as it did from him.