



Sunday, March 29, 2020

Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to Matthew 16:13-17:8

It can be easy for us to gloss over faces in a crowd, to lose the “trees” for the “forest,” as the expression goes. Yet it is an important exercise in interpreting the Bible that we recognize how the authors give us concrete examples of those who followed Jesus. It is important that we recognize people like Zacchaeus, Bartimaeus, and Lazarus as people who were profoundly impacted by Jesus and who followed Him, as it says of Bartimaeus, “on the way.”

Likewise, when it comes to understanding Paul’s letters, it can be helpful to think about who the original recipients of his letters would have been. For instance, it stands to reason that some of the original recipients of his letter to the Philippians would have been Lydia or the former prison guard (Acts 16). And when Paul writes to the Thessalonians that he was concerned that they not be overwhelmed by their present sufferings (1 Thess. 3), that he was thinking of Jason who was dragged from his home and put on trial (Acts 17). So, when we think about what the New Testament teaches regarding what we should believe or how we should live, it is not abstract doctrine, but is written to real people facing real suffering.

Context

While much of the Gospel of John differs in substance and in sequence from the Synoptic Gospels, the events of the last week before Jesus’s crucifixion are fairly uniform. Jesus had come from His “home base” in Galilee and was making His way to Jerusalem for the Passover. On His way, He journeyed down the Jordan river valley and came to Jericho where He spent some time ministering before traveling to Bethany and ultimately to Jerusalem. All along, as Luke most clearly portrays, Jesus is making His way to the cross, but accomplished a great deal of ministry along the way.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Luke 19:1-10; Mark 10:46-52; John 12:1-11

“Faces in the Crowd”

Luke 19.1

Zacchaeus

- Despised
- Wanted to see Jesus
- Changed by faith...generous

Mark 10.46

Bartimaeus

- Ignored
- Called for Jesus
- Changed by faith...see

John 12:1

Lazarus

- Beloved
- Personal friend to Jesus
- Changed...alive

When your heart is touched by grace, you want to follow Christ!

Zac was lost but now is found

Bart was blind but now sees

Lazarus was dead but now lives

Discuss

- 1) What kinds of things have dominated your prayer life during this time? What are you asking Jesus for?

- 2) If you remember, what were you seeking when you were first introduced to Christianity?

- 3) When did it become clear to you that repentance was necessary for salvation (Luke 19:8-9)?

- 4) Read John 11:25-26. How can this passage give us hope in the midst of a pandemic?

- 5) Pastor Don mentioned Zacchaeus, Bartimaeus, and Lazarus as people who may have been in the crowd shouting “Hosanna” on Palm Sunday. These, like the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, constitute a “cloud of witnesses” to God’s grace. Who have been some of those “faces in the crowd” in your life? Who are some people whose walks with God have profoundly impacted your own?