

Jesus & the Crowds

Mt 4:23-25

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. The story is told of Shah Abbas, a Persian monarch who loved his people very much.
 - 1. To know & understand them better, he would mingle with his subjects in various disguises.
 - a. One day he went as a poor man to the public baths & in a tiny cellar sat beside the fireman who tended the furnace.
 - b. When it was mealtime the monarch shared his coarse food & talked to his lonely subject as a friend. Again & again, he visited & the man grew to love the monarch.
 - 2. One day the Shah told him he was the monarch, expecting the man to ask some gift from him.
 - 3. But the fireman sat gazing at his ruler with love & wonder and at last spoke: “You left your palace & your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to eat of my coarse food, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry. On others, you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself, and it only remains for me to pray that you never withdraw the gift of your friendship.”
- B. Jesus left his palace & his glory to come to this dark & sinful world to serve man.
 - 1. Phil 2:5-7.
 - 2. Jesus himself saw his role in terms of being a servant: Mt 20:28.
 - 3. This passage presents three ways that Jesus came to serve.
 - a. The passage, however, does far more than simply tell us ways that Jesus served—it shows ways Jesus serves the masses he came to save.
 - b. To these great crowds, Jesus is A PREACHER, A PHYSICIAN, & A PATTERN.
- C. Matthew writes this passage for two purposes:
 - 1. First, this passage sums up Jesus’ entire ministry.
 - a. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is presented as one who preaches, one who heals & one who is followed.
 - b. In Matthew’s day, books were quite expensive because they had to be copied by hand.
 - 1) Therefore, most people did not own books & audiences would gather around people who had books to hear them read them.
 - 2) So, many ancient books contain summary statements like this one to help people get a feel for the entire book.
 - c. Even though you & I have Bibles that we can flip through & read, summary statements like this one help us understand the layout of the entire book.
 - 2. Second, this passage serves as immediate background for the Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. Two parts of this morning’s text serve as background material for the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. First, we are told that Jesus went throughout Galilee “teach in their synagogues” (v 23); at 5:2, we are told that Jesus taught his disciples.
 - c. Second, we are told that Jesus gained many disciples (v 25); at 5:1, we are told that Jesus saw great crowds & called his disciples to him to teach them.
- D. This morning, we want to examine this summary of Jesus’ ministry in order to see him clearly as a servant.

II. TO THE CROWDS, JESUS IS A PREACHER, v 23.

- A. READ TEXT.
- B. We are told that Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues.
 - 1. It makes perfect sense that Jesus would teach in the synagogues.

Jesus & the Crowds

- a. The Jewish synagogue arose during the Babylonian Captivity when Jews were separated from the Temple in Jerusalem. Devout Jews wanted a place where they could gather for worship, and the synagogue provided an opportunity for that.
- b. The primary purpose of the synagogue was not worship but instruction in the Law.
 - 1) The synagogue was a place the common Jew could come, hear the Law, & gain understanding into God's Will.
 - 2) Philo, the Jewish philosopher born about 15 years before Jesus, referred to synagogues as "houses of instruction, where the philosophy of the fathers and all manner of virtues were taught."
2. Therefore, the Jewish synagogue was the perfect place for Jesus to teach.
- C. Not only does Matthew tell us that Jesus was teaching in synagogues but that he was also "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom."
 1. Jesus' preaching ministry was all about the kingdom of God: 4:17.
 2. In the text three chapters—what we call the "Sermon on the Mount"—Jesus outlines precisely what it means to be part of the kingdom.
- D. There are some important things we need to notice from this passage.
 1. Matthew certainly seems to draw a distinction between teaching & preaching.
 - a. In the NT, "teaching" refers to instruction of believers.
 - 1) Mt 5:1-2. Notice that Matthew there says that Jesus taught his disciples.
 - 2) The Apostles were to teach the disciples they made to observe everything Jesus had taught (Mt 28:19-20).
 - b. In the NT, "preaching" refers to instruction of those who need to be converted.
 - 1) Notice the description Matthew gives of John's ministry (Mt 3:1)—John is preaching the need to repent.
 - 2) Philip went to Samaria & preached the Christ to them (Acts 8:5); the Samaritans then believed & were baptized (Acts 8:12).
 2. What does the difference between teaching & preaching have to do with us today?
 - a. This tells us that even those who have been converted need further teaching.
 - 1) Jesus didn't simply go to the synagogues & say, "You know the Scriptures, so you need no further instruction."
 - a) Rather, he explained the Law to those Jews.
 - b) He did so in the synagogue at Nazareth: Lk 4:16-21.
 - 2) Even those of us who have come to Christ need to know the teaching of the Scriptures.
 - a) In Neh 8, Ezra led the people in recommitting to the Law.
 - i. Nehemiah lists the names of men who were around Ezra reading the Law.
 - ii. We then read that "they read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading" (8:8).
 - b) Paul told Timothy that in Ephesus he was to "command and teach these things" (1 Tm 4:11).
 - b. Because we need to be taught, we need an earnest desire to be taught.
 - 1) In an earlier day, it was said that we in the churches of Christ were "people of the Book." The implication was that we were a well-taught people who well knew the Scriptures.
 - 2) Could the same be said of us in this era?
 - a) When we are too busy to come to Bible study on Sunday morning or Wednesday night?
 - i. I know many of you have trouble sitting through both services, or you have trouble driving at night. That's another thing altogether.
 - ii. But, there are many who have no health difficulties who just don't bother with being taught for one reason or another.

- b) Do we regularly spend time studying from the Scriptures when we aren't assembled that we might know the Scriptures?
- 3) Many saints of old serve as examples of a desire to know the Scriptures.
 - a) Paul, knowing that his life was about to end, tells Timothy—2 Tm 4:13. We don't know for sure what the "books and parchments" were, but it certainly seems likely that they were at least, in part, Scripture.
 - b) David pleads with God to teach him: Ps 25:4-5.
 - c) A well-known denominational preacher, when he was too old to mount the pulpit, would rise every morning to prepare a sermon, even though he never preached them.
 - i. He did this until the day he died, because he was convinced that he needed to know the Scriptures.
 - ii. If a man caught up in error had that desire to know the Scriptures, what does that tell us? Do we desire to know the Scriptures?

III. TO THE CROWDS, JESUS IS A PHYSICIAN, vv 23b-24.

- A. Matthew here demonstrates Jesus to be the "great physician."
- B. Jesus healed "every disease and every affliction among the people."
 - 1. Wouldn't you like to find a doctor who could heal every disease & affliction?
 - a. Because God designed the human body with so much complexity, it's necessary for physicians to specialize in specific fields.
 - b. Not every specialist is able to save every case presented to him or her. Not even Gregory House can save everyone.
 - 2. Jesus, however, heals every single disease & affliction.
 - a. Kathryn Kuhlman was a Pentecostal faith healer who died in 1976.
 - 1) She went to Philadelphia in 1976 & conducted a healing service.
 - 2) Dr. William A. Nolen conducted a case study of 23 people who claimed to have been cured during her services.
 - a) Of those 23 people, there were absolutely no cures.
 - b) In fact, one woman claimed to be cured of spinal cancer. She threw away her brace & ran across the stage at Kuhlman's command. Her spine collapsed the next day & she died four months later.
 - b. Compare such deceit to the work of Jesus—he healed everyone who came to him.
- C. Because Jesus is healing so many people, his fame spreads to Syria.
 - 1. Jesus is such a good physician that his fame spreads outside of Galilee & goes all the way up to Syria.
 - a. Syria was a territory north of Galilee; many Jews were apparently living in this region during Jesus' ministry & they bring their sick to him.
 - b. If you knew, without any doubt, that someone could heal your loved one, wouldn't you do everything in your power to get that loved one to the person who could heal him?
 - 2. Matthew mentions the type of illnesses Jesus healed—various diseases & pains, demon-possession, epilepsy, and paralysis.
- D. What is in this passage for us?
 - 1. We see that Jesus cares for the whole person.
 - a. I fear sometimes that we have this image that Jesus **only** cares about spiritual ailments.
 - 1) There can be no doubt that the spiritual is far more important than the physical.
 - a) Jesus came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28).
 - b) Jesus taught us to value the spiritual more than the physical—Mt 16:26.
 - 2) Yet, Jesus' healing of **physical** ailments demonstrates how important the physical is.
 - b. God cares deeply about our physical needs.

Jesus & the Crowds

- 1) As Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he says, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt 6:11)—If God cares nothing about our physical needs, why would Jesus teach us to pray that we have enough food to eat?
- 2) Js 5:14-15. If God cares nothing about our physical needs, why did he inspire James to write these words?
2. Because Jesus cares for the whole person, the church must care for the whole person.
 - a. Mt 25:35-36. Where we spend eternity is **partially** determined by how well we care for those in need.
 - b. When Agabus foretold of the great famine, the brethren in Antioch determined to send relief to the brethren living in Judea (Acts 11:28-30).
 - c. Gal 6:10. Are we doing good to all men?

IV. TO THE CROWDS, JESUS IS A PATTERN, v 25.

A. READ TEXT.

B. People from all over come & begin to follow Jesus.

1. It is quite obvious from this text that we are to think that they follow Jesus as disciples.
 - a. Notice 5:1.
 - b. Remember, the term “disciple” does not just refer to the Twelve, but the term refers to anyone who came to a rabbi to be taught.
 - 1) The Apostles were told to make disciples throughout the world (Mt 28:19).
 - 2) These crowds look to Jesus as a PATTERN, a teacher.
2. Jesus is the perfect PATTERN for us.
 - a. 1 Pt 2:21b.
 - 1) In context, Peter writes specifically concerning how to suffer—the Christians to whom he wrote could learn how to suffer for righteousness by looking to Jesus.
 - 2) Yet, Jesus lived so perfectly in tune with God’s will, that he serves as a perfect pattern for us.
 - b. 1 Jn 2:6.
 - c. Jesus teaches us how to pray, how to love, how to overcome temptation, how to have compassion—he is the perfect PATTERN.
3. A man once said, “A man's life is always more forcible than his speech. When men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as dollars and his words as pennies. If his life and doctrine disagree the mass of onlookers accept his practice and reject his preaching.”
 - a. Jesus taught us many things with his words, but he always put those words into practice. Are we following both his words & his practice?
 - b. What about before others? Are we setting a positive example for others to follow? Are we a PATTERN?
 - c. Do you need to come to Jesus, follow his pattern, & allow yourself to be a pattern for others?