Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – March 1, 2020

Let’s read Matthew!

***The Plentiful Harvest***

Matthew 9, 10

**What’s happening in the book?**  Jesus confronts increasing opposition.

 Jesus continues spreading God’s Kingdom, preaching and working miracles to validate the message. But now there is open opposition, and Jesus recruits disciples not only to spread the message, but also to share in His confrontation with a religious establishment which craves political, not spiritual, power.

**What would we like to ask Matthew?**

 Why does Matthew seem to stress forgiveness over this healing?

 How does Jesus’ call of Matthew himself relate to this miracle?

 What is the “new wine,” and what are the “old wineskins”?

 Why does Jesus not want the blind men to tell of their healing?

 Why does Jesus characterize the people as shepherdless?

 Why does Jesus tell The Twelve not to go to the Gentiles?

 Are Jesus’ instructions ONLY for The Twelve? How do you know?

**What do we need to know about this passage?**

❑ Matthew is not recounting random events. He layers miracles with opposition stories to contrast the “New Wine” of God’s Kingdom with the “Old Wineskins” of Judaism (and its nationalistic legalism) which could never embrace God’s grace and love for sinners. Matthew is focused upon the nature of God’s plan and how that plan is completed.

 ❑ The paralytic’s forgiveness is a preview of Jesus welcoming the tax collector, Matthew, and his friends. The Pharisees question Jesus’ ability to forgive sins, and then are outraged at His love for sinners! 9:1-16

❑ Then, four miracle stories contrast faith and unbelief. A woman is healed, a daughter is raised from the dead, two blind men can receive sight, and a man is freed from demons. But while Jesus’ miracles inspire awe in believers, the Pharisees accuse Him of demonic powers. 9:17-38

❑ The opposition Jesus faces and His love for shepherdless sinners prompts Him to encourage prayer for new laborers AND to appoint and equip The Twelve to join His outreach to Israel. 10:1-15

❑ But Jesus alludes to far more than The Twelve’s immediate task, including persecutions and the consequent Gentile mission which happen only after His death. He even speaks of His return and last judgment. Matthew “telescopes” the experience of all Kingdom disciples, with Jesus prophesying the spiritual confrontations of the entire age. 10:16-42

**What’s the big idea (main point) of the story?**

**While the gospel of forgiveness to sinners is founded upon Jesus, it reaches the nations through His disciples who, following Him, face opposition until He returns in judgment.**

***For Growth Groups. . .***

 How do you think believers you know would respond to persecution?

 Why does Jesus seem to be predicting events beyond The Twelve?

 Why is the very first controversy about the forgiveness of sinners?

 What does Jesus imply in speaking of disciples taking up their crosses?