Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – March 8, 2020

**Let’s Read Matthew!**

***The Quiet, Conquering King***

***(and His family)***

Matthew 11, 12

**What’s happening in the book?**  Matthew shows how Jesus wins.

 Perhaps the biggest surprise in the Bible, other than Jesus Himself, is how His quiet grace subdues a rebellious world. His Kingdom is, for now, understated, and His disciples underrated. They are sheep among wolves, and children amidst chaos largely because the King is not forcibly and outwardly pushing His agenda. Even John is surprised!

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

 Why does John baptize and praise Jesus, and then doubt Him?

 How can the very least in the Kingdom be greater than John?

 How can John be Elijah, and why does the Kingdom suffer violence?

 Why does Jesus call His seemingly heavy burden, “light”?

 Why does Jesus keep asking people not to report His miracles?

 Why does Jesus seem to excuse certain examples of “law breaking”?

 What makes the unpardonable sin unpardonable?

 What does Jesus mean when He refers to “this generation”?

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

❑ John clearly is not expecting a Messiah like Jesus. Jesus’ words are meant to remind John that while Jesus’ miracles validate His message, they don’t dictate His methods. The point is that if Jesus is the Christ, He is worthy of implicit trust, however He presents the Kingdom.

 ❑ Jesus surprisingly contrasts John, the greatest in a line of prophets, and equal of Elijah, with the very least in the coming Kingdom. It is a new day, and one that “this generation” is not receiving. They reject both John’s fasting and Jesus’ feasting, acting like spoiled children.

❑ Jesus repeatedly warns “this generation” of their unbelief and the coming judgment, mirroring God’s word (Gen. 7:1) on Noah’s generation. The rejection Jesus experienced was typical of all generations, then as now. The Kingdom is revealed to “children,” who come to Him for rest.

❑ The two Sabbath controversies show Jesus as “Lord of the Sabbath,” who pleads God’s desire for mercy over sacrifice (9:13; 12:7). Grace guides His Kingdom, but prompts killing-hatred from the religious leaders. Jesus withdraws, choosing quiet good over outward display.

❑ The unpardonable sin of the Pharisees is the rejection of the very grace of God Spirit Jesus proclaims and procures. “This generation” of sign seekers gets only the Resurrection, which will prove that He has foiled their plot to silence Him. On the other hand, all who “bear good fruit” by receiving grace become His family, the family of God.

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

**The firm, gentle, power of God’s grace may surprise us, but it penetrates each heart, bringing us either to receive Jesus’ grace as His family or to face judgment as His foe.**

**For Growth Groups. . .**

 List some misconceptions about Jesus which persist to this day.

 What prompts Pharisees, then and now, to reject God’s grace?

 How can Jesus be so confident that His “quiet” approach will win?

 Why does rejecting the truth of God clear the way for the demonic?