

Week 51
Matthew 19-23

Theme: When and why should we fight for our faith?

Conversation Starter

What action option did you choose to do after our discussion last week? What went well? What did not go well?

What questions do you have from the reading this week?

Weekly Review/Intro

The readings this week continued through the book of Matthew. This section of scripture is primarily focused on the teachings of Jesus and the Triumphal entry. We are going to primarily focus on the teachings of Jesus in Chapter 21.

Have you ever met someone who will refuse to admit they are wrong?

Have you ever met someone AT CHURCH who will refuse to admit they are wrong?

How do you like interacting with that person?

Everyone has met someone who refuses to admit their fault. Jesus spent time confronting the hard-hearted who refused to admit they were wrong in our reading.

Read Matthew 21:23-27

What was the original intent of the priests? Why were they questioning Jesus?

Instead of responding, what did Jesus do?

The religious leaders originally intended to question Jesus' authority to do what he was doing. Instead of answering them, Jesus asked them about John's baptism.

What was significant about the question that the question asked?

Why were the priests so torn on how to answer?

Why were they hesitant to choose either of the options given by Jesus?

The question posed by Jesus was whether the baptism of John the Baptist was from heaven or man. Either answer posed a problem for the leaders. If they said “from heaven,” they would then admit that they were wrong by choosing to not follow John’s teachings (aka. Accept Jesus). Conversely, choosing “from man” would bring about anger from the people because they believed in John.

Since we know that John was a prophet of God, “from heaven” was the correct choice.

Instead of choosing either answer, what did the religious leaders do?

How do you think pride played into their response?

Jesus put the religious leaders between a rock and a hard place with one question. Instead of choosing, they chose to sidestep the question and not give a response. Pride seems to be a major motivator because admitting they were wrong was not an option (v. 25) and offending the people would also hurt their standing (v. 26).

How can our pride get in the way of use growing closer to God?

How does refusing to admit fault become a problem for a Christian?

Has there ever been a time that you refused to admit your fault to God? If so, what do you need to do differently?

Application

Not only did Jesus address the religious elite, he also confronted another population of Jews and made a stand for the Kingdom.

What words would you use to describe Jesus and how he acted while he was on the Earth?

Do you ever feel like our society paints a simple picture of what Jesus was like? If so, how do you think society describes Jesus?

For those who have not read the Bible, Jesus, many times, is described as a nice teacher who went around healing people. Granted, that description is partially true, he was a much more diverse and deep person that people give him credit for. We are going to look at the characteristics of Jesus and ask ourselves how we can be more like him.

Read Matthew 21:1-10

Based on these verses, how would you describe Jesus?

Why was it important that Jesus rode a donkey?

Are there any words in verse 5 that stand out to you about who Jesus is?

The Triumphal Entry is a big part of Jesus ministry. It is a point where people worship him and acknowledge him as the “Son of David.” It is also the time where he acknowledges that he is the son of God. As we have seen before, Jesus told people to not share that information. The choice of a donkey comes from a prophecy in Zechariah 9:9-11.

Read Zechariah 9:9-11

What do these verses say that Jesus would do?

According to verse 10, what is Jesus proclaiming to the nations?

These verses are a prophecy of Jesus to come. Jesus is coming to proclaim peace to the nations (v. 10). We also see that he will have dominion “from sea to sea.” This language should sound very similar to what we read in Revelation. This prophecy shows us why Jesus came, and we can see why the Jews were so excited for his arrival. Directly after the triumphal entry, Jesus did something that might seem odd to us.

Read Matthew 21:12-13

How could these two verses seem contrary to the idea that Jesus was coming to bring peace?

How do these verses contradict the misconception that Jesus was a simple person?

Verses 12-13 are the account of when Jesus threw out those buying and selling from the temple. To those who do not know the true Jesus, this may seem very odd. Jesus was meant to bring peace, but here he is casting people out and flipping tables. However, Jesus was quoting scripture as he was doing it.

Why was Jesus casting people out of the temple?

Do you think he was justified to do that?

Jesus was casting people out of the temple because they were defiling it by their unjust business practices and defiling the laws of God. Jesus was justified to do this as we know that

Jesus did nothing wrong. However, this idea brings about some interesting questions for Christians.

When should Christians fight for their faith?

Do you think that the Bible gives directions on when a Christian should fight for their faith?

How should a Christian fight for their faith?

This topic can become widely debated. Clearly, there are things that happen in this world that are not Biblical, and one side of the spectrum believes that we are to fight every situation that is not Biblical. The other side of the spectrum is to not fight at all. We are not going to settle this debate, but we are going to study one example of where a Christian should take a stand/fight and the reason why we should do it.

Looking back at verse 12, where did Jesus make his stand?

Why is it significant that he did this in the temple?

Who was allowed in the temple and what should these people have known?

Would these people be aware of the verses that Jesus was quoting in verse 13?

As we have discussed many times over, the temple was the center of Jewish religion. This was the place where the people would come to follow the law and give their sacrifices to God. The primary group of people in this building were Jews. The verses that Jesus was quoting were Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. These verses came from the major prophets that the Jews, the religious people, should have known.

Based on the verses we have read so far, what is one group of people we should be willing to challenge for our faith?

What should our reason be for fighting?

The first group we should be willing to stand against is our own people, Christians. Jesus is confronting the Jews because they are God's chosen people, and he is doing it because he knows that they are in the wrong. Similarly, we need to be willing to stand against our own churches if we see practices happening in the church that do not align with the Bible.

Do you think there are any practices in your church that need to be stopped because they are unBiblical?

How should you go about making those changes?

Do you think there were other reasons why he threw them out of the temple?

Read Matthew 21:14-17

Where was Jesus in verse 14? Why is this significant to what we just read in verses 12-13?

What other purpose do you think Jesus had of throwing people out of the temple?

Verse 14-17 gives us a look at a second reason why we should be willing to fight for our faith. We see in verse 14 that Jesus stayed in the temple that he just cleaned out. He then used the temple as a place to do ministry to those who were blind and lame. Another reason Jesus fought for the faith was because cleaning house meant that he could do ministry more effectively for the kingdom.

Are there things that your church should be doing but are not?

Are there things you are doing but are not?

What sin is holding you or your church back from ministering effectively to others?

People sin. This is a fact of the world, and Christians are not immune. However, the Bible clearly teaches that we are to live by a higher standard than the rest of the world, and Jesus showed us that we may have to call out our brothers and sisters in Christ when we see wrongdoing. As we see, the purpose is not simply to fight for the sake of fighting, but we are to call out those who know the Word so that we can minister to others who need Jesus.

Week 51
Reflection

During this week, you are being charged with answering these questions about yourself and your walk with God. Hopefully these will force you to pray and consider what God wants you to do in your life.

- 1) Is your pride getting in the way of your walk with God?
- 2) What faults do you need to admit to God so you can be closer to him?
- 3) Are there wrongs in your church that need to be addressed so you can better serve others?
- 4) Are there wrongs in your own life that need to be addressed so you can better serve others?
- 5) Are there practices that you or your church need to address so you can better minister to others?

Week 51
Action

Choose one of the following actions to do as part of your walk this week.

- 1) Go to a trusted believer and confess how your pride has gotten in the way of your relationship with God. Be open and confess what faults or wrongs you need to admit to God and pray together.
- 2) Take a personal inventory. Pray this week and ask God if there are any faults or wrongs that you are doing that are getting in the way of ministering to others around you. Write down what you need to change, pray over the list, and make the needed changes.
- 3) Pray for your church every day. Pray for your pastor and leaders. Pray for God to reveal to the church what things need to be changed so you can better minister to others. Discuss what God reveals to you at your next small group meeting.