

## MONDAY 25 April 2022 "A mother's plea" (Matt. 20:20-28)

Good Monday morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

*Have you ever had the experience where the very good news you received was simply TOO good to be true?* I think that's what it was like for the friends of Jesus in the weeks following that unforgettable Passover/Easter weekend in which Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead on what we call Easter Sunday morning.

Yesterday I left you watching as Jesus suddenly appeared again to the gathering of disciples and this time Thomas was with them. John tells us that event took place in Jerusalem, so that tells me they had spent all week after Easter in or near Jerusalem, yet almost all of them were from the Galilee area and I'm sure anxious to get home. The problem, of course, was they didn't know what to do with the 'too good to be true' news that Jesus was not dead but alive, resurrected from the dead. I'm sure they were struggling that Monday morning to know if they should stay longer in Jerusalem or go home? What would Jesus want them to do?

It appears they decided to head home to Galilee. For John and James, Peter and Andrew, they had their fishing jobs waiting for them, and I presume several of the others could go back to whatever they were doing before Jesus called them to follow Him. But for Matthew... have you ever thought about what Matthew might have been thinking as they walked back home to Galilee? *Matthew had given up his tax collecting job to follow Jesus. Perhaps he still had a house to return to, but not his job.*

Matthew, however, had one very important skill which he had refined in his tax collecting business: record keeping! *So, I wonder if during that week in Jerusalem after Passover / Easter weekend Matthew had begun writing down his memories of Jesus?* John records that both Easter Sunday evening and the following Sunday evening, as the disciples gathered together, they locked all the doors and windows out of fear of the Jews! So, I presume they were in hiding that week. I think it's very possible Matthew, realizing all was not lost and there was perhaps a future with resurrected Jesus, began writing his record of all he could remember, from the time he had first even heard about Jesus. Now, as they were walking back to Galilee, is it possible Matthew already had some scrolls in his bag, *the beginnings of what we today know as the Gospel of Matthew?*

I presume the 11 disciples walked along the road just as they had so often with Jesus. Probably Peter and John out front with James, Andrew, Philip and Nathaniel close by them...always talking as they walked. I wonder if Matthew, again because of his tax collecting reputation, was accustomed to being alone, and walked along not talking to anyone, just digging deeply into his memories of Jesus, and thinking about what he'd write next? As he looked at John and James, perhaps he remembered the time their

mother had approached Jesus asking if her two sons could have priority places when Jesus would set up His kingdom?

Now that was quite a day!! Matthew recorded it like this: ***"The mother of Zebedee's sons [James & John] came to Jesus with her sons and kneeling down asked a favor of Jesus. 'What is it you want'? Jesus asked her. 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom.'" (Matt. 20:20,21)***

I wonder if Matthew shook his head remembering that scene. Mothers always have hopes and dreams for their children while they are growing up. But James and John were already grown men, in business with their father. Evidently, she imagined Jesus the miracle worker might establish an invincible kingdom and give some of His powers or possible wealth to her sons? Perhaps she thought there might be some 'trickle down' effect and she and her husband Zebedee might be blessed with a better life than relying on fish for survival? How often do we find ourselves asking God for more...? What do you ask God for my friends?

Jesus' response to her was straightforward: ***"You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "Yes, we can!" they answered.*** Again, I wonder if Matthew shook his head as he remembered, this time remembering the garden of Gethsemane and how both those men slept when Jesus asked them to pray in His time of deep agony. Or how they ran into the shadows when Judas came with his mob to arrest Jesus? Words are often easy to speak, promises easy to make, but as these disciples had painfully learned, no one could have imagined what would happen to Jesus that Passover/Easter weekend.

Matthew records what Jesus said next to these ambitious brothers and their mother: ***"You will indeed drink from My cup, but to sit at My right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by My Father." (Matt. 20:23)*** In Matt. 27:56, Matthew records that this dear woman was among those few standing at the foot of His cross, watching His horrific suffering in crucifixion. Her son John, Jesus' closest friend, was also there comforting Jesus' mother. Dr. Luke records in Acts 12:2 that a few years later, Herod had James beheaded as the first of Jesus' disciples to die. And from John's opening of the book of Revelation we know that in his old age John was exiled among other prisoners on the remote island of Patmos. (Rev. 1:9) So yes, this dear mother and her two sons did in fact drink from the painful cup of Jesus' agony in His sufferings, as they followed Jesus.

May I ask what you think Jesus meant when He spoke of those two places of honor being reserved for His Father to fill? ***This was another of Jesus' frequent reminders to all who heard Him that He was here on earth, sent by God the Father, to accomplish a specific mission only He, the Son of God, could accomplish.*** That mission was to sinlessly and powerfully represent God to all humanity both in His teachings and miracles, but also in His suffering and atonement death. And finally in His victorious resurrection and ascension return back to His glory in heaven! Once there in heaven

Jesus returned to the very throne room of God and **"sat down at the right hand of the Majesty"**.

That powerful statement is given to us in Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 1:3. *By going to the right hand of the Father, Jesus returned to His glorious place of honor as God the Son. By sitting, presumably on His throne, Jesus is reassuming His rightful place as Sovereign over His kingdom.* John gives us several glimpses of this glorious, heavenly throne room in Revelation 4 & 5. And there we do see those who sit on smaller thrones around King Jesus.

Matthew records **"When the other disciples heard about this, they became indignant with the two brothers."** Jealousy can be a brutal reality even among friends, even in a family, can't it? And jealousy breeds resentment, bitterness, anger and tears relationships apart. We've all experienced it, haven't we? Jesus used this painful moment of discord among His friends as a great opportunity to teach them His better way: **"...whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."** (Matt. 20:25-28)

*As they walked along, Matthew's mind likely filled with images of Jesus serving... serving all kinds of people who had all kinds of needs, remember?* Jesus served the sick as He healed all types of diseases. Jesus served the demonically oppressed by binding the evil spirits and setting them free. Jesus served everyone by telling them of God's love and by proving it on the cross. And then Matthew remembered the upper room, and several hours of Jesus serving him and his fellow disciples. Yes, Jesus did set the model for true, humble, servant leadership. Matthew wondered... could they learn how to live like Jesus? *Would the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised He'd send to them, help them live as Jesus had lived?*

It's our question too isn't it my friends? Is the Holy Spirit of God helping you live with humility, serving others and touching our world with God's hope and help in Jesus' name? *Or are you still struggling to be first, no matter how you climb your mountain of success?* Let's walk with Matthew today and reflect on this important life lesson. And here's a song I think Matthew would have been singing if it had been written in his day...

**Today's Scripture is Matthew 20:20-28.**