

THE HUMBLE ARE INVITED TO THE TABLE



PSALM 107:1-7, 33-37 NRSV // MATTHEW 23:1-12

MONDAY 11/6/23

Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37 /// 1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble 3 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Matthew 23:1-12 /// 1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach.

REFLECTION The Bible teaches the sin of being arrogant and unwilling to submit to the authority of Christ is very costly. We will either submit to Christ's love, now in this life, or submit to him as someone who is dead. Of these two situations who do you think will live in God's eternal kingdom? Jesus' intention is to make sure the people still understand that the commandments of God are very important. Jesus knew the Scribes and the Pharisees were teaching the Law, but not living by them. Why, because they were all puffed up with pride and felt important. So Jesus warns them about the disputes they have regarding the Law. Their teaching is confusing and it creates trouble in the community. The Law is the means in which people are taught how to please God. The truth is how the Law shows us ourselves and how we fall short of what God requires of us. It points out our sins and our ungodly behavior. So, it's intent is to drive us to God to seek forgiveness and renewal. The whole Book of Leviticus was written for this purpose. But it was only temporary until God sent the Messiah to lead his people. God's forgiveness now comes only through his Son Jesus Christ who overcame the Law for us. The Law points out our vices that separate us from living in unity with God. The Scribes and Pharisees believed they had the authority to teach righteousness and punish the people. Now, Jesus begins to teach the people about God's love and they have a major problem with him.. They ask, are you greater than Moses? Jesus knows their true character. Matt 15:7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 8 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'" (NLT) They did not submit to the authority, nor the love of God because they have no love for Christ. They exalted themselves and defy Jesus. The Law can not make us righteous before God. By God's grace alone we are forgiven. That is because it is impossible to obey all of the Law perfectly. Only a sinless person is able to do that. That person is Jesus Christ who sacrificed his life so we may be forgiven and live.

PRAYER Heavenly Father I pray, help me to show the face of Jesus to others and not my pride and arrogance. Please Lord God help me to have the mind of Jesus. In Jesus Name, Amen.

TUESDAY 11/7/23

Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37/// 4 Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; 107:5 hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

Matthew 23:1-12///4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 23:5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long.

REFLECTION When someone ties us up with heavy rules and intolerable burdens it often breaks our spirit. We end up having no hope and give up. Jesus understands this so well. The Scribes zealously oppress and terrorize the people's souls everyday. They are not willing to assist those in need but are rigid in their teaching. Jesus understands the Law of God is a heavy and intolerable burden on us. But still, Jesus strongly reproves these proud and arrogant hypocrites who demand others to pay what they owe God. So what then is our hope. How can we find our way back to God? One of my favorite authors Paul Zahl writes "People do not wish to be challenged, people wish to be comforted. They wish to be supported. They wish to be encouraged and sustained. What people wish for is to be loved. (*Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life*) I completely agree with Paul, people want to be loved, and especially loved by God. But we see our own sin that keeps us from experiencing it. We all, in some way, sense there is a curse upon our lives, the curse of death. As the famous song of the 70's from Country Joe and the Fish goes, "And it's five, six, seven, eight open up the pearly gate. Well there ain't no time to wonder why, whoopee! we're all gonna die." The only relief from the curse is God's eternal and loving grace and the end of the law. St Paul was taught to be a Pharisee but Jesus called his name. That is why he wrote in Romans 10:1-4: Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. 2 I know what enthusiasm they have for God,

TUESDAY 11/7/23 CONTINUED but it is misdirected zeal. 3 For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. 4 For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God. Our hope is in the name of our Lord Jesus."(NLT) There is no room for this message in an arrogant heart. PRAYER Lord Jesus thank you for calling my name, as I wandered in the desert of this life. Truth is I did not even know I hungered and thirsted for your love. My soul was that famished. But your word called to me and I heard the message of redemption. Praise you Jesus. In Jesus Name, Amen

WEDNESDAY 11/8/23

Psalms 107:1-7, 33-37/// 6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress;107:7 He led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.

Matthew 23:1-12/// 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 23:7 and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi.

REFLECTION Did you hear about the guy who won a medal for being the most humble Christian. The problem was he felt funny wearing it. Not so for the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus speaks to their arrogance. They have a real zeal to show their piety in the temple and stumbling over one another to show it off. They push and shove to be first in places and have the best seats for themselves. They choose to exalt themselves among the people and enjoy the approval of God. Jesus condemns them right from the beginning. In John 2:17 Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me."18 But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it." (NLT) Jesus continues to condemn them for calling themselves Rabbi's of God. Jesus Christ is the word of God made flesh and now supersedes Moses and the Law. This has caused a great division among the people. Only Jesus is the right and honorable Rabbi of God. Jesus appoints new apostles to represent the office of teaching in his name. Jesus brings them from the least to the greatest. The word Jesus speaks is the voice of God our Father. Matthew 17: "5 But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him." (NLT) All of Jesus ministers ought to be heard as humbly people who are seeking the masters wisdom. Jesus authority must remain entire with him and no mortal person can claim any small portion of it. The pastors of Jesus are held to govern the Church as Jesus governs them. St Paul agrees we have no right to judge one another, for all are brothers and sisters in Christ. We all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Romans 14 11 For the Scriptures say, "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God." 12 Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. 13 So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall. (NLT)



PRAYER I remember crying out to you Oh Lord when I was in big trouble, you heard my plea and rescued me from my distress. Praise you for leading me down the straight path to heaven.

In Jesus Name, Amen

THURSDAY 11/9/23

Psalms 107:1-7, 33-37/// 8 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

107:9 For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

Matthew 23:1-12/// 8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students.9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father--the one in heaven.

Reflection: The very idea of having a Father in heaven is absolutely amazing. Not only do we have an earthly father in the flesh, but also a heavenly Father in the spirit. Our heavenly Father invites us to live above just the physical human experience by ascending upward with blessed thoughts and wonders. I remember just before my own father's death, I was meditating on living life without my father. I felt alone and fearful with a concern about the ability to make wise decisions. In that moment I had a transcendent moment. I heard a still small voice of Jesus saying, "I am your real Father, and you can

THURSDAY 11/9/23 CONTINUED depend on me.” The fear left me and it was replaced with tears of joy. Jesus has never let me down, and never will. When we humble ourselves before God we turn over our lives. As we turn over our lives, we begin to be used by God for the glory of God. There is no better life than having God as our intimate Father, guiding our us, our families and our future. It has not always been a bed of roses. But it is far more beneficial than I could have ever imagined. Hebrews 12:5 5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his son? He said, “My son, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you. (NIV) God alone is the Father of all. Let us all be reminded that all of our relationship first depend on God alone through Christ. So let’s give continual honor to our Father in heaven. We gathered last Sunday for Holy Communion and in doing so we came into the presence of our Father in heaven, and that is pretty amazing!

PRAYER Heavenly Father I give thanks to you the LORD of all relationships. Your steadfast love is assuring and I am learning to depend upon you. Praise you Father for quenching my thirst to be loved by you. In Jesus Name, Amen

FRIDAY 11/10/23

Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37/// 33 He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, 107:34 a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

Matthew 23:1-12/// 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.11 The greatest among you will be your servant.

REFLECTION When the Bible repeats something we need to pay extra attention. In this case Jesus Christ is the master Rabbi, the chief Teacher who informs us God alone rules over us. Christ is God in the flesh and therefore possesses the power and authority of God the Father. Christ is the only head of the whole Church on earth. So for us to be in unity with Christ we need to humble ourselves and accept His guidance and love. He knows what is best for our lives and how we are to live in relationship with one another. He knows what our church needs and readily invites us to seek his work among us. Ephesians 1: 19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe in him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.”(NTL)

PRAYER Lord Jesus, you are the creator who turns your blood into wine and your body into bread bread. You guide me and help me bear fruitful of my salvation. Prarise you! In Jesus Name, Amen

SATURDAY 11/11/23

Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37/// 35 He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. 107:36 And there He lets the hungry live, and they establish a town to live in; 107:37 they sow fields, and plant vineyards, and have a fruitful yield.

Matthew 23:1-12///12 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

REFLECTION“All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.” What does that really mean? First, we need to think of Jesus Christ life on earth as the perfect example of a humble man. Jesus, the Son of God sets the goal post for us to live towards. His humility is far beyond our imagination. Jesus, in the flesh, was exposed to the temptations of Satan and the lashing of sin projected upon him by everyone he meets. He was subject to torture and death and the most painful way of dying. Not once did he strike back with arrogances or egotism. Not once did he wander from his path of self sacrifice toward self centeredness. He died for each of us to pay the penalty for our sins. He died so we would not die. Let no person ever forget our rank in the Kingdom as we serve God. Let us be mindful to keep ourselves within the limits of God’s grace. Whatever title we may bear takes nothing away from God, but offer the services of his love for the good purpose of the Kingdom. Never should we diminish the authority of Christ as our loving Master. As his children never insult God by the shameful practice of mocking other and demeaning them. We are all created in the image of God and to boast and be haughty is the opposite of humility. Do the work of the Lord with joy knowing God knows your heart, and that should be enough. Christ does not restrict his followers to aspire or desire to rise any higher than the love we share as brother and sisters united by the Spirit. We are all equal in footing under the heavenly Father.

PRAYERI thank you Father for sending a humble man to rescue me from the darkness that surrounds me. Praise your name for your Spirit that reminds me to be humble in the presence of others. In Jesus Name Amen.

