INTRODUCTION

Destruction – devastation – ruin: not a prophecy then or now, but all started in Garden of Eden

Why don’t all the ways we’ve messed up apart from Jesus cause us to run right to him & to stay there?

Answer: 1. His way is hard.

2. Requires submission

3. Must yield our desires to someone else

4. Must make personal sacrifices

5. Must exercise self-control & self denial

6. Must be humble & repent

Matthew 6: 14-15

LESSON 1 – FORGIVE

Sermon on the Mount not just a message for those present that day

Matthew 7: 24, 25 twice-stated invitation

Hard to apply Jesus’s exhortations – especially forgiving others’ trespasses

Following Jesus often entails seeing & doing things opposite our instincts.

When Jesus starts with “You have heard it said…but I say to you,” about to have world rocked.

Vv 21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44

Jesus not correcting the OT – instead, correcting people’s interpretations & practices

Jesus often spoke of forgiveness – especially in last week (Mark 11:25) & on cross (Luke 23:24).

1 John 1: 5-6, 9; Luke 6: 37-38; Romans 12: 18-20

Need clear accounts to have fellowship with God: peace, forgiveness with Him, interaction with others

Psalm 103: 10-14

Entitled: believing oneself to be inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment

We feel entitled & at same time minimize our flaws, believing them fewer & more justifiable than flaws of others.

Under right conditions, thoughts morph into grudges.

Romans 3: 23

Our hearts are prone to wander away from God: to be self-centered, self-promoting, self-indulgent, lustful, greedy for

gain, disrespectful, discontent, disconnected from truth, angry, judgmental, unforgiving.

Despite all, God withholds judgment from those who follow Jesus because Jesus took it instead.

Romans 10:9

God doesn’t force forgiveness – He allows people to continue down path of destruction.

Should melt our hearts – what right do we have to hold others to standard we’re not being held to?

Psalm 139:13, Matthew 10:30; Psalm 139:2; Psalm 58:8; Psalm 147: 3

Pray Psalm 139: 23-24

Some things harder to forgive than others; hardest = murder, but Jesus was murdered.

Jesus will avenge, protect, comfort & heal us.

[How do you feel if God forgives your tormentor?]

*NOTE: While we’re called to offer forgiveness to others, we don’t have to live under continued abuse by the unrepentant. If you can’t discern what offering forgiveness looks like in that situation, seek the wisdom of a trusted pastor of other Christian leader.*

LESSON 2 – GO

Disciples’ lives may seem to us simpler, but they still dropped everything to follow Jesus [*e.g.* Simon & Eden).

Mark 6: 7-9 first mission trip - apostles sent out 2 by 2

Disciples = devoted followers, even crowds of them (resembled army but Jesus said not, they need rescuing)

Apostles = the 12 chosen to be leaders; label given at Sermon on Mount (from Greek meaning “one who is sent”)

No supplies, no plan except walking, preaching, healing – which none had ever done

Luke 10: 1-12 second mission trip – 72 disciples sent

Mark 1: 14-15 The time (the promised Messiah) is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand.

What would the disciples have missed had they not gone?

Jesus promised apostles provision Y power but not universal acceptance (Mark 6: 10-11).

Matthew 28: 18-20 The Great Commission

LESSON 3 – GRIEVE

*L’shana toah!* Hebrew for “good year” (Mary to Jesus)

*Laila tov* Hebrew for “good night” (Jesus to Mary)

Nazareth not accepting:

John 7:5 Brothers didn’t believe.

Crowd angry: Luke 4: 20-21 Scripture fulfilled

Luke 4: 24-27 God’s love for all people

Luke 4: 28-30 passed through angry crowd

Accusations: false prophet = false teaching while claiming to speak word of God

blasphemy = speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things

sacrilege = violation or misuse of what is sacred

Deuteronomy 13: 6-11 who should be stoned

Jewish rabbinic document (Mishnah) describes proper stoning – includes throwing person over cliff & dropping

stones on them. BUT only to be carried out after proper trial.

Was even attempted on Sabbath

In Jesus’s time, capital punishment allowed only with govt. permission (John 18:31).

God must have grieved.

Grief isn’t something we should fear or deny or even always avoid.

We should grieve with Jesus & respond to others the way he does.

Sin, lost people, people perpetuating grief upon others should break our hearts.

Jesus promises us trouble in this world, but moves toward us as the Comforter in Chief.

Genesis 6: 56 God regretted creating man due to his evil.

Speaking anthropomorphically about God (ascribing human characteristics to a nonhuman) doesn’t enlighten us

about God but about how upsetting sin is.

“Grieved” in Genesis 6:6 in the same family of words as the “pain” Adam & Eve suffered as a result of their sin.

We suffer the consequences of our sin, while God suffers grief over human sin. Offers compassion.

God doesn’t leave us stuck in our sin & grief: our way to restoration is walking with Jesus.

LESSON 4 – STAND

Jesus doesn’t remove us from storms of life but promises to be the solid ground on which we stand.

Storms unpredictable; we want to know how things will end but rarely get to.

Disciples also wondered (John 13:36-14:11; 21:15-22; Acts 1:6-8).

Answers would have been too difficult, since 10 of the 12 martyred.

Why was Lazarus raised from dead?

Give him few more years on sinful planet?

Momentarily spare his sisters pain they’d eventually experience again?

\*To know how the story will end.

One of most common Hebrew words for “believe” (*aman*) + NTS Greek word (*pisteuo*) imply committed trust, not merely

agreement.

James 2: 19 Even the demons believe in the one God.

James 2: 20-23 Abraham as a model of faith

Romans 4: 2-5 Abraham’s faith

Matthew 7: 21-23 Agreeing with Jesus’s words not enough; must do the will of the Father

Believing Jesus means **following** him– an action verb.

Surrendering gets more difficult when floodwaters rise.

How do we stand on the rock? **Abide** (John 15: 4, 9-10).

LESSON 5 – DELIGHT

God intends for earthly blessings to be enjoyed: relationships, new discoveries, teamwork, job well done, really good meal, thriving community, home to return to after a long day.

Even more than earthly blessings, God wants you to enjoy Him.

Your greatest treasure = relationship with God.

Listening to & meditating on Jesus’s words

Carrying God’s wisdom, joy, grace into relationships with others

Re-forming the way you see & experience the world

Sometimes practicing religion easier than pursuing relationship: we sometimes view following Jesus as set of rules, but our behavior not the endgame – our relationship with our Creator is the endgame.

OT Israelites had to obey law of Moses for God’s promise to lead, protect, bless them (Deuteronomy 30: 15-18;

1 Samuel 12: 14-15). People couldn’t keep law, so to remain cognizant of their sin they had to make proper

atoning sacrifices.

Romans 8:1-4 Jesus & new covenant

When we try to operate old way, we respond to our awareness of our sin by trying to do better in own strength

(*e.g*. pray more, read bible more, call Grandma more). Then our tendency to justify how our sin not as bas as

others’. Result = more religion, less relationship

Oxen in yoke an ancient symbol of subjection to another one. In Judaism the yoke a symbol for OT law (Matthew 23:4)

Being yoked to Jesus, though, a restful way of love & faith (1 John 5: 1-5)

God delights in His creation & delights in: your company (He made you)

your acceptance of His forgiveness

your worship

your deference to His holiness

your faith & hope in Him

your participation in his kingdom work

Isaiah – Preacher of OT; Jesus – Preacher of NT

“Believe” is action word revealed in our behavior:

When we’re loving, even when others aren’t

As we lay up treasure in heaven by being generous on earth

So we build God’s kingdom & invite others to come & see

So we trade strive & struggle for needed rest

So we delight in the One who delights in us

Religion – heavy & impossible to maintain, but

Relationship with Jesus light because: he carries our burdens, transforms our hearts, delights in us

LESSON 6 – ASK

Because Jesus didn’t fit preconceived notions of the Messiah, questions came to minds of disciples – even John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-3).

John faith-filled until languishing in prison, despite heavens opening at Jesus’s baptism & the miracles

(Purpose of baptism – repentance for forgiveness of sins - Mark 1:1-5)

John 3: 28-30

Matthew 7:8 shows how awesome John’s question was awesome & exactly right way to handle his doubt.

Jesus not upset with John – publicly honors him to crowd

Response to John: Remember what you know about me; dig deep & trust me.

We’re encouraged to bring our doubts, confusions & fear with the questions they unearth (Matthew 7:9-11).

Luke 7:28 John the last of OT-style prophets with forward-looking faith about the coming Messiah. Those after him, including us, have the privilege of backward-looking faith at the victorious Jesus, therefore a fuller understanding than even John the Baptist’s

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Parents don’t give serpents when kids ask for food (1 John 5: 14-15)-- also don’t give serpents when kids ask for serpents.

God doesn’t say yes to everything we ask, but in James 1:5 we always get wisdom when we ask.

Jesus didn’t visit John in prison & didn’t get him out.

John executed but immediately in heaven, surpassing earthly expectations (Matthew 14: 1-12; mark 5: 14-29)

LESSON 7 – WELCOME

Jesus’s unfettered interactions with others a constant source of conflict in his ministry – Israelites not nearly as welcoming (neither are we)

Who do you struggle to welcome?

Our welcome conditional: differences, strong denominational distinctions; church doctrine, ranked sin

Luke 14: 16-23; Matthew 22: 1-14 banquet parable

Matthew 22:15 pharisees plotted against him in reaction

Luke 14: 24 banquet invitees rejected by master the most disturbing statement

Only requirement to attend God’s banquet is to accept the invitation.

In *The Chosen*, celebrating feast of Purim – commemorates salvation of Jews from Haman’s plot to kill all living in exile in Persia in 356 BC: bravery of Esther & Mordecai.

God everywhere present in Esther’s story, but book of Esther only 1 of 2 in Bible that doesn’t actually mention God.

Other is Song of Solomon.

Jesus re: welcoming all: God makes sun rise on the evil & the good, sends rain on the just & unjust (Matthew 5: 45).

Matthew 25: 35-40 “least of these my brothers” In NT era, Greek term for “brothers” regularly included men &

women.

Our welcome of others supposed to be independent of their attitudes & actions toward us. In fact, Jesus promised we’d be hated as he was (John 15: 18-19). We’re not expected to act in our own strength but strengthened by Holy Spirit.

LELSSON 8 – TRUST JESUS

Trusting Jesus all the time difficult for disciples when:

crowds grew (Mark 3: 7-10), got angry (Mark 3: 1-6), hungry (Mark 6: 31-44; 8: 1-10, 14-21), made accusations

(Mark 7: 1-5).

asked to do things outside comfort zone (Mark 6: 7-13, 9: 14-29)

felt neglected or abandoned (Mark 4: 35-41, 6: 45-52)

confused or offended by something Jesus said or did (Mark 3: 21; 8: 31-38; 9: 30-32; 10: 13-16, 23-31)

Jesus allowed them to struggle

Hard things cause our faith to waver but ultimately cause our faith to grow because God uses all things to work together for our good & His glory (Romans 8: 28) & to make us more like Jesus (Romans \*: 29-30; 2 Peter 1: 3-4).

Lots of things we place our faith & trust in do disappoint: money, celebrity, human relationship, success.

John 16: 33 what Jesus says about suffering

John 14: 1-3 where Jesus ways we’re going

John 14: 6 who Jesus says he is

Holy Spirit makes obedience & Christlikeness possible.

Isaiah mentions former things without disdain (41: 22; 42-9; 43: 9, 18; 46: 9; 48: 3; 65: 17).

In God’s economy, the former things are foundational & helpful in process of maturing & moving forward. Children grown through childhood, not in spite of it – must not skip it, but must not stay in it (1 Corinthians 13: 11-12).

Hebrews 12: 1-3 advice because we struggle

2 feeding episodes:

1. 5000 in countryside near Bethsaida (only miracle told in all 4 gospels - Matthew 14: 13-21; Mark 6: 32-44; Luke

9: 10-17; John 6: 1-15)

1. 4000 in the Decapolis (Matthew 15: 32-39; Mark 8: 1-10)

Jesus the “Founder & perfecter” of our faith: calls us, then continues to lead, teach, correct us

Not about the size of our faith – trying harder to have bigger faith akin to having faith in oneself

All needed is faith of mustard seed

Is about who your faith is in

CONCLUSION

Those who find the narrow gate are few because life is hard.

Sin broke the world Bod made, & we live under its consequences.

Shifting sand of the wide road ensures our separation from God & therefore our destruction.

Solid ground available to us through Jesus.

The reward: Revelation 22: 1-5