

GROWTH GROUPS

February 24, 2013

Matthew 11:1-10; 20-24; Proverbs 4:20-27

Conversation Starter: How often do you think about Jesus as a confrontational person who sets out to cause people to make a decision about who he is and what he came to do? If you are like most people this is not the image of Jesus that immediately comes to mind. Think for a moment on why this partial image of who Jesus is causes you to be uncomfortable.

Understanding: This passage of scripture continues our series on the book of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus teaches and preaches in ways that cause people to wrestle with what religion should look like. Many people said that no one had taught with authority like Jesus. Jesus heals the sick and brings deliverance to those in spiritual bondage. Many people are drawn to Jesus and folks travel for miles to see and interact with Jesus. There is something about him that is compelling and compassionate. But Jesus also teaches and preaches in ways that challenge the religious establishment and the ideas of what it means to be a faithful and observant Jew. His ideas of the first being last and laying down one's life to gain life are stimulating many questions and some folks are not happy with Jesus. He prepares and sends his disciples out to minister and tells them that faithful people will be misunderstood and even persecuted. He encourages his followers to count the cost of following him and says that they must be prepared to take up their cross in following him. In Chapter 11, Jesus furthers this image that causes some to stumble and stop following him by challenging people to consider what they came out to see when they first saw John the Baptizer and Jesus. He then speaks a message of "Woe" to some cities that had experienced the miraculous and even great teaching and preaching but who had failed to really be transformed. Chapter 11 challenges them to consider why Jesus had come to the world. He challenges them to consider what made them different from some cities that had come under harsh judgment from God. He then encourages them to grow tired of their self-efforts to please God and to surrender so that God would give them rest from those efforts and show them a different way.

Questions

1. Why is the image of Jesus as portrayed in Matthew Chapter 11 so different from how we normally think of him? Do the words of Jesus personally challenge you? How so?
2. When you here Jesus speak to the cities in his home region with the word "Woe" what initially comes to mind? What might Jesus say to the modern Church that has so many religious "gospel" resources and that has seen the work of God for 2000 years? Do you think that he would be pleased or disappointed?
3. What have you seen and heard in Church that has changed your life and your understanding of who Jesus is and what he requires of you to be a religious or faithful person? What have you done about it?

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