



Building Community
Changing Lives
Bringing Hope

SUMMIT CHURCH

Being Jesus Christ to the World

“Mountains and Miracles”

Theme: Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew – Mountains and the King

Sermon Scripture: Matthew 14:22-34

Family Activity for the Week: Ask each person to share one or two of his or her personal struggles, fears or worries. Ask everyone else to simply listen—not to try and take the worries or fears away. Read Isaiah 41:10. Choose to spend some quiet time together with your family inviting God to help you overcome your fear and bring each of you peace. Maybe you want to take a brief walk. You might each want to spend some time reading. Maybe you prefer listening to music. Encourage everyone to ask God to calm their hearts and to fill them with peace during their quiet time. Also ask each person to find a word or an item during the quiet time that will help him or her carry that peace every day. Share your experiences as a family and pray God’s peace for one another. Ask God to help you persevere through your challenges.

Monday, March 23 – Read Matthew 13:1-30. Jesus taught with many “parables,” which used images to get hearers thinking. Scholar N. T. Wright said, “Jesus didn’t tell parables to provide friendly little illustrations of abstract theology. He told parables because what he was doing was so different, so explosive, and so dangerous, that the only way he could talk about it was to use stories.” Jesus’ disciples asked him why he used parables when speaking to the crowds. Jesus quoted Isaiah 6:9-10, words people often misunderstand. The words were an ironic picture of how closed most people’s minds and hearts already were. The CEB Study Bible said God gave the prophet “a contrary message for people who haven’t been listening.” Neither Isaiah nor Jesus meant that God wanted people to close their minds and hearts.

- ▲ Professor C. F. D. Moule once said, “You can’t teach by spoon feeding. You must let people puzzle it out for themselves.” How does his comment suggest at least one reason Jesus used parables? When have you understood Jesus’ message more deeply by wrestling with some part of it yourself rather than having someone else hand you an answer?
- ▲ When Jesus said “those who have will receive more... as for those who don’t have, even the little they have will be taken away from them” (verse 12), he wasn’t saying God would arbitrarily take anything away from those who “don’t have.” He was stating the simple fact that if we use muscles, they grow, but left idle, they wither away. In what ways have you “received more” when you have intentionally developed your spiritual “muscles”?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you came to bring light and life. Guide me as I keep learning how to live into the life you offer, how to stretch myself and grow in the atmosphere of your grace. Amen.

Tuesday, March 24 – Read Matthew 13:31-58, focusing on verses 44-46. In these compact stories, Jesus told of two people who “laid it all on the line” in order to gain a one-of-a-kind treasure. Their actions seemed odd in the short term—we can imagine their friends and family asking, “What do you think you’re doing?” Yet considering the treasure they had found; their initially puzzling choices and values were right on target.

- ▲ What changes and choices have felt (or feel) to you like the “costs” of following Jesus? Jesus’ stories taught that this temporary, temporal world is a drop of water in the spiritual ocean of eternity. How has Jesus added inner richness, meaning and beauty to your here-and-now life? What is helping you grow into a deep-seated trust that eternity in God’s kingdom is worth whatever it might “cost” you today to follow Jesus?
- ▲ In the parable of the hidden treasure, Jesus describes the man as being “full of joy” while on his way to obtain the field. Far too many people have experienced faith in Jesus as a source of guilt and heaviness, not of joy. What parts (if any) of serving Jesus, and others in Jesus’ name, have brought you the most joy? In what ways is this joy deeper than the surface happiness our world tends to offer?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for using these short stories to teach big ideas about your kingdom and its value. Guide me through your Spirit as I seek to live into those big ideas in my everyday life. Amen.

Wednesday, March 25 – Read Matthew 14:1-26. Herod had just executed John the Baptist, and Jesus sought solitude as he dealt with his grief over John’s death (cf. Matthew 14:13). The crowds followed him though, and he ended up miraculously feeding over 5,000 people. He again went to be alone, while the disciples sailed to

(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for March 21-22, 2020 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

the other side of the lake. Due to another storm, he went to rescue the disciples—but seeing a figure walking toward them on the water completely unnerved them.

- ▲ On a popular level, many Gentiles and probably a number of Jews believed in ghosts, although such a belief technically contradicted mainstream Jewish views of the afterlife, heaven or hell and future resurrection. What fears, if any, do you deal with based on popular culture, even though they may not fit into your more careful understanding of Jesus' teachings?
- ▲ There is a sense of urgency in verse 22: "Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat." John's gospel said that after he fed 5,000 people, Jesus had to avoid a move to forcibly declare him a military leader and king (see John 6:15). Have you ever had to take urgent action to stay in tune with God's purposes for your life? Are you facing any pressures like that today?

Prayer: *O God, keep me open to your presence in my world and my life. If you show yourself in an unexpected way, help me to welcome you with joy rather than with fear. Amen.*

Thursday, March 26 – Read Matthew 14:27-36. Jesus says, "I am." Although this can mean, "It is I," the activity in the context supports an allusion to Jesus' deity (cf. Ex 3: 14). Then Peter spoke up. He showed that mix of faith and doubt most of us wrestle with at times: "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." Next thing he knew, he was striding across the water! It worked until he lost his focus on Jesus. The strong wind distracted him, and his fear took over. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" And Jesus did.

- ▲ Scholar Myron Augsberger wrote, "We might ask, 'Peter, how did you do it? Had you practiced, had you studied yoga, had you studied surface tension?' And Peter might have answered, 'It was when I thought of surface tension that I began to sink!' Faith rivets its attention solely on the Master who says 'Come'... The primary meaning is that Jesus as Lord of creation can be present in the lives of people in this material world." In what stormy parts of your life do you need Christ's comforting, calming presence today? What gives you confidence that he can and will be with you?
- ▲ When you start to "sink," do you tend to reach out to Christ or try and swim on your own? Spiritually, where is God leading you to step out of your comfort zone and walk in faith with God?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, at times I'm riding high, walking toward you in faith! At times my fears distract me, and I take my eyes off you. Remind me that your love and salvation are always within reach, even when I feel as though I'm sinking. Amen.*

Friday, March 27– Read Matthew 15, focusing on verses 1-16. Jesus, the Pharisees, and the legal experts all sought to answer the same question. What does it mean to be faithful to God? They also answered in terms of living pure lives. But they understood in different ways what this entails. Jesus taught that what contaminates people in terms of their relationship with God isn't what they eat but their moral character. It doesn't always involve what we eat, but people today still often define purity in terms of external acts, not inner character.

- ▲ Jesus often introduced teaching with phrases like the "Listen and understand" he used in this reading. What people, publications or practices have helped you most in gaining greater understanding of Jesus' teaching and how to apply it in your faith life? In what ways would you like to increase your understanding?
- ▲ Peter's request was typical of many times Jesus spent with his disciples: "Explain." And Jesus' reply was also relatively frequent: "Don't you understand yet?" Do you believe the disciples' struggles to understand reflected that they were an unusually clueless group? Or did it reflect the depth and counter-cultural impact of Jesus' teaching? Do we as followers of Jesus always need to be ready to stretch to fully grasp the implications of his teachings?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank you for being patient with me when I say, "Explain." Thank you for graciously giving me room to keep learning and understanding more all through my life. Amen.*

Saturday, March 28 – Read Matthew 16, focusing on 21-28. The whole point of this story is that Jesus, to the horror of his close friends, was now beginning to tell them that the way he had to become king is through suffering and death. The challenge for the disciples is a challenge for all of us. Following Jesus means losing our life in order to find it. We squirm and struggle against this, like a fish on a hook. Anything rather than this. But it's the only way. Following Jesus means denying yourself, saying "no" to the things that you imagine make up your "self", and finding pure astonishment that the "self" you get back is more glorious, more joyful than you could have imagined. That's how the kingdom arrived through Jesus and that's how it spreads today.

- ▲ When and how did you come to recognize Jesus as your Messiah? What does it mean to you that Jesus is Lord and Savior? In what areas do verses 24 and 25 strike home to you now? How does verse 26 influence the way you make priorities?

Prayer: *Teach us, gracious Lord, to follow you in all the ways you lead, whatever it costs. When I find the way difficult and challenging, help me to see you at work in those moments, helping me become more like you and a part of your kingdom and not my own. Amen.*