



Do You Really Understand?

The Power of Repetition and Our Deep Need to Stay Focused!

July 17, 2022

Holy Text: Matthew 20:17-19

Today's Text is relatively clear. Still, there are wonderful lessons therein, not the least of which is how Jesus led and a reminder of His propitiatory sacrifice for our sins!

Matthew 20:17 (KJV) And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

1. Our LORD left the place where He was (the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan, v.19:1); and began moving towards Jerusalem.
2. Noteworthy, everything Jesus did had a purpose. He knew what His Father had asked Him to do and steadfastly did those things. Luke writes at an earlier point in Jesus' ministry:

Luke 9:51 (KJV) And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

3. Although this final trip to Jerusalem would be filled with disappointment, betrayal, and pain, it was a part of His earthy journey and His Father's will.
4. May I ask you today, by way of exhortation, "Do you know the Father's will? Is your face "set" towards Jerusalem?" Please don't underestimate the the power of Kingdom focus!
5. Jesus also "took the twelve disciples apart in the way." The KJV brings out the special effort on Christ's part to share His mission with the disciples. "Took apart" here can mean "privately." In other words, it wasn't a casual conversation. He likely got them alone (apart from any crowds) and explained to them "again" what He was going to do.
6. Here is Mark's version:

Mark 10:32 (KJV) And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

7. Are you leading well (going before)? Are you determined (face set)? Do you have anybody with you on your journey (who are you discipling)? Are you aware that sometimes those you lead are amazed but also afraid? Are you taking the time to explain where you're going and why? Do you have anyone in your life willing to go with and even suffer with you?

Matthew 20:18 (KJV) Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

1. Note the LORD's specificity...
2. He told them where He was going, what He would face (betrayal), who would persecute Him, and how they would do it (death vial mocking, scourging, and crucifixion...)
3. As sinful beings we don't always have this level of clarity. Still, when you are leading people, particularly if it may be into a battle, follow Christ's example and be as specific as you can!

Matthew 20:19 (KJV) *And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

1. Jesus did not shield His disciples from unpleasant truths. He would be gruesomely and unfairly murdered in Jerusalem.
2. He wanted them to know both what He would endure for the sake of the elect, and show them what “carrying a cross” really means (the price of discipleship).
3. Are you willing to face unpleasant truths on your journey with Jesus and towards your Jerusalem? Are you still willing to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow him? (Matt 16:24)
4. Thankfully, our King and Master would not stay dead. Although He would go down to the grave, on the third day He would rise again! He is risen! (Matt 28:6)

A Praise Break:

Can we pause and thank the LORD for His immense and glorious sacrifice on our behalf?

Isaiah 53:3-6 (KJV) *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 (KJV) *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (KJV) *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

Hebrews 4:14-16 (KJV) *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

The Ordo Salutis!

1. He chose you! (Election, **Eph 1:4**)
2. He called you! (Calling, **1 Pet 2:9**)
3. He changed you! (Regeneration, **Titus 3:5**)
4. He convicted you! (Repentance, **John 16:8**)
5. He imparted belief! (Faith, **Eph 2:8**)

6. He declared you “not guilty!” (Justification, **Rom 5:1**)
7. He made you part of His family! (Adoption, **Rom 8:15**)
8. He set (and is setting) you apart! (Sanctification, **2 Thess 2:13**)
9. He keeps you! (Perseverance, **1 Pet 1:5**)
10. He will change you again! (Glorification, **1 Cor 15:51**)

Hallelujah!

Do You Really Understand?

1. Another noteworthy thing about this Text is its **repetition**. This the third instance in a reasonably short time that Jesus said similar things to His disciples:

Matthew 16:21-23 (KJV) *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. **22** Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. **23** But he turned, and said unto Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**

Matthew 17:22-23 (KJV) *And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, *The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: **23** And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.* And they were exceeding sorry.*

2. We preached two sermons on Matthew 16:21-23 called ***From Revelation to Temptation***, wherein we learned much about the nature of Satan and spiritual warfare. We also gave a few personal observations:

- Moments of revelation and elevation can also be moments of great temptation! Beware of the devil in those times! Stay humble!
- Moments of revelation can provoke our pride. Did Peter really presume to rebuke or correct our LORD?
- Application of revelation might conflict with dearly held presuppositions. The disciples were expecting an earthy kingdom. Even after the Resurrection, they expected Jesus to be a political ruler who would defeat and displace the Romans with a “free” Israel!

Acts 1:6 (KJV) *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

- Yet, Peter surely knew of Isaiah 53...that the Savior would suffer! True revelation is always in line with Scripture!
- Can we be like Peter? Yes! Let us be mindful of demonic and fleshly temptations, particularly when we are “riding high.” Let us be mindful of pride. Let us never presume to correct Jesus or His Word! Let us be mindful of our need to be teachable. God’s ways aren’t our ways!
- <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/7/from-revelation-to-temptation>

3. From Matthew 17:22-23, we spoke about **Overcoming Betrayal** when one is **Betrayed into the hands of Men**. <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/10/betrayed-into-the-hands-of-men-overcoming-betrayal>. So much in that message, but in short:

- Don't be a Judas; be loyal—sow faithfulness! (Gal 6:7)
- Expect it; know that it is a part of sin nature. This is not paranoia; it is heart preparation.
- Refuse to seek vengeance when betrayed. Vengeance belongs to the LORD! (Rom 12:19)
- Beware of bitterness and pride. (Prov 16:18; Eph 4:31; Heb 12:15)
- Be quick to forgive. (Matt 11:25-26; Eph 4:32)
- Trust the LORD! (**Psalms 118:8 (KJV)** *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*)
- Keep loving, keep working, and keep serving!

4. However, LORD saw fit to tell the disciples **again** that He was bound for Jerusalem. Interestingly, here is the way Luke wrote our Text:

Luke 18:31-34 (KJV) *Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*

Luke 18:31-34 (NLT) *Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus said, "Listen, we're going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true. 32 He will be handed over to the Romans, and he will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. 33 They will flog him with a whip and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again." 34 But they didn't understand any of this. The significance of his words was hidden from them, and they failed to grasp what he was talking about.*

5. Astonishingly, the first time He said it, Peter tried to rebuke Him under the influence of the devil. The second time He said it, "they were exceeding sorry" as if they truly understood. Now we find out that despite Jesus' communicating these truths THREE TIMES, they still didn't get it! They missed the significance of His words. It was "hidden" from them in that they could not grasp the truths concerning His upcoming substitutionary sacrifice for our sins!
6. Could this lack of understanding have been because they expected a political solution to the Roman problem? That is very likely. And if so, their faulty worldview kept them from truly understanding our LORD's mission until later.
7. **Here are very critical questions we should ask ourselves today (and maybe ask our children too):**
- Although we read certain Bible passages over and over, do we really understand them?
 - Do we really grasp the eternal and spiritual significance of what we are reading?
 - Do we truly have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that understand? (Isa 6:10; Matt 13:15)
 - And if so, do our lives demonstrate such understanding?

The Power of Repetition

Beloved, I believe one of the reasons that Jesus repeated Himself is because He loved His disciples and wanted them to understand. I believe another reason is that He knew they didn't!

And this is often the case. **God, in love and mercy, often repeats Himself.** There is power in that. Here is what we mean:

1. Your Bible is absolutely filled with repetition!
 - First, it is inspired, infallible, inerrant, and sufficient. It is settled in heaven. It will not change! So to read it well, by design, is to read it over and over again.
 - How many times do we read certain words (*holy* 611 times, *love* 311 times, *sin* 448 times, *blessed* 302 times, etc.) and the large themes of *rebellion and restoration, law and Gospel, war and victory, and judgment and the coming paradise?*
 - There are whole passages repeated in Scripture! There's an entire book of the Bible written to repeat and restate! (Deuteronomy)
2. Your soul needs repetition!
 - Scripture commands us to study the Word and sing Psalms! We are commanded to meditate upon God's statutes and pray without ceasing! This will result in reading, praying, and singing the same things over and over again!
 - And it's a good thing too because we are forgetful and fearful! We need the solid Rock of God's Word again and again!
3. Your family needs repetition!
 - Your marriage needs to hear and rehear the great truths concerning the biblical household.
 - Your productive singleness needs constant reminding of your great status and call to productivity.
 - Your children need the precepts principles and pattern of the Word repeated over and over again. (Deut 6:7-9)
 - I know this can be difficult in a culture that idolizes the newest thing, but please remember:

***Jeremiah 6:16 (KJV)** Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*
4. Your church is required to repeat things!
 - Christ's Church is literally commanded to build upon the Rock and to follow the pattern! (Matt 7, 2 Tim 1:13) The Church does not have the authority to serve Christ according to man's desires!
 - Each LORD's Day service is required to have the same elements over and over. **This is a part of the way God disciplines, encourages, and strengthens us in Him!**
 - <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2021/12/the-blessings-of-the-lords-day-service>
5. Your peace and joy require repetition!
 - One example: There are few things that encourage us like joyful singing. The Book of Psalms was designed to be sung over and over again. It is meant to remind God's people of His mercy and grace, His faithfulness and love, His wrath and judgment, His worthiness of praise and adoration!

- Another example: most relationships enjoy new things. But the vast majority of what makes a relationship good is walking with another through the same things over and over again. It's the day-to-day seeing one another again that brings joy. It's the consistency, faithfulness, and the wonderful repetition of life that brings us the most peace!

6. Your faith flourishes with repetition!

- To encourage the reader, the writer of Hebrews defined faith and then went back over (repeated) the many examples of faith in the Scriptures. (Heb 11)
- When we are weak, the Word of God strengthens us. By reading the Bible, we are *reminded* (a word that implies repetition) of God's faithfulness.
- Therefore, we need to hear the Word declared over and over again in order to walk by faith. (Rom 10:17) We need to remember what thus saith the LORD!

7. Your Gospel preaching IS and MUST BE repetitive!

- The very nature of preaching the Gospel is to say the same thing over and over. We have no other message. **Its power is not in changing it but in declaring it faithfully over and over again!**
- **Galatians 1:8-10 (KJV)** *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

Our Need to Stay Focused

Repetition increases our focus. We have taught these vision principles over and over. Vision is about *looking*...about *focus*:

1. Vision gives us direction. Sets our path in life and helps us set goals.
2. Vision drives our motivation. This keeps us from getting distracted by the small stuff.
3. Vision helps us prioritize (focus). Helps us say “no” to wrong things and “yes” to right things.
4. Vision builds our faith. If it is God's idea it will require God's power.
5. Vision forces us to be disciplined. No one can walk in obedience without self-control.¹

We all need divine repetition to stay focused on God's vision...God's wonderful plan for His children!

Final thoughts:

Friends, do the hard work of self examination to make sure **You Really Understand**. Does your life show it? Embrace the repetitive nature of how God communicates with His children. **Don't allow yourself to “get bored” with the eternal truths of Scripture!** They are for our good! Stay focused on the simple and powerful truths of the Word.

Amen!

¹ *The Biblically Healthy Household*, p.254, Carlton C. McLeod, 2021.