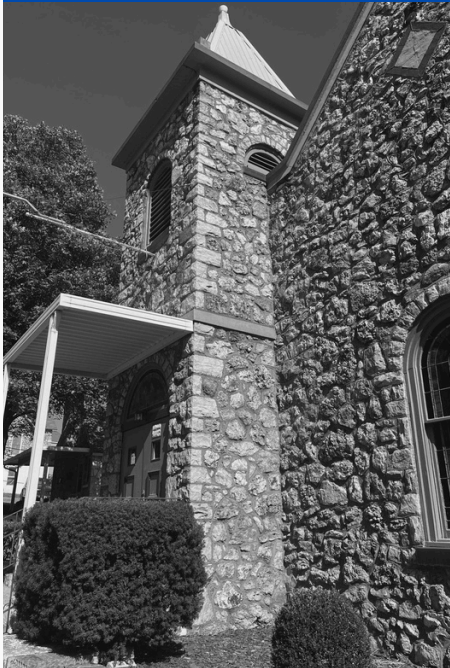


COMMUNITY GROUPS NEWSLETTER



STRUCTURE OF EVENING

1. Begin with announcing and discussing the upcoming events listed to the left of this page.
2. Pray through the following:
 - a. Church health (spiritually and physically)
 - b. Upcoming ministries
 - c. Our evangelistic efforts
 - d. This evening's discussion
3. Talk through the plan for community group discussion time
 - a. Based upon sermons preached on Sundays
 - b. Will only be beneficial if there is discussion
4. Work through the questions provided below.
5. Pray that we may live out what we've discussed this evening.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

- Joy Luncheon (May 12)
- Mother's Day, No Sunday night meeting
- Last day of FBC Kids (May 13)
- Business Meeting (May 31)
- SCBA Children's Camp (July 6-10)
- Thrive Camp (July 12-16)
- St. Louis Mission Trip (July 19-24)

PRAYER PROMPTS

1. Pray that our church might be holy and blameless, above reproach, that we might be kept from sin.
2. Pray God would pour out His Spirit upon us that we might walk with Him closely and intimately.
3. Pray for our ministries and their effectiveness (personal evangelism, discipleship, children's, youth, etc.).
4. Ask God's blessing upon our leaders.
5. Pray for those in our body who are experiencing pain and loss, that God would grant them a supernatural peace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

APRIL 12, MATTHEW 11:1-24

- In previous chapters of Matthew, we have seen who Jesus is through His birth, fulfilled prophecy, His teachings, His miracles, and His claimed authority, but in this chapter we see three surprisingly honest responses to Jesus. John the Baptist doubts, the crowds criticize, and the city remains indifferent to Jesus. The underlying question of this chapter is: “What do you do with Jesus when He doesn’t meet your expectations? In Matthew 11:3 John the Baptist asks Jesus if He is the one the prophets spoke of, or should they look for another?
 - Have you ever faced difficulties in life that caused you to doubt?
 - How did you deal with this doubt?
 - Look at verses Matthew 11:4-6, how does Jesus address John’s doubt?
 - What is the practical implication from this example?
 - Finally, notice what Jesus says to the crowd concerning John. (Matthew 11:7-10). Why do you think Jesus asked the crowd these questions, and then closed with the statement from Malachi 3:1?
- The phrase “to whom much is given, much is required.” Is based on Jesus’s teaching in Luke 12:48, and it speaks to Christians concerning how they should manage what they have been blessed with (gifts and talents). We see a similar sentiment in Matthew 11:20-24 where Jesus is speaking to cities who rejected the Gospel message.
 - What are the similarities in the two passages?
 - What are the differences in the two passages?
 - Are there conclusions we can draw from the two passages, if so, what are they?
 - Based on the passages how should it impact our motivation for sharing the Gospel?

Brandon closes this sermon with three exhortations:

1. Bring your doubts to Jesus, not away from Him.
 2. Refuse childish criticism and repent instead.
 3. Do not be indifferent to the Gospel you have heard.
- When life brings difficulties in life, when faith is hard, where do we/you run with our doubts? Why? (v. 1-15)
 - When Jesus brings to light failures in my life how do I respond? With repentance, or with criticism and excuses? (v. 16-19)
 - Have I/we grown indifferent to truths that should still humble and move me? (v. 20-24)

APRIL 19, MATTHEW 11:25-30

1. In Jesus’s prayer (v. 25-26), what does He reveal about the nature of salvation?
 - i. Who is salvation open and closed to?
 - ii. Is it easy to recognize our pride? What happens when God opens our eyes to our need? How do you deal with this need?
2. “For such was your gracious will” can be translated as “it pleased you very well”. How does understanding God’s pleasure in salvation and rest affect your pursuit of Him? Does it change the way you think about His demeanor and posture when you approach Him?
3. Jesus invites all who labor and are heavy laden. Though all of us would likely say that we are tired and worn, what keeps us from going to Jesus with these things?
 - i. What has that looked like during your life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

4. A.W. Tozer said, "The most important thing about a person is what they think of when they think of God." When you think of God, do you think of Him in terms of His own self description of "gentle and lowly"? Why or why not?
 - i. How does seeing the authentic heart of Jesus change you?
5. Rest for our souls is found exclusively in Jesus. Have you tasted this rest? If so, tell the testimony of how it happened and how it changed your heart.

APRIL 26, MATTHEW 12:1-14

- What is the definition of "Sabbath"? *to rest/cease*. What is the purpose of the Sabbath? How has the modern church perverted the Sabbath? (examples)
- What is legalism? *prioritizing the letter of the law over its spirit or intent*. Can you give examples of how the church has perverted the Sabbath, or examples of legalism?
- What are other examples of legalism in the modern church?
- Brandon makes the statement, "Legalism always takes what God has given and makes it heavier than God intended." What are some of the negative consequences or dangers created by legalism? How do I recognize when I am stuck in legalism? How do I find freedom from the burdens of legalism?
- In Matthew 12:7 Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice..." What is the significance of this statement to our lives?

Although the term "Sabbath" often refers to the 7th day of the week, the term also has the idea of rest and directing our focus on God.

*Then, in Matthew 12:8 Jesus declares "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." He is stating that **He** is in charge of the Sabbath. He created it (Genesis 2:1) He established it in (Exodus 16) and then in (Exodus 20) He provides more direction concerning the Sabbath and its purpose. He has all authority to say what right and acceptable during/on the Sabbath.*

Exhortation #1: We come to Jesus for rest, not to perform

Earlier in Matthew we see Jesus offer rest to all who will "come." The Sabbath is for-- rest in Jesus, the Sabbath is not for-- our performance.

- What are some symptoms or signs that occur when we allowed our "sabbath" to become an "act" or "performance"?
- How do I guard against allowing the Sabbath/Rest to be an performance?

Exhortation #2: Read God's word with God's heart

- Often, we read God's word asking three questions: "What is the line or expectation?" "What is the rule?" "What is the technicality?" These are good questions to ask when reading God's word, but we should also ask, "What does this show me about God's character?", "How does this point me to Christ?", "How does this teach me to love God and love others rightly?" So, why is reading God's word with God's heart important in Christian Walk?

Exhortation #3: Do good, show mercy, and value people over man-made religion.

- In the final few verses of our passage, we see Jesus heal a man's hand, and the Pharisees become enraged because he healed on the Sabbath. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that if they had a sheep in danger on the Sabbath, they would work to save it. He then says how much more valued is a man than a sheep. What is the take away from this brief story of Jesus healing a man with a deformed hand?