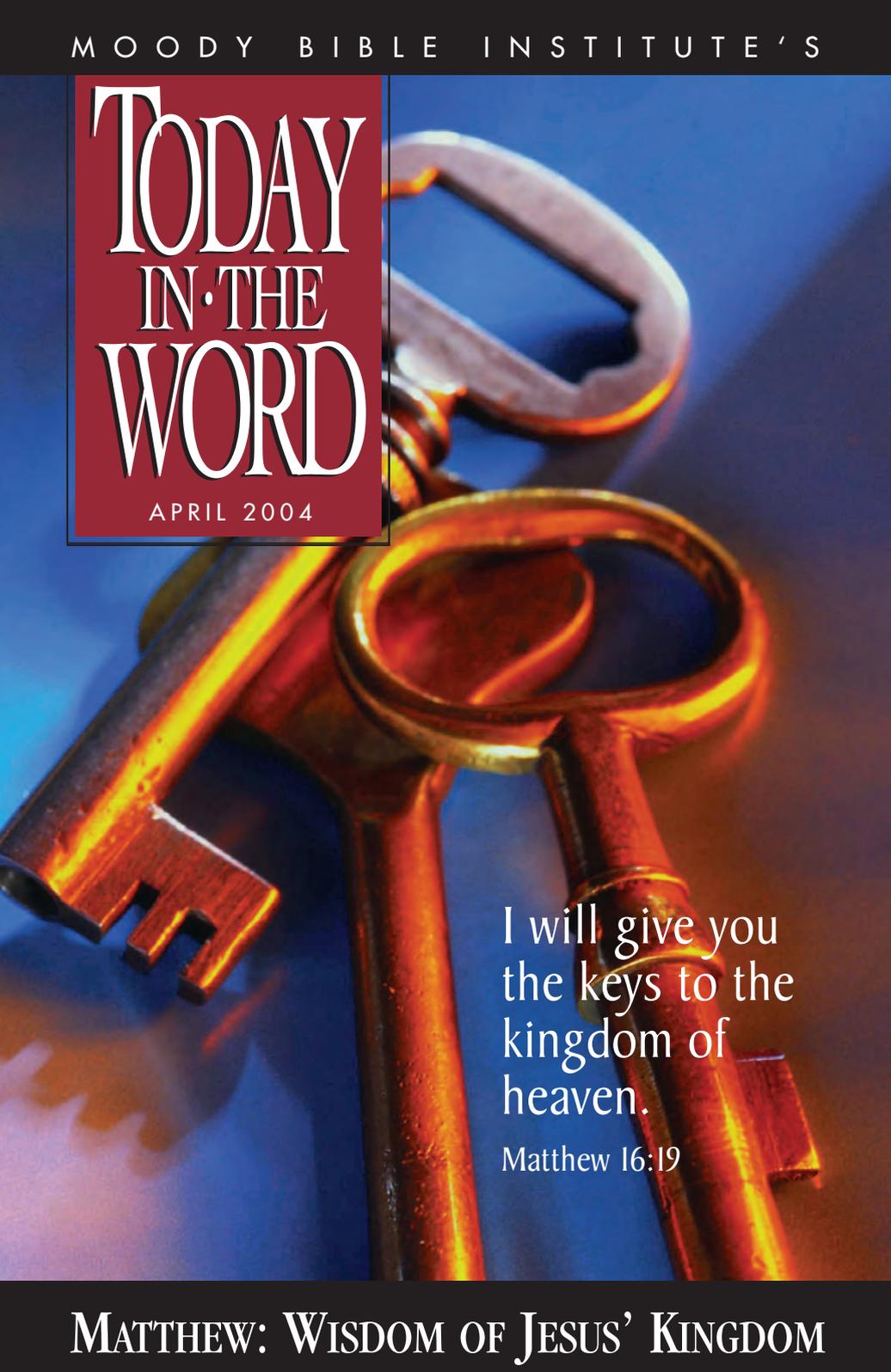


# TODAY IN THE WORD

APRIL 2004



I will give you  
the keys to the  
kingdom of  
heaven.

Matthew 16:19

# EXTREME MAKEOVERS

**E***xtrême Makeover* is a TV show that offers participants the chance to win a new lease on life through the “miracle” of plastic surgery. The men and women who want to be on the show believe that their lives will be improved by an “extreme makeover” to their appearance.



The winners are treated by the nation’s finest plastic surgeons who cut and tuck and recreate them as better versions of their previous selves. For the grand finale, the new and improved men and women are revealed to their friends and family amidst tears and hugs and applause.

This obsession with looking better is just part of a bigger picture. As a culture, we are driven by the compelling

need to improve ourselves, to be better people, to make our lives count for something. This search for significance can easily become an obsession. As author and theologian R. C. Sproul says, “We yearn to believe that in some way we are important. This inner drive is as intense as our need for water and oxygen.”

A walk down the self-help aisle of your local bookstore will give you a taste of the world’s wisdom. Titles offer to make us over as better people by helping us lose weight, repair relationships, make more money, or discover our inner self.

According to the world’s answer, becoming a significant person means being famous, wealthy, or beautiful. But, as we delve into the pages of Scripture and look at Jesus’ life through the words of His disciple Matthew, we realize that in God’s kingdom, wisdom looks far different.

Authentic Christianity turns worldly wisdom upside down. Instead of learning to

defend ourselves, we are called to trust Jesus to defend us, we are called to respond to all who cross our paths with a gentle and humble heart, like His (Matt. 11:29).

True Christianity focuses on the heart rather than the outward appearance. It calls us to complement one another, not to compete. It holds us accountable to be people of unflinching integrity and to care more about the kingdom of God and eternity than about material things, regardless of how significant they may make us feel here and now.

True Christianity doesn’t measure our importance by what is in our bank account. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (19:23).

True Christianity doesn’t focus on getting ahead. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave” (20:26–27).

Like Matthew, we have been called to be disciples of Christ, to follow His footsteps. That means that we are now operating by the rules of a better, wiser kingdom, led by a bigger, wiser King. A proper understanding of our walk with Christ plants our security firmly on our unshakable relationship with Him. It speaks against connecting our identity to persons or possessions or temporary makeovers. Christians are not to live to please others or their culture, but rather to please God.

By following Jesus, we are indeed asking for an extreme makeover. But this makeover won’t involve the scalpel of a skilled plastic surgeon. It is far more radical. We are called by God to lay down our search for significance and to allow His wisdom to rule and guide our lives in ways we might never have imagined. Are you ready?

Sproul, R. C.

# ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

## *Infinite*

After many years of preparation and labor, David's son Solomon fulfilled his father's dream of building a temple for God. David's plan had been to build something that was "of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations" (1 Chron. 22:5). Both kings poured considerable wealth and effort into the project. When the temple was finished, however, Solomon realized that it could be called God's dwelling only in a limited sense.

"But will God really dwell on earth with men?" he prayed. "The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (2 Chron. 6:18).

Solomon's prayer acknowledges the infinite nature of God. He is omnipresent with respect to space and eternal with respect to time. God transcends all space and is not confined to any location, yet He is also near. Even though the heavens were too small to contain Him, Solomon could still pray in His presence (2 Chron. 6:19). After sacrifices had been offered in dedication, God marked His presence there by filling the temple with His glory (2 Chron. 7:2).

We find a reaffirmation of this divine attribute in the New Testament, and an echo of Solomon's prayer, in Paul's declaration that God does not live in temples built by human hands. Yet, Paul continues, "he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:27–28).

### *Why Theology Matters*

*The same God who is infinite took to Himself a finite human nature and became flesh for us. He experienced the limitations of humanity so that we could enjoy the freedom of forgiveness. As Christina Rossetti writes:*

*Our God, heaven cannot hold him, / Nor earth sustain; / Heaven and earth  
shall flee away / When he comes to reign; / In the bleak midwinter / A stable  
place sufficed / The Lord God Almighty, / Jesus Christ.*

#### *For Further Reading*

For a poet's view of the miracle of the infinite God becoming flesh, read Christina Rossetti's hymn entitled "In the Bleak Midwinter." It can be found in many hymnals.



# MBI Today

NEWS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS AT MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE  
APRIL 2004

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## *Moody Alumni's* **Unquenchable Fire**

by *Lisa Ann Cockrel*

**F**irefighters are among the most revered workers in America for one undeniable reason—they save lives. When the alarm sounds, they respond. As the need grows and the intensity of the fire increases, more alarms are sounded and more units come to help save those in distress. Walter White, a former firefighter and Moody grad, answered an alarm that rang out from around the world. As the newest Executive Director of Moody's Alumni Association, he's responding exactly as he's been trained to do.

"This is really a dream job for me," says White who spent the last 21 years as a seminary student, church leader, and firefighter in Dallas, Texas. "Since I was 17 years old, I've wanted to be in full-time ministry encouraging missionaries and pastors. When I heard about this position with the Alumni Association I was really interested because I realized it offered just such an opportunity—to support and encourage Christian leaders."

After graduation from MBI, White married his college sweetheart, Mary, and began his studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus. In 1982, the couple, with their two sons Walter III and Daniel, moved to Texas where White began to attend Dallas Theological Seminary part-



time while working full-time for the Dallas Fire Department. "Working as a firefighter and paramedic offered me the flexible work schedule that allowed me to go to school and provide for my family at the same time."

Under the leadership of Tony Evans, senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, White became increasingly involved in ministry. He taught in the church's Center for Spiritual Growth, served as a small group discipleship leader, and worked as Training and Orientation Coordinator for the Christian Education ministry of the church. He eventually joined the church staff part-time as Director of its Comfort



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## Matthew: Wisdom of Jesus' Kingdom

The Kingdom Jesus described in Matthew must have mystified His audience. It probably didn't sound particularly like any kingdom they had ever heard of.

But Jesus isn't like any other king, so it makes perfect sense that His kingdom stands out from the rest.

And as familiar as many of His kingdom beatitude statements are to us, the concept of His kingdom can still be very difficult to understand. This month in *Today in the Word*, we'll study it in great detail, addressing some of the toughest questions this subject always stirs up.

Through it all, though, we'll be making sure that Jesus sits on the throne of our hearts, we'll bow at His feet and seek to know Him more deeply. We hope you enjoy this journey into the Kingdom of Christ. Thanks for your gifts that make this study possible!

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**TODAY  
IN THE  
WORD**

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*Jesus Christ  
the son of  
David, the  
son of  
Abraham.*

MATTHEW 1:1



TODAY AT MOODY

Robert Neff, Vice President of Broadcasting, asks you to continue to pray for MBN's Share 2004, which started at the end of March in Chicago and will go on for the next two days. Thank you for supporting Moody Radio!

*Read: Matthew 1:1–17*

TODAY IN THE WORD



Have you ever tried to research your family background? These days, the Internet can be a helpful tool in this regard. At a Web site such as Genealogy.com, for example, you can use the “Family Finder” to search available data for information relevant to you. Depending on what you find, the site will also help you make a basic family tree.

Our reading today of a genealogy may seem unexciting, but it has much to tell us. In this passage, Matthew traced Jesus back to Abraham and emphasized His ancestry through Joseph. (In contrast, Luke traces Jesus’ physical ancestors through His mother, Mary. See Luke 3:23–37.) Matthew had in mind a mainly Jewish audience, and he wanted to assert Jesus’ credentials as the Messiah. Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term, Messiah. To introduce Jesus as “the son of David, the son of Abraham” called to mind the whole tradition of messianic prophecy (v. 1). God had told Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed, and had promised David that his throne would endure forever (Gen. 12:3; 2 Sam. 7:16).

In addition, Matthew quoted or alluded to the Old Testament more than any other book in the New Testament. He used Jewish terms such as kingdom of heaven and assumed a knowledge of Jewish tradition and history. His Jewish focus,

however, wasn’t exclusive, as can be seen in the presence of non-Jews such as Ruth and Rahab in Jesus’ genealogy. Like all the Gospels, Matthew shows Jesus as Savior of the world.

As we do a book study of Matthew this month, we will trace central threads and themes: Jesus’ identity and how people responded to Him; discipleship, or living as citizens of God’s kingdom; the spiritual truths found in His parables; and the character and results of true faith and wisdom.

Following a notorious career as a tax collector, the author Matthew answered Jesus’ call to be one of the Twelve. After his conversion, he held a banquet to introduce Christ to all his old friends—showing that right from the beginning, Matthew was a teller of the good news (Matt. 9:9–13).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we begin this month’s study of Matthew, we encourage you to take some time soon to read straight through this Gospel in one sitting. Doing so will help you get more out of this month’s devotionals because you’ll see the big picture more clearly from start to finish.

As you read, try to see for yourself the overall purposes and themes Matthew wove into his narrative. Pray that God will reveal truths that will change your life. And praise God for the good news of the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ!

*Read: Matthew 1:18–2:23*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In a fourth-century Christmas sermon, St. John Chrysostom preached:

“What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of Days has become an infant. He who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He who cannot be touched, who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infant’s bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation [be] the measure of His goodness.”

Amen! The Christmas story, rightly understood, should fill our hearts with praise. First, we see many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled. Isaiah had foretold the virgin birth of the Messiah (1:23; Isa. 7:14). Micah had said His birthplace would be Bethlehem (2:6; Mic. 5:2). Hosea had spoken of a time in Egypt (2:15; Hos. 11:1). Jeremiah had foreseen the horrifying violence of Herod (2:18; Jer. 31:15). And various prophets had indicated the Messiah would be “despised,” or in Jesus’ day, the equivalent of being “called a Nazarene” (2:23; Isa. 53:3).

We also rejoice because God intervened in miraculous ways throughout the Christmas story. Jesus was born of a virgin—somehow, the Holy Spirit

engineered His conception outside of the normal means (1:18). Angels, who are God’s messengers, delivered several special announcements. And how did the Magi know where and when to come to find the newborn King? God was clearly at work in their knowledge, the star they followed, and the dream, warning not to tell Herod.

Most of all, in reading the Christmas story we worship the Son of God, who for our sakes became human. Why did He do it? To save us from our sins (1:21). To show God’s love to the world and bring light to all peoples—after all, the Magi were foreigners. And to become “God with us,” a phrase that succinctly captures the mystery and wonder of the Incarnation (1:23).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Never mind that it’s April . . . after today’s devotional, don’t you feel like singing a Christmas song? Go for it!

To conclude your personal devotions, sing “Silent Night,” “Joy to the World,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” or another favorite Christmas classic. The spirit of Christmas—that is, a spirit of rejoicing in the Incarnation of Christ—is just as appropriate now as it was some months ago. And since Easter is coming soon, it’s more than fitting to remember the beginning of Jesus’ earthly life.

*They will call him “Immanuel” — which means, “God with us.”*

MATTHEW 1:23



#### TODAY AT MOODY

As WMBI, Moody Radio station in Chicagoland, concludes its Share 2004 today, we’d like to thank all who tuned in and gave during this annual fundraiser. Please continue to pray for its staff: Daniel Anderson, Maureen Ber, Roger Basick, and Diana Berryman.

*He will  
baptize you  
with the Holy  
Spirit and  
with fire.*

MATTHEW 3:11



**TODAY AT MOODY**

Today and tomorrow, we lift up to God again the WMBI staff and their ministry of love and truth to the world. Would you add to your prayer list these team members: Mark Elfstrand, John Hayden, Steven Hiller, Collin Lambert, and Monte Larrick?

*Read: Matthew 3:1–4:11*

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



Coca-Cola is the most valuable brand name in the world, estimated to be worth \$70.5 billion in 2003. Sixty-two of last year's top 100 brand names—including eight of the top ten—were American, including Microsoft, IBM, and General Electric.

Brand names command value because consumers want to have confidence that they are getting quality for their money. They like to recognize what they're buying and from whom. A familiar logo can prompt a customer to say, "That one!"

Jesus' baptism served a similar purpose. By it, the Father in effect said, "That one!"—the Son of God was publicly recognized and affirmed. And in resisting the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus proved His right to such affirmation.

John the Baptist knew Jesus was coming. He prepared the way, preaching that people must repent from sin to enter the kingdom of heaven. He must have touched a spiritual nerve, for many responded to his call. He told the crowds that another would come—one more powerful, with a superior baptism, and with authority to judge (3:11–12).

Why did Jesus ask John to baptize Him? He didn't need purification from sin, which is what the baptism normally signified. Instead, He underwent baptism to obey the Father, consecrate Himself for ministry, and publicly identify with John's

message. The other two members of the Trinity—the Father's voice from heaven and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove—put their seal of approval on His righteous obedience (vv. 16–17).

Jesus' temptations in the next chapter were a private testing ground following this public commissioning. The episode was clearly God's will, for the Spirit led Him into the wilderness for this very purpose. Jesus knew it would be a spiritual battle, because He prepared by fasting and had angels minister to Him afterwards. When the Adversary tempted Him with physical need, pride, and power, He responded with the Word of God, specifically, with quotations from Deuteronomy. Though Adam and Eve had given in to Satan's wiles and sinned, the Son of God resisted and obeyed perfectly.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



Luke 4:13 says the Devil left Jesus after the wilderness temptations, but only until an "opportune time." That is, the battle against temptation continued throughout His life.

In the same way, our daily struggle against temptation is crucial to our discipleship. Today, do additional Bible study on how to resist temptation and pursue obedience? Beginning with today's reading and familiar verses such as 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Hebrews 4:15–16, dig deeper to discover more passages and principles to help you in your fight.

## *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*

MATTHEW 4:17



### TODAY AT MOODY

WMBI's David Mitchell, Roy Patterson, Michelle Strombeck, and Christopher Wright will be grateful for your prayer support today. Thank the Lord for their faithful service and their commitment to Christian radio.

*Read: Matthew 4:12–25*

### TODAY IN THE WORD



How should the kingdom of heaven change the purpose of life? Timothy

Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards and president of Yale University, had an answer that remains relevant today.

The Christian's plans will "be concerted in such a manner, as to embrace, and promote eternal purposes. They will be the plans of an immortal being, destined to act with immortal beings in a boundless field of existence: the plans of a dutiful and faithful subject of the infinite Ruler; of a child, warmed with perpetual and filial piety to his divine Parent; of a brother, finally united to the household which is named after Christ; of a redeemed, sanctified, returning prodigal, brought back with infinite compassion, and infinite expense, to the house of his father, and welcomed with exquisite joy by the family of the first-born. To glorify God, to bless his fellow-creatures, and to be blessed by both, will be the combined and perfect end for which he lives."

When Jesus called His first disciples, this was the life to which He called them. And it is still the life to which He calls us as well.

His public commissioning and private testing done, Jesus began His public ministry. He began by preaching the same message as John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (v. 17).

"Kingdom of heaven" is a Jewish phrase found only in Matthew. We can define it as the "rule or reign of God," as when we pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). At present this "kingdom" is spiritual, found in believers' hearts, but we know that when Christ returns His kingdom will come in every sense of the word.

Jesus also began His ministry with John's disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Apparently, He had met them before (John 1:35–42). When He called them—and how many rabbis would have called blue-collar laborers?—He wanted them to understand that their discipleship would be more important than their careers and families (vv. 20, 22).

### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In today's reading, Jesus called His first disciples to leave their fishing careers and follow Him. What is He calling you to do? Leave your family and serve Him overseas? Change jobs in midlife? Share the gospel more boldly with your neighbor? Volunteer to fill a ministry need at your church?

Whatever it is, take decisive steps of obedience in the direction Christ has called you. We may not know where the road will take us, but obedience to the Lord is always the most important priority!

*Do not think  
that I have  
come to  
abolish the  
Law or the  
Prophets; I  
have not come  
to abolish  
them but to  
fulfill them.*

MATTHEW 5:17



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Today is a good opportunity to pray for the safe travel and God's blessings on MBI President, Dr. Stowell, as he speaks at the Association of Christian Schools International conference in Vienna, Austria (April 3-6) and in Nairobi, Kenya (April 7-11).

*Read: Matthew 5:1-48*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In history, salt has carried many meanings. One superstition held that spilled salt brought bad luck. Others believed that every grain of spilled salt represents a tear to be shed in future troubles.

On the other hand, salt was a symbol of friendship to the ancient Greeks, who welcomed visitors with a pinch of salt in their right hands. In some cultures, salt was so valuable that it was part of laborers' wages. And of course in modern times we are quite familiar with its properties as a seasoning and a preservative. It is perhaps these last few meanings that Jesus had in mind when He said, "You are the salt of the earth" (v. 13).

The famous Sermon on the Mount teaches how followers of Christ's kingdom ought to live. Matthew 5, verses 1-16, give an overview, then verses 17-48 go into specifics. The initial overview lists qualities and actions that God will bless, including being poor in spirit (an attitude of humility and trust), hungering for righteousness, showing mercy, making peace, and being persecuted for the sake of godliness. The metaphors of salt and light are the climax of these Beatitudes, and the bottom line is that our obedient good deeds are all for the glory of God (v. 16).

The rest of the chapter consists of six mini-sermons that go into more detail about kingdom living. Though the

principles given here contrast with legalistic traditions, it's important to point out that Jesus was not opposing the Law—in fact, He said He came to fulfill it. Rather, He was probing its moral and spiritual essence in order to arrive at higher, harder truths (vv. 17-20, 48).

He taught against anger—believers are to seek reconciliation; against lust—believers are to passionately pursue purity; against divorce—marriage has been divinely instituted by God and should be treated as sacred; for integrity—believers are to be as good as their word; against an "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" attitude—believers are to turn the other cheek; for showing God's love to one's neighbor—and, shockingly, even one's enemy!

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



One of the many challenging commands in today's reading is to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (v. 44). Are you doing this?

Allow the Holy Spirit to examine your heart on this issue. If your conflict with someone truly stems from your testimony for Christ, know in faith that God will give you the grace to love that person. We don't want to be governed only by natural affections, but to show the supernatural love of God in all we do. Loving your enemies requires heavenly resources!

*Read: Matthew 6:1–34*

TODAY IN THE WORD



“Which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life’s span?”

Jesus asked rhetorically (v. 27, NASB). Maybe not, but some people in China are trying to add a “cubit” to their height’s span, anyway. They check into a hospital, where a doctor cuts leg bones in two, puts on a brace, and waits for new bone tissue to grow in the gap. Called the Ilizarov procedure, it is painful and dangerous.

Why do they do it? In highly competitive urban China, tallness is an important advantage in getting good jobs and spouses. Newspaper employment and personal ads even list height requirements!

Jesus warned against this things-of-earth attitude in today’s reading. In this second installment of the Sermon on the Mount, He continued to describe kingdom living and exhort us to seek heavenly treasures.

The passage begins with three examples of true godliness (vv. 1–18). First, generosity to the poor should be done quietly. If it is done publicly—that is, for human recognition—God will not reward it. Second, true prayer includes the basic elements in Jesus’ model prayer, especially including forgiveness. Again, this spiritual practice is contrasted to the “prayers” offered by show-offs and hypocrites. And third, fasting should likewise be done with sincerity and humility.

The chapter’s second half develops a foundational principle behind kingdom living: putting God first (vv. 19–34). What will endure from our lives—and thus, what is worth seeking or striving for—is to be found only in Christ (cf. Col. 2:2–3). To spend our time and energy pursuing earthly things appears downright silly when we understand that God provides for all such needs (cf. Phil. 4:19). A true disciple does not worry about or “run after” such concerns, but lives by faith. Our God who feeds birds and clothes flowers will surely take care of us! We must “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (v. 33).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If you wish, try to memorize Matthew 6:19–21 by the end of the day: “Do not

store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

You’ll find that the practice of reviewing these verses will help to put your mind on heavenly things!

*Seek first  
his kingdom  
and his  
righteousness.*

MATTHEW 6:33



TODAY AT MOODY

It’s always a privilege to set aside a day to pray for our students. Join us today in praying for these young people with a passion to serve Christ—that their lives and work would bring glory to God!

# Question & Answer

**Q** *I am puzzled by the idea that at*

*Communion we eat Jesus' body and drink His blood. How can that be true?*

**A** It is true figuratively, not literally. There would be no confusion about the matter if we don't isolate a few verses in John 6 from the rest of the chapter. Jesus said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink" (John 6:54-55). But that is not all He said about the subject.

That Jesus did not intend to be taken literally is clear from the rest of the chapter. His enemies introduced the subject of bread (manna). Moses produced it miraculously, they claimed. So what can *you* do to prove that you came from God? Jesus replied that He was the true bread from heaven: "He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (v. 35). In the verses that follow, He says repeatedly that he or she who *believes* will have eternal life. Thus, eating and drinking

must be understood as metaphors for coming to Him in faith.

**Q** *A friend at work insists that the Book of Revelation predicts the appearance of astronauts and space ships. Is he right?*

**A** No. It's one more illustration that many theologically unsophisticated people find whatever they want in the Book of Revelation.

**Q** *Should relatives plant flowers on a dead person's grave?*

**A** Why not? Traditionally, flowers have been a symbol of resurrection. In laying flowers on a grave, Christians testify to their expectation of the resurrection of the body. Doubtless, many who decorate graves do not think of this symbolism, but it is there.

**Q** *If Jews living in ancient times were saved by faith, what was it that they had faith in? What did they believe?*

**A** They believed in God and they believed whatever God told them, no matter how far-fetched it appeared to their neighbors. Noah built an ark before anyone on earth had ever seen a drop of rain (Heb. 11:7). When God told Abraham—an old geezer at the time—that he would have descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore or the stars in the sky above, Abraham believed God, and the Lord “credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

We do not know the content of every individual’s faith; we do not know how much they needed to know. However, Hebrews 11:6 lays down the minimum: “everyone who comes to [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

**Q** *What happened to the blood of Jesus?*

**A** It was shed, which is a way of saying that Jesus was put to death. In the

process, all or part of His blood probably ran into the ground. Because of texts such as Leviticus 17:11 (“the life of a creature is in the blood”), blood became a metaphor for life, and “shed blood” a metaphor for violent death as at the hands of murderers. Blood was not viewed as a separate component of life.

Old Testament ritual foreshadowed the death of Christ. But not every detail in the Old Testament types was reproduced by or at the death of Christ. Unlike the high priest who entered the holy of holies with a basin of blood, Christ entered heaven bearing only the marks of His death. A basin of blood was not necessary; it was the death of the spotless Son of God that mattered. (See Hebrews 9:14, 23–28; 10:5–10.)

When Christ was crucified, His blood flowed from His hands and feet and side; it ran down the bloodstained cross and into the ground.

*Many  
theologically  
unsophisticated  
people find  
whatever they  
want in the  
Book of  
Revelation.*

*Small is  
the gate and  
narrow the  
road that  
leads to life,  
and only a  
few find it.*

MATTHEW 7:14



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Thomas Cornman, Vice President and Dean of Undergraduate School, helps our students fulfill God's purpose for their lives. Ask for the Lord's strength and encouragement for Dr. Cornman as he balances his numerous responsibilities at Moody Bible Institute.

*Read: Matthew 7:1–29*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Concerning the narrow way, John Wesley preached: “Narrow indeed is the way of poverty of spirit; the way of holy mourning; the way of meekness; and that of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Narrow is the way of mercifulness; of love unfeigned; the way of purity of heart; of doing good unto all men; and of gladly suffering evil, all manner of evil, for righteousness’ sake. . . . How thinly [such people] are scattered over the earth, whose souls are enlarged to love all mankind; and who love God with all their strength, who have given Him their hearts, and desire nothing else in earth or heaven!”

This final section of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is like a picture gallery of the Christian life. The “eye picture” reminds us to act with charity and humility. To judge a brother’s “sawdust” when we ourselves have a “plank” is hypocritical. This is not an absolute prohibition against exercising judgment, but rather a condemnation of smug self-righteousness. After all, when we have dealt with our own sin, we should help our brother or sister with theirs (v. 5; cf. 1 Cor. 5:12; 6:2–4). God is the true Judge—we are to help one another on the way toward holiness.

The “family picture” shows the essence of true faith: God is a loving Father who gives good gifts to His children. It is on this

basis and within this trusting relationship that we go to Him in prayer. Prayer is not calling on a genie-in-a-bottle, but a persistent habit of the faithful soul.

We discussed the “narrow way picture” above; it similarly deals with spiritual truth and discernment. How can we know the truth? It’s as simple as judging a tree by its fruit. God’s kingdom is not primarily about miracles, but rather obedience to His will.

The chapter’s final pictures are found in Jesus’ parable to explain the importance of obedience. To disobey God is to build one’s life on sand—it will be swept away. But to obey Him is to build on rock—what is constructed there will endure for all eternity.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Today’s reading provides many pictures for study and meditation—eyes with sawdust or planks in them, pearls before pigs, a father giving gifts to his children, a narrow gate and road, trees bearing fruit, wolves, and buildings with rock or sand foundations.

Choose one of these images for further reflection today. You may even find actual pictures of these things that you can place around your home or office to help turn your thoughts to this passage. Meditate on the truth Christ teaches behind the image that you choose.

*Read: Matthew 8:1–9:34*

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



A new contact lens helps blind people see. Developed by Dr. Perry Rosenthal,

the Boston Scleral Lens sits only on the white of the eye, protecting the cornea with a layer of fluid. People who cannot see due to corneal damage can wear them and lead normal lives.

Individual lenses are custom-made to fit individual eyes, and cost about \$7,500. Unfortunately, insurance companies have so far refused to pay for them, but Dr. Rosenthal turns no one away. He hopes to open clinics around the country to help as many as possible.

Helping blind people see is what the Messiah came to do as well (see Isa. 42:6–7). In today's reading, we see clearly who Jesus was. He was powerful—healing a leper and others, calming a storm, and even raising a dead girl to life. He was compassionate. He demonstrated divine authority—acknowledged even by demons—to heal, resurrect, and forgive. He called disciples to follow Him and abandon everything for which they had previously lived. He was and is and will be the Bridegroom of His people (9:15).

In this passage, we can also see how people should respond to Christ. Faith is central. Jesus commended the Roman centurion for his faith, and He healed two blind men in accordance with their faith (8:10; 9:29). Merely to recognize Jesus is not the same as saving faith: as we see, even demons

recognized Him. True faith responds to His power and goodness with love and obedience. Matthew himself was a good example in this regard.

By contrast, the people who owned the pigs cared nothing for spiritual life. The Messiah had just shown His power, and all they could think about was financial gain and loss. The blasphemous Pharisees actually accused Him of using Satan's power. And even the disciples were admonished for having only "little faith" (8:26).

What's the bottom line? Jesus had come to heal those sick in body and soul (9:12). As the Great Physician, He alone could forgive sins and give entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Most encouragingly, He came to do so for the entire world (8:11)!

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



After he came to Christ, Matthew held a banquet in his home to introduce Jesus to all his friends. You can do the same! An evangelistic dinner might be just what your friends and neighbors need to come face-to-face with the Savior.

At such a dinner, for example, you might share your personal testimony, show the Jesus film, or discuss Easter holiday traditions. Are you afraid of looking foolish or being criticized? Remember that your motive is to introduce the sick to the Great Physician.

*How can  
the guests  
of the bride-  
groom mourn  
while he is  
with them?*

MATTHEW 9:15



**TODAY AT MOODY**

Throughout its history, God revealed His provision to Moody through the generosity of His people. Please join Richard Campbell, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, in prayer and praise for your generosity at this point of MBI's timeline. Thank you for helping us share the Word!

*Ask the Lord  
of the harvest,  
therefore, to  
send out work-  
ers into his  
harvest field.*

MATTHEW 9:38



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Today's Good Friday reminds us of the price our Savior paid to open up God's Kingdom to us. Thank the Lord for His sacrifice today and look at the theme of this month's study through the message of the Cross.

*Read: Matthew 9:35–10:42*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



When former French Open champion Michael Chang retired from tennis last year, he had no thoughts of taking it easy. Instead, he plans to devote his time to Christian ministry.

"I've been able to spread the gospel with a tennis racket in my hand," he told Christian Reader. "Ministry doesn't really change. It just won't be out there on the court. . . . People will forget great victories, great shots, and great matches. But when you're able to touch and impact a person's life for Christ, that stays with them their whole lifetime and beyond."

Michael Chang is on a mission—just like the disciples. In today's reading, Jesus commissioned the Twelve to go and do as He had been doing. It was a "warm-up" for the rest of their lives! Though for this mission He sent them only to the Jews, they would eventually go to the whole world (10:5–6, 18).

What can we learn from this passage about life in Christ's service? First, Jesus has sent us. He has authorized and empowered us to go. We should minister in a spirit of compassion, as He did (9:36). We should have spiritual eyes to see the "harvest," and ears to hear when He tells us where it is. Our first response to a needy world should be prayer, asking Him to send more workers.

Second, faith is at the core of this kind of discipleship. The

Twelve were not to pack supplies, but to trust God to provide through His people. Their love for Christ was to be so strong that all else would be as nothing—family must be "hated" and one's own life must be surrendered. Faith also believes that God will judge those who reject His message.

Finally, we can expect persecution. The Twelve were sent out as "sheep among wolves." Steadfast faith is the answer—God will take care of us and give us the words to say. We can rejoice that by suffering we are following in the footsteps of our Lord (10:24–25). Only by losing our earthly lives in Him can we find eternal life (vv. 38–39).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Today's reading should impress upon us the biblical imperative of missions and evangelism. Are you aware of specific local and overseas missionaries supported by your church? Are you involved in praying for and giving to them and their work?

If not, sign up for a missionary newsletter or join a missionary prayer team soon. If yes, encourage another member of your congregation to do one of these things. If you're not sure what needs to be done, ask your pastor.

*Wisdom is proved right by her actions.*

MATTHEW 11:19



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Richard Epps, Vice President of Stewardship, oversees several strategic areas of the Institute's communication with our donors. Today, please uphold in prayer one of these areas—Direct Mail—and those who work together with Dr. Epps to keep Moody family connected.

*Read: Matthew 11:1–19*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In his autobiography, educator Elton Trueblood wrote the following words

about reading C. S. Lewis:

“What Lewis and a few others made me face was the hard fact that if Christ was only a Teacher, then He was a false one, since, in His teaching, He claimed to be more. . . . [I]f Christ was not in a unique sense ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15), as the early Christians believed, then He was certainly the arch impostor and charlatan of history. . . . What I saw in 1943, and have seen ever since, is that the Good Teacher conception is one option which Christ does not allow us to take. We can reject Him; we can accept Him on His terms; we cannot, with intellectual honesty, impose our own terms.”

Apologetics—using arguments to defend Christianity—helped Trueblood recognize Christ’s true identity. When John the Baptist wondered about this same issue, Jesus gave him a straightforward answer. He pointed first to the miracles as evidence of God’s power, and specific proofs of His Messiahship (vv. 4–5). Why? Because—and this was His second point—these miracles fulfilled messianic prophecies such as Isaiah 35:5–6 and 61:1.

Why did John doubt? Perhaps because he was in Herod’s prison for standing for righteousness; as in many of the psalms, it may have appeared to him that the wicked were win-

ning. Or perhaps John felt like the Messiah had come, but with results he had not expected. Perhaps he just wanted some confirmation. In any case, Jesus affirmed him as the “Elijah” who had indeed prepared the way (v. 14; cf. Mal. 3:1).

John was a spiritual superstar, but every follower of Christ can live by the same faith and obedience (vv. 10–11). And like him, we can expect persecution. That’s the meaning of verse 12: The Greek phrase translated “forcefully advancing” should be taken in a passive sense, meaning “enduring attacks.”

Unfortunately, the nation did not respond in faith to either John or Jesus, criticizing both with inconsistent charges. By contrast, “wisdom is proved right by her actions” (vv. 16–19).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In today’s reading, Jesus effectively answered John the Baptist’s doubts. Are you ready to do the same—to give answers to the skeptics in your life (1 Peter 3:15–16)?

The Internet can be a good place to sharpen your apologetics skills. One good Web site you might wish to visit is Stand to Reason, [www.str.org](http://www.str.org). This organization “trains Christians to think more clearly about their faith and to make an even-handed, incisive, yet gracious defense for classical Christianity and classical Christian values in the public square.”

*Take my  
yoke upon  
you and learn  
from me, for  
I am gentle  
and humble  
in heart, and  
you will  
find rest for  
your souls.*

MATTHEW 11:29



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Today, we'd like to send Easter greetings to Moody friends around the world. We also bring prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord for everyone participating in MBI's vision of telling the world about the love and hope of the risen Christ.

*Read: Matthew 11:20–12:50*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Willie Aames, who stars as the title character in the *Bibleman* videos

and live performances, initially started acting in order to boost his self-esteem. He appeared in such television programs as *Gunsmoke* and *Eight Is Enough* and made millions of dollars. He tried big houses, fast cars, touring with a rock band, drugs, marriage, and a twelve-step program, but he still felt empty.

Later, after he had lost nearly everything, his girlfriend invited him to church. Listening to the people there, he thought: "I've had everything in the world—except hope. That is what I need." That day he and his girlfriend accepted Jesus as Savior! On that day, he said, Jesus "forgave me, accepted me, and healed my broken life."

Like many of the people in Matthew, Willie Aames responded in faith to the person of Christ. When we trust in Jesus, we not only take up our cross and prepare to suffer; at the same time, paradoxically, we find rest and peace for our souls (11:28–30).

What do we see about Jesus in today's passage? He had an intimate, obedient relationship with His Father (v. 27). He was Lord of creation, including the Sabbath. He had God's power and authority to heal, as He did for the man with the shriveled hand. He showed compassion and patience. He knew the thoughts and inten-

tions of His enemies, and acted wisely to foil them. He fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (12:17–21).

What about unbelievers?

He condemned towns where He performed miracles because they had not repented. Revelation made the Jews doubly responsible—knowing the Law and the Prophets, they should have recognized God at work (11:20–24). The Pharisees not only did not believe—they actively opposed Him and plotted to kill Him. They were guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit—that is, unbelief—against which Jesus warned (12:30–32).

Those of us who believe and follow Christ should show our faith by our words and deeds (v. 35). We must not be spiritually adulterous, but rather embrace the Father's will. In doing so, we become family with Jesus (vv. 49–50)!

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Have a blessed Resurrection Sunday! This is the perfect time to rest and celebrate the great salvation Christ has won!

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Eph. 1:7). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11–12).

*Read: Matthew 13:1–52*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In 1926, music by Antonio Vivaldi was discovered in the archives of an Italian monastery. Inspired, scholars began to search for more. Vivaldi had been popular in his day, but had fallen into obscurity. Almost all of his music had been lost.

A second trove of Vivaldi's music was subsequently found in the collection of two brothers who were unaware of what they had. Included was *The Four Seasons*, one of the first compositions to feature a solo violin. Though it sat in an attic for over two centuries, today *The Four Seasons* is considered one of the most popular classical pieces in the world.

A treasure found in an attic—it sounds like one of today's parables! A parable is a picture or story illustrating a spiritual truth. The two themes that dominate the parables in today's reading are the kingdom of heaven and the nature of true faith. We'll focus on the second of these.

In the parable of the sower, a person of true faith (the seed in good soil) hears, understands, and obeys the gospel (v. 23). This is contrasted with people who don't understand (the seed by the path), those who have no firm foundation of faith (the seed in rocky soil), and those for whom "faith" is not life's first priority (the seed choked by thorns).

True and false faith may appear similar for a period of time, as we learn in the parables of the weeds and the net. False faith is a work of the enemy, Satan. But through the test of time, the truth will be known. Another feature of faith is that it may start small, but its effects grow and spread enormously (vv. 31–33; cf. 17:20).

True faith seeks the kingdom of heaven first and foremost, understanding that Christ is of supreme value. This is the lesson of the parables of the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great price. The finders in these stories rejoiced and gave up all they had to obtain the treasure—and so should we (cf. Rom. 14:17–18).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Find and read to a child in your life a modern retelling of one or more of the parables in today's chapter. A well-told version of the pearl of great price, for example, may capture a child's imagination with a truth of God's kingdom. If the book has vivid, well-drawn illustrations, all the better. Be sure to use your voice and body language to make the story come alive for the child.

If you're feeling especially creative, you could rewrite or illustrate a parable yourself!

*The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you.*

MATTHEW 13:11



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Charles Dyer, Senior Vice President of Education, will appreciate your prayers today as he oversees the ministry of the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools as well as Moody Distance Learning Center.

*I am the  
bread of life.  
He who comes  
to me will  
never go hun-  
gry, and he  
who believes in  
me will never  
be thirsty.*

JOHN 6:35



## TODAY AT MOODY

MBI's Independent Studies expand the scope of Moody education reaching learners across the world with correspondence and Internet courses. Would you remember in your prayer the Independent Studies staff: Sharon Clifford, Denell Covington, and Debbie Ellis?

Read: Matthew 13:53–14:36

## TODAY IN THE WORD



What is true faith? Evangelist D. L. Moody once said: “We cannot dictate

to God. The prayer of faith is not to make myself believe that just the very thing I ask will be done and done in just my way . . . but a trust in God's power to do what I ask and a trust in His love that if He does not do it it is because it is better not to have it done and to leave the decision with Him.”

In today's reading, Jesus' miracles followed up on yesterday's parables. These miracles essentially continue to explain the nature of true faith. What can we learn?

Initially, we see that true faith is a necessary condition for miracles (13:58). The people of Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, thought they knew Him, and familiarity had bred contempt. They saw for themselves His miraculous powers and heard His wise teaching, but their amazement did not spur them to faith. Instead, they proudly took offense and rejected Him.

True faith, by contrast, makes us willing to sacrifice our very lives in the cause of righteousness. John the Baptist provides a good model. He had condemned the public immorality of Herod's brother, then thanks to an angry woman and Herod's careless promise he paid the ultimate price. No doubt he died strong in his faith in Jesus' Messiahship (see April 10).

True faith also understands that Jesus is the all-sufficient Provider, as we see in the feeding of the five thousand. And He didn't just provide a light snack; there were twelve basketfuls left over! Spiritually, too, Jesus is not stingy: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Finally, true faith can do what seems to be impossible. If we see through eyes of faith—that is, if we keep our eyes fixed on Christ—we can run our spiritual races victoriously (cf. Heb. 12:2–3). His presence is the key to keeping up our courage (14:27). Unlike Peter and the other disciples, we must not allow stormy circumstances to undercut our faith in the sovereign Lord.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Here's an exercise to help you apply today's reading.

Think through the past week. In what situations or actions did you show true faith? In what ways did you fulfill the characteristics of faith given in today's devotional? How and why did you do so, and with what results?

Next, move on to consider how you might show true faith in the week to come. Based on what you know, what challenges might you be facing soon? In prayer, prepare yourself to rely on God alone.

*Read: Matthew 15:1–16:20*

TODAY IN THE WORD



Two years ago, antiquarian book expert John Sibbald discovered a first edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* at a "car boot sale" in England. It sold for £40,000.

Last year, he did it again. Examining books taken from an Edinburgh warehouse, he found another of the rare first editions of this classic novel. To make two such finds within a twelve-month period of time was an astonishing accomplishment!

To recognize these books for what they are, Sibbald needed knowledge and experience. To see Jesus for who he is, Peter needed the eyes of faith. His famous confession provides the crescendo to a pair of contrasts found in today's reading.

In the first contrast, the Jewish leaders looked bad next to a Gentile woman. The Pharisees were spiritually dull. They didn't recognize or acknowledge the Messiah. They honored tradition above Scripture, using it even to disregard one of the Ten Commandments (15:3–6). Their concern for outward ritual over true holiness made them first-class hypocrites!

A Canaanite woman, on the other hand, asked for her daughter to be healed from demon possession. Even though the good news of the kingdom was for Jews first, she showed trust that God's love reached to all people. Jesus commended her "great faith" and granted her request (vv. 24–28).

In the second contrast, the Pharisees again lost out, this time in comparison with Peter. They demanded a sign—an ironic request considering it follows the story of the feeding of the four thousand, not to mention all the other miracles in Matthew (see v. 31). Jesus condemned their blindness and answered their request with the sign of Jonah. This is usually interpreted as foreshadowing His resurrection, since Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish (cf. Matt. 12:39–40). But since Jonah had called the Ninevites to repent in the face of judgment, this may also be a call to the Pharisees to repent.

Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" This is the key question of the gospel. Peter's God-inspired declaration got it right: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Music can be a soul-stirring complement to words. A particular example is the 1992 album, *The Book of Kells*, by the group, Iona. *The Book of Kells* (named after a famous illuminated Gospel manuscript) features songs and instrumental pieces exploring the life of Christ as revealed in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A line from the album reminds us, "Nations shall rise and nations shall fall / But nothing shall stand in the way of the Word."

*You are the  
Christ, the  
Son of the  
living God.*

MATTHEW 16:16



TODAY AT MOODY

As we continue in prayer for the Independent Studies administrative staff, please add to your prayer list these employees: Lanna-Marie Enns, Jessica Potes, and Christine Tinker. Thank the Lord today for their dedicated service.

*For whoever  
wants to save  
his life will  
lose it, but  
whoever loses  
his life for me  
will find it.*

MATTHEW 16:25



#### TODAY AT MOODY

As we rely on computer programs and applications to increase the efficiency of our work, we also need the expertise of our computer specialists. Praise God for just the right people for the job! Support in prayer our Information Systems personnel headed by Vice President Frank Leber.

*Read: Matthew 16:21–17:13*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



When Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Law, he dwelt there in God's presence for forty days and forty nights. As a result, when he descended to deliver the Law to the people, his face was radiant with the reflected glory of God. The Israelites were afraid to approach him at first, but then Aaron and the leaders came and listened to what God had told him. After that, Moses wore a veil over his face to avoid frightening them (Ex. 34:28–35).

In today's reading, we see Jesus' face glowing with the His glory as the Son of God, revealed in the Transfiguration. Just as Peter's confession was a clear human affirmation of Christ's identity, so the Transfiguration was a direct divine affirmation of Jesus as the Son of God (17:5).

The disciples expected a conquering Messiah; instead, Jesus gave them His first prediction of His suffering, death, and resurrection (16:21). This was so difficult to wrap their minds around that even Peter—who had just got his confession right—this time got it completely wrong. Earlier he had declared Jesus to be the Son of God, but now denying Jesus' God-given redemptive mission made him at that moment a tool of Satan (16:23).

Jesus next explained what it truly means to be His disciple (vv. 24–27). Discipleship requires self-denial and suffer-

ing. It's not about self-fulfillment, "personal growth," or one's own glory. It means we must not pursue merely earthly goals, but instead live with our soul's eternal destiny in view. The Son of God will reward such disciples according to what they have done.

Jesus asked for a lot . . . then He showed His disciples (and us) that He is worth it. The Transfiguration, which may have taken place on Mount Hermon, revealed Jesus' divine nature. As when God had appeared in the Old Testament, the disciples were terrified and awed by His glory. But they still couldn't put the ideas of suffering and glory together, which is why Jesus repeated His earlier prediction (17:12).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Are you looking to take your commitment to Christ to the next level? Among many excellent published books and other materials on discipleship, we recommend *Discipleship Journal* to you today. To learn more about it and access some free resources, you can visit [www.navpress.com/dj.asp](http://www.navpress.com/dj.asp).

This magazine contains a wealth of feature articles and shorter items to spur on your spiritual growth and development. Many articles are designed for use in Sunday school classes and small groups as well.

*Read: Matthew 17:14–18:9*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In his essay, “A Bible Fit for Children,” English professor Alan

Jacobs asked his students what it means to “become like children. They responded that children are innocent and have a simple faith and a sense of wonder. “But,” commented Jacobs, “Jesus Himself employed none of these concepts.”

Instead, he explained, Jesus was referring to the low social status of children. “After all, in most societies children do not have the full rights and privileges of adults; they are not free agents, they are under the authority of their elders. One can readily see how accepting for oneself such a status would be congruent with Jesus’ insistence that the first shall be last and the last first.”

If we’re going to understand true greatness in God’s kingdom, we’re going to have to dispense with romantic notions and pay close attention to God’s Word. Today’s reading provides several important clues about how to be great in the kingdom of heaven.

The first way is to live by faith. Genuine faith, even if it is as small as a mustard seed, can cast out demons and move mountains. That is to say, if faith is placed in the right Person—God—nothing inside God’s will is impossible (17:20). After giving this promise, Jesus kept His disciples from misconceptions about power by again predicting His death and resurrection.

Against all human expectations, they were to put their faith in a suffering Messiah.

Another road to greatness in God’s kingdom is to live in freedom. Jesus did not owe the temple tax. There was no duty to be done, no obedience required, in this situation. But freedom in Christ means the freedom not to put self first, so Jesus told Peter to pay it. He did not bow to the legalists, but simply avoided giving offense by working a rather humorous miracle.

A third characteristic of greatness in God’s kingdom is childlikeness (18:4). As noted in today’s illustration, we associate childlikeness with trust, openness, unpretentiousness, and eagerness to learn. Jesus also had in mind here conscious humility—choosing to take a servant’s position.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In what ways can you choose a servant’s position?

Perhaps your church has some behind-the-scenes ministries where you could serve. Or maybe you could assist some elderly people with necessary but unglamorous tasks like house cleaning or yard work.

It may be that you allow someone else to have the spotlight, whether at home or at work. Whatever the Lord brings to your mind, remember that in choosing to be a servant you are choosing to honor Him!

*Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 18:4



#### TODAY AT MOODY

For the next two days please join us in prayer for the Educational Ministries Faculty. May God’s spirit guide Marta Alvarado, Gary Bredfeldt, Dennis Fledderjohann, and Mark Eckel. They don’t just provide professional training, they shape our students’ lives!

*If you  
forgive men  
when they sin  
against you,  
your heavenly  
Father will  
also forgive  
you.*

MATTHEW 6:14



## TODAY AT MOODY

Nancy Kane, Jeri Kendrick, and Robert MacRae lead our students into deeper understanding of the Bible and their life's calling in following Him. Thank the Lord today for their faithful service as faculty members and wise guides, counselors, and friends of the students.

*Read: Matthew 18:10-35*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



On an August day twenty-six years ago, Darryl Stingley was a wide receiver with a bright future. That day, during an exhibition football game, safety Jack Tatum tackled Stingley hard, paralyzing him.

How did Stingley respond? He forgave. And as the years have past, he's kept a spirit of forgiveness. Last year, when he read in the newspaper that Tatum had lost part of a leg due to complications from diabetes, he said, "Maybe the natural reaction is to think he got what was coming to him, but I don't accept human nature as our real nature. Human nature teaches us to hate. God teaches us to love. . . . Now life and God have taught me to have compassion."

For us, as followers of Christ, forgiveness must be part of our spiritual lives. That's one of the central lessons in today's reading. We see in today's passage that we serve a God who has a special heart for children (vv. 5, 10). Their guardian angels always have access to His throne. We also serve a God who wants His people to live in unity (vv. 15–20). Jesus here set down a procedure for confronting other believers about sin (cf. 1 Cor. 5) and promised to be present in even the smallest gatherings of His followers.

Most of all, we serve a God who mercifully forgives and requires us to do the same. Peter had given what he thought was a generous answer

to his own question. Forgiving seven times went well beyond the rabbis' rule of forgiving three times—but Jesus said not to count or keep track at all. To illustrate, He told a parable revealing that whatever "debt" someone owes us, it's nothing compared to the "debt" we owe God. The servant had requested more time, but the king went beyond that request to give the gift of total forgiveness.

In response, how could a man who had received such mercy turn around and condemn his fellow servant? He should have also forgiven his brother. Instead, he discovered the truth of Jesus' words: "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matt. 7:2).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Has someone sinned against you? Are you holding on to a grudge? Whether it's for something big or small, let it go—ask God for the grace and strength to forgive. Do whatever it takes to let that person know about your decision to forgive, and that you've done so because of and through God's much greater forgiving love.

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:13).

*Read: Matthew 19:1-30*

TODAY IN THE WORD



Columnist George Will summarized the state of marriage in America: “More

than 40 percent of America’s first marriages end in divorce. Cohabitation by unmarried heterosexual couples has risen rapidly from 523,000 in 1970 to 4.9 million today. Procreation outside of marriage . . . has lost much of its stigma now that 33 percent of births—including about 60 percent of births to women younger than 25—occur to unmarried mothers.”

Jesus’ teaching on marriage has never been more necessary than now! His main points in today’s reading illustrate that practical teaching still has its focus on the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus had a high view of marriage, but He also praised those who choose singleness for the sake of the kingdom. God had instituted marriage from creation—divorce was never the plan. The Law allowed for it because of human hardness of heart, but divorce wasn’t God’s will. The standard is high, and those who enter into marriage should do so with this understanding (vv. 10–11). Others, Jesus said, “have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it” (v. 12; cf. 1 Cor. 7).

We see here again that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the childlike, that is, those who are humble, submissive, and obedient, both to God and to others (cf. Matt. 18:1–4).

Perhaps most importantly, we learn again that the kingdom of heaven demands our total commitment. Discipleship can’t have reservations. The rich young man wanted to find the way of eternal life, but he didn’t understand his own sinfulness. Knowing where the man’s “treasure” lay, Jesus asked him for what was closest to his heart: his money. In effect, He asked him to live out the parable of the pearl of great price . . . and the man walked away. To the surprised disciples—who interpreted wealth as a sign of blessing—Jesus explained that money can be a competitor for our faith and allegiance (vv. 23–24; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6–10). But when we follow Christ, to lose the world is to gain eternal life (v. 29).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Here’s a thought exercise you might wish to do today: Make a brief list of

what you consider your most valuable material possessions or financial assets. Then put a line through the top three. Imagine they’re gone—lost to fire, thieves, or what have you. How would you feel? What would you do?

If this exercise shows your “treasure” is somewhere other than in the kingdom of heaven, pray over the results, asking for the faith to surrender all for the “pearl of great price.”

*Many who  
are first will  
be last, and  
many who  
are last will be  
first.*

MATTHEW 19:30



TODAY AT MOODY

Let’s continue to ask for God’s leading, wisdom, and direction in the life and service at Moody of Edward Cannon, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer. Ask also that the Holy Spirit will encourage him in his numerous responsibilities and decisions.

*Whoever  
wants to  
become great  
among you  
must be  
your servant.*

MATTHEW 20:26



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Please uphold before the Father today Moody's Health Service staff: Ann Meyer and Tiffany Wade. With over 600 employees and 1,400 students on campus needing medical services at some point, they keep a busy schedule and appreciate your prayers.

*Read: Matthew 20:1-34*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote, "If anyone would like to acquire

humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realize that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed."

In today's reading, Jesus revisited the topic of humility and greatness in the kingdom of heaven. To begin, He reminded us that He's the King, not us. If we need a reason to be humble, all we need to remember is that He's the sovereign of the universe! This lesson comes through loud and clear in the parable of the workers in the vineyard. To grumble and grab for our "rights" is to forget whose vineyard it is. The owner has every right to do as he likes—who then can complain about his promise keeping and generosity? When we do, it shows our pride.

Another key point here is the familiar phrase, "The last will be first, and the first will be last" (v. 16). God does not order things the way we would or for the reasons we would. Jesus predicted that He would be betrayed, condemned, beaten, mocked, and executed. In the eyes of the world, He would be a loser—but in God's eyes, He would be the ultimate winner.

His resurrection would be the greatest victory in history!

In short, servanthood is part of the road to greatness in God's kingdom. Jesus had already taught much on this topic, but apparently the disciples had not tuned in. They were preoccupied with jockeying for position and power. They should have known how ironic their request was—to ask to be "first" meant they wanted to be "last" from an earthly perspective. Jesus clarified that being a leader in His kingdom meant that they would, like Him, suffer for righteousness' sake.

The disciples thought of authority in terms of a pecking order, but Jesus tried to show them (and us) a completely different way of possessing and using power—it means serving and seeking the benefit of others (vv. 25–28).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Almost all of us find ourselves in some sort of leadership position,

whether at church, at work, or in your home.

Spend some time today praying that God will help you see how you can serve others through your leadership. And all of us need to be consistent in praying for the leaders in our lives, including the President and those in Congress, pastors, and our bosses at work.

*Read: Matthew 21:1–22*

TODAY IN THE WORD



In G. K. Chesterton's poem, "The Donkey," the animal describes its own

ridiculous appearance and negative associations. But in the final stanza, it tells its secret: "For I also had my hour; / One far fierce hour and sweet: / There was a shout about my ears, / And palms before my feet."

That "hour" was the Triumphal Entry, and in the poem we discover this familiar story through new eyes.

Our reading today introduces us to the start of Passion Week. In this single episode we see who Jesus is and how we should respond to Him. Riding a donkey showed His humility and gentleness, as well as His royalty and mission of peace-making. In doing so, He fulfilled yet another messianic prophecy (v. 5; cf. Zech. 9:9). The people spread cloaks and branches on the road, signifying respect and honor, and they acclaimed Him with a messianic title, "Son of David." Their call, "Hosanna," basically meant "Save us!"

In a similar way, the temple cleansing incident revealed Jesus' priorities and passions. He shared God's heart for the nations, so the way the temple's court of the Gentiles had been turned into a profiteering bazaar angered Him. He treated the spirit of greed in a place of prayer as blasphemy. He condemned the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders, but showed compassion for those

who needed healing. Everything He did was to the praise and glory of God. The praise of children could silence God's enemies (v. 16; cf. Ps. 8:2)!

Now we turn to the interesting account of Jesus' cursing of the fig tree. The context suggests that the incident was a parable or warning of how Israel—and especially the religious leaders—would be judged for their rejection of the Messiah. They should have recognized Him, just as the fig tree should have borne fruit. Their failure to do so earned God's condemnation. In addition, Jesus Himself drew a straightforward application: those who pray in faith can, so to speak, wither fig trees and move mountains!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The final verse of today's reading contains an amazing promise and an amazing challenge (v. 22). "If you believe" implies strong faith, which in turn implies perfect submission to the object of faith. That is, to pray on the basis of this promise requires our wills to be totally in line with God's will.

Do you want to pray with power? Then begin your prayer times by consciously submitting to God's will: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

*Blessed is he  
who comes in  
the name of  
the Lord!  
Hosanna in  
the highest!*

MATTHEW 21:9



TODAY AT MOODY

Senior Vice President of Operations, Timothy Ostrander, ensures comprehensive communication and wide-ranging interaction among the numerous departments of the Operations Division. Ask the Lord to guide him and his team in serving all the ministries of the Institute.

*The stone  
the builders  
rejected has  
become the  
capstone; the  
Lord has done  
this, and it is  
marvelous in  
our eyes.*

MATTHEW 21:42



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Larry Mercer welcomes your prayer support today. As Senior Vice President of Media, he provides overall leadership to the ministries of Moody Broadcasting, Moody Publishers, and Church Ministries. Thank you for praying!

*Read: Matthew 21:23–22:14*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



A recent survey by the Barna Research Group found that 76 percent of Americans believe in heaven, and nearly the same number believe in hell. Only five percent said there was no life after death. But while 64 percent believe they will go to heaven after they die, only one half of one percent think they are headed for hell.

That seems optimistic! Yet it's in line with our human desire to believe only the best about ourselves. In today's parables, Jesus tried to strip away self-deception and show us that our eternal destiny is determined by how we respond to Him.

During Passion Week, He gave the Pharisees and other religious leaders one more chance to receive Him. Instead, just as they had in the past, they questioned His authority. In response, Jesus told several parables to test and expose their unbelief. In the parable of the two sons, we see that obedient actions are what count. By this standard, the sinners who responded to John the Baptist's message will enter heaven before the Pharisees (21:31–32). What a blow to their pride!

In the parable of the tenants, we see specifically that how we treat the Son of God is what matters. Instead of giving the owner his due, the tenants tried using violence to take over the vineyard for themselves. In both of these parables, Jesus had the leaders themselves discern the right and wrong of the

situation, and in effect they condemned themselves! Here, the consequences of rejecting Christ loom even larger—the vineyard will be taken away and given to others (v. 43).

The next image of Jesus as the “capstone” or “cornerstone” (NASB) has powerful implications. Worldly “builders” saw nothing in Him, but the Father used Him as the center of His entire redemptive plan. We who believe in the Stone ourselves become living stones, but those who neglect it will be crushed by it (v. 44; cf. 1 Peter 2:4–8). That's why, in the next parable, the Jewish leaders were compared to guests invited to a wedding who respond with indifference or violence. They would be judged and punished!

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Choose one of the parables from the reading and plan to set aside some time for additional Bible study. If you're not sure which one to pursue, we encourage you to explore more deeply the parable of the wedding banquet.

Analyze carefully the images, characters, and events depicted. Write down questions about items you don't understand. Check cross-references. Consult commentaries and other resources. Discuss the parable with a friend. In the end, be sure to apply it to your own life!

*Read: Matthew 22:15–46*

TODAY IN THE WORD



George Whitefield, the famous colonial revivalist, once preached on the question, “What do you think about the Christ?”

“[N]umbers that are called after the name of Christ, and I fear, many that pretend to preach Him, are so far advanced in the blasphemous chair, as openly to deny His being really, truly, and properly God. . . . [I]f Christ be not properly God, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins: for no created being, though of the highest order, could possibly merit anything at God’s hands; it was our Lord’s divinity, that alone qualified Him to take away the sins of the world.”

How people respond to Christ is life’s most important issue, whether they are Pharisees, colonial Americans, or modern suburbanites. Today, we read the final dialogues between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders.

The first dialogue started with flattery from the Pharisees, followed by their trick question about paying taxes. Jesus had eluded the Pharisees so many times—and they had lost so much face—that they sent their followers, along with some Herodians (their political enemies!). But Jesus taught that we should submit to the proper authorities in our lives.

Next came the Sadducees with a question about marriage. The question was absurd in itself; they showed their mocking attitude because they them-

selves didn’t even believe in resurrection. Jesus responded that resurrection is a biblical truth. A lack of belief in it reveals that they didn’t know the Scriptures or God (v. 29). His indictment struck at the core of their prideful self-conception!

The Pharisees tried once more, this time asking a meaningful question about the greatest commandment. Jesus’ answer summarized the spirit of the Law: to love God and one’s neighbor is the basic spiritual duty of every worshiper (cf. Deut. 6:5). Here, “love” is *agape* love—that is, not a feeling of affection, but a chosen, sacrificial devotion.

Finally, it was Jesus’ turn to ask the questions. He asked the leaders about the identity of the Messiah, then confounded them by explaining from Scripture that the Christ would be more than a man—He must Himself be the Lord!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The Pharisees and other religious leaders had the chance to ask Jesus anything they liked. Unfortunately, they squandered their opportunities with trick questions and hostile motives.

If you could ask Jesus any question, what would it be? If you came face-to-face with Him today, what would you ask Him? Check your heart to make sure the question isn’t self-serving or accusatory, then rejoice that we will have this very chance one day in heaven. He Himself is the Answer to all our questions!

*No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.*

MATTHEW 22:46



TODAY AT MOODY

The ministry of Moody Broadcasting wouldn’t be possible without those who work behind the scenes, ensuring that all the equipment works well. It’s our privilege today to pray for Moody’s Network Engineers: Ronald Kinzie, William Tennant, and Mark Williames.

*Woe to you,  
teachers of  
the law and  
Pharisees, you  
hypocrites!  
You shut the  
kingdom of  
heaven in  
men's faces.*

MATTHEW 23:13



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Please say a prayer of praise today for our Physical Plant team under the leadership of Bruce Cain, Vice President of Facilities Management. They build, repair, clean, and improve MBI's campus in all seasons, at all times.

*Read: Matthew 23:1–59*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Scientists have recently uncovered one of the secrets of the brittle star (a relative of the starfish). Its ability to flee from ocean predators, hunt, and change colors from day to night—despite having no eyes—had long puzzled researchers. As it turns out, the brittle star (or serpent star) is itself one enormous eye.

The species of brittle star in question has a skeleton made up of calcite crystals that function like an eye. The crystals give visual information that allows the creature to “see” and respond to its environment. One scientist called them “nearly perfect microlenses.”

Though it appears blind, in fact the brittle star can see with an eye that modern technology cannot match. By contrast, the Pharisees, though they appeared to be the spiritual seers of Israel, were in fact blind guides. As we saw in yesterday's reading, they rejected Christ and lost many public debates with Him. In today's reading, Jesus delivered a summary condemnation of how badly they had failed.

The first seven verses give an overview. The Pharisees didn't practice what they preached. They were hypocrites. They were proud. They pursued human recognition and praise.

The following verses provide an instructive contrast. The preeminence of God as Father and of Jesus as the Master Teacher revealed the values and

pursuits of the Pharisees as empty. As we've seen in the “first shall be last and the last first” verses, humility is the real test of greatness in God's kingdom—a truth that the Pharisees neither understood nor practiced.

Most of the rest of the chapter consists of seven pronouncements of woe or judgment. These are somewhat formal curses or condemnations, and go into detail about the Pharisees' spiritual condition. They blocked the door to the kingdom of heaven. They thought legalism was praiseworthy. They didn't understand worship. They were careful in small duties but neglected what God wanted most. They ignored and opposed God's Word, and killed His messengers. They broke God's covenant.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



After reading Jesus' fourth woe today (vv. 23–24), you might want to double-check your attitude to stewardship. Do your thoughts and actions reflect the truth that all you have belongs to God? Do you honor Him with the “first-fruits” of your earnings? Do you give generously and cheerfully? Are you open to the Spirit's leading in this area?

If you're not sure, look back through your financial records. Pray about how you (and your family) can be better stewards of the money and resources He has provided.

*Read: Matthew 24:1–25:13*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



A surprise publishing phenomenon of the past decade has been the success of

the bestselling *Left Behind* novels. *Publishers Weekly* called them “the most successful Christian fiction series ever.” *ABC News* said the books are “fun and engaging, with fast-paced plotting, global drama, regular cliffhanger endings, and what has to be the quintessential villain: Satan himself.”

Authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins want the stories to reach a mainstream audience with biblical truth. Even one secular reviewer could see that “the characters are constructed to cause readers to identify with them in their search for meaning and, in time, faith.”

The millions of *Left Behind* readers who want to know the fate of the world should also have a look at Matthew 24. What does the “end of the age” mean here? Some interpret this phrase generally, as indicating things taking place in the period between Christ’s First and Second Comings. Others interpret it more specifically, as mostly referring to events during the Tribulation or before the Second Coming.

At first, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple (A.D. 70), but as the chapter progresses He spoke more and more of the “end times” in our future. What will happen then? False messiahs, wars, and natural disasters will signal the end is near. Believers will be perse-

cuted and some who seemed to believe will fall away. The right response is to stand firm and keep preaching the gospel (vv. 13–14).

The “abomination that causes desolation” (v. 15) is also prophesied in Daniel 9:27 and elsewhere. This specific event will usher in a time of more intense suffering and disasters, and is often dated at the middle of the Tribulation. This was historically prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes, who put an altar to Zeus in the temple in 168 B.C. (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4).

Like dawn breaking through this darkness, Christ will return in power and glory (vv. 30–31; cf. Rev. 1:7)! Though His coming will be unexpected—as we learn from the parable of the virgins and their lamps—we should keep watch and read the signs of the times (vv. 32–33, 42).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If you knew Jesus would return tomorrow, how would your life

change today?

The implication, of course, is that whatever would change in this case should change in any case, regardless of when Christ comes back. When He returns, we want Him to find us faithfully doing the work He has given us and living obedient, righteous lives. If there’s something in your life that wouldn’t stand up to His scrutiny, why keep it there? With God’s help, you can change!

*Keep watch,  
because you  
do not know  
on what day  
your Lord  
will come.*

MATTHEW 24:42



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Our library gives everybody at the Institute an access to a wealth of knowledge. Today and tomorrow we want to express appreciation in prayer to those who facilitate this access—its staff: Lorilee Johnson, Walter Osborn, and Sheri Rough.

*Come, you who  
are blessed by  
my Father,  
take your  
inheritance, the  
kingdom pre-  
pared for you  
since the cre-  
ation of  
the world.*

MATTHEW 25:34



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Please include these library employees in your prayers: Concepcion Nasution, Jeremy Peterson, and Roger van Oosten. May God through “eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage . . . and strengthen [them] in every good deed and word” (2 Thess. 2:17).

*Read: Matthew 25:14–46*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



The picture of God as a Shepherd is found throughout the Bible. Jacob blessed Joseph in the name of “the God who has been my shepherd all my life” (Gen. 48:15). David, too, called the Lord “my shepherd,” and added, “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters” (Ps. 23:1–4). God referred to Himself in the same terms: “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep . . . I will shepherd the flock with justice” (Ezek. 34:11–16).

To divide sheep from goats is the work of a shepherd, and spiritually speaking, it will be the work of the Good Shepherd (see John 10:1–18). The second story in today’s reading is probably a parable, though some have tried to match it with a specific judgment. Its main point is that we will be held accountable for our actions—the ones listed here are practical and measurable. In the judgment scene, we discover that righteous people did these things out of love, with no ulterior motives. Their good deeds weren’t done to earn “merit points,” but simply revealed their true spiritual condition. By contrast, the unrighteous people were unaware they had missed the boat, but were still judged for their sins of omission. To show love for our brothers and sisters is the same as

showing love for Jesus Himself (v. 40)!

The earlier parable of the talents also teaches us to live as people who must one day give an account to our Master. As in the parable of the virgins, He will certainly return and we must keep watch. We must be good stewards of the resources God has given us, including time, money, energy, abilities, and opportunities, using all for the glory of God. A true disciple cannot be spiritually lazy or indifferent, or act based on fear, as the third servant did.

What’s at stake? Eternal joy in God’s presence . . . or hell, to be cast into the darkness and grief of permanent exclusion from His presence (vv. 21, 30, 46).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Are you feeling up for a creative project today? If so, we suggest you do your best to illustrate one of the two stories in today’s reading. You might paint a watercolor of a key scene, draw a short comic book of a complete story, or create a montage of images and scenes from a story using, for example, color photos cut out from magazines.

This would be a great project to do with younger children, or as a whole family during family devotions.

*Read: Matthew 26:1–35*

TODAY IN THE WORD



During the 2002 World Series, fans voted on the top ten moments in baseball history. According to the balloting, the winner was the day in 1995 when Cal Ripken Jr., broke Lou Gehrig’s “iron horse” record for consecutive games played. It was followed by the 1974 game in which Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth’s record for career home runs. In third place was the day Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first African-American player in the big leagues in 1947.

These and other great players made history with their unforgettable actions and achievements. Unfortunately, there are other ways to make history as well, as Judas proved in today’s reading. Though one of Jesus’ inner circle, he chose to betray the Lord. To do so, he went to the religious leaders, who had already rejected Jesus and were plotting to have Him arrested and killed.

In contrast to their hate, we read of the love and honor showed by Mary, the sister of Lazarus (v. 7; cf. John 12:1–11). She anointed Christ’s head and feet with a jar of very expensive perfume. When the disciples “piously” complained that the money could have been given to the poor, Jesus replied that she had anointed Him for His coming burial. Her act was spiritually beautiful and would forever be connected with the preaching of the gospel (vv. 12–13).

Judas and Mary show us two extremes, so we may feel more of a connection with Peter. He would fail the Lord, at the crucial moment denying he even knew Him. But we serve a merciful God, who gives repentant sinners many second chances. Peter would grieve his actions and Jesus would forgive him.

In the midst of all this, Jesus Himself set the standard for selfless love. He knew Judas planned to betray Him, yet during the Last Supper He, in effect, offered him a chance to change his mind. He knew Peter would deny Him, yet He graciously gave him early warning and forgiveness later. Most amazingly, He did this even as He contemplated His own redemptive sacrifice—the suffering and death that would begin later that evening.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Many American denominations observe communion on the first Sunday of every month. That’s next Sunday, so if this is your church’s practice, prepare your heart by rereading and praying over Matthew 26:17–30 every day this week.

How important is this? “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Cor. 11:28–29).

*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

MATTHEW 26:28



TODAY AT MOODY

Would you join us as we pray for Robert Gunter, General Counsel at Moody? We value his service to the leadership of the Institute and ask God for continuous guidance. Also uphold his Executive Secretary, Margaret Wheeler, in prayer.

*They all  
answered,  
“Crucify  
him!”*

MATTHEW 27:22



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Moody's External Studies present a convenient evening alternative to daytime education for every ministry-minded student of the Bible. Today we invite you to pray for the staff of our External Studies Division—William Blocker and DuRhonda Palmore.

*Read: Matthew 26:36–27:26*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



A recent report found the United States to be “a cold and uncaring place to die, offering little relief from pain or even sympathy to people in their last weeks and months.” Few Americans die at home, although 70 percent say they would like to. Few hospitals offer hospice or palliative care, designed to make dying patients more comfortable. One in four nursing home residents experiences ongoing, unmanaged pain.

Jesus certainly knew the suffering of a lonely death, and what it means to be abandoned by everybody. But, despite the physical pain, unjust trials, and abandonment by his friends, His actions model for us the way of perfect obedience.

In Gethsemane, Jesus submitted to His Father's will. This was not a simple matter, but involved strong emotions and intense prayer. Jesus knew exactly what was coming, and in obedience He stepped forward to fulfill God's Word. He was secure enough in His own and His Father's power not to use it for short-term relief.

During the trials, Jesus remained quiet, calm, and self-possessed. He did not respond to the leaders' false accusations because He knew they had already made up their minds, but He did answer truthfully the only meaningful question they asked (26:63–64). To accomplish our redemption, He

endured injustice, spite, mockery, and physical torture.

Unfortunately, there were also the negative examples around Jesus, and we can learn from them too. The disciples were too sleepy to pray with Him, and deserted Him when He was arrested. Peter vehemently denied Him. Judas betrayed Him, then committed suicide. The Jewish leaders encouraged lies and cruelty to get their revenge. Pilate ignored both his own observations and his wife's dream, tried to wash his hands of responsibility, and turned Jesus over to the crowd, who had been easily swayed to become a bloodthirsty mob.

In the end, we turn our eyes back to the “man of sorrows” and rejoice to follow the Lamb of God (cf. Isa. 53:3–7).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



With your family or small group, plan a special time of worship centered around Christ's death and resurrection. We're a bit past Easter, but don't worry about that. To rejoice in our salvation is always in season!

Choose hymns, praise choruses, Scripture readings, poems, and other elements to make your worship time memorable and honoring to Christ. You might stage brief dramatic scenes from the biblical narrative, or give meditative readings from classic Christian devotional and theological texts.

*Read: Matthew 27:27–66*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In 1963, only about four hundred breeding pairs of bald eagles could be found in the lower 48 states. But today, after a remarkable comeback, bald eagle pairs number more than five thousand—including those in Alaska and Canada, nearly ten thousand. They've recently been spotted building nests in Minneapolis, Florida, and Washington, D.C. Said one scientist: "The bald eagle is cited as one of the greatest success stories in endangered species recovery."

One reason we smile at this good news is because the bald eagle is a symbol of America. We associate the fierce, proud head of this large bird with our nation's history and character. In a similar way, the Cross is the symbol of our faith, a powerful reminder of Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

Today's reading features a large cast for this central drama of history. The Jewish leaders continued to attack Jesus, insulting even His relationship with His Father. The disciples, having run away, were conspicuous by their absence. The Roman soldiers went beyond their orders, torturing and mocking Jesus sadistically and "crowning" Him with thorns. The passersby jeered at Him as He hung on the cross—as if dying weren't enough—and even the two criminals executed with Him joined in (vv. 39–44).

A few bright rays shine forth from several supporting

characters: Simon of Cyrene (modern Libya), plucked from the crowd to carry the Cross, apparently had his life changed forever, since his sons Rufus and Alexander became believers (cf. Mark 15:21; Rom. 16:13). A Roman centurion responded in faith (v. 54). Joseph of Arimathea revealed his "secret discipleship" by claiming Jesus' body. And several women remained faithful witnesses of all this when no one else did (vv. 55–56).

Clearly, though, the main character and hero of this salvation drama is Christ Himself. He endured it all, pursuing obedience even unto death. He suffered the ultimate pain—separation from His Father (v. 46). He remained in control, determining the exact moment when He would give up His life (v. 50). And He did it to open for us a direct way to God (v. 51).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Do you have visual reminders of "taking up your cross daily"?

We encourage you

to make the Cross a concrete, meaningful part of your life through such means as wearing jewelry or displaying paintings in your home. While it is true that these things can be overdone or trivialized, that's no reason to abandon them altogether. By considering carefully where and how images of the Cross appear in your life, you can remind yourself of Christ's awe-inspiring sacrifice and recapture the power of this symbol.

*When Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two.*

MATTHEW 27:50–51



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Today, we'd like to commit to prayer the service of Lloyd Dodson, Vice President of Human Resources at Moody. We appreciate his faithfulness to Moody and commitment to his work and his team.

*He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.*

MATTHEW 28:6



#### TODAY AT MOODY

We invite you to dedicate the two remaining days of April to prayer for Moody Aviation, specifically Avionics and Maintenance instructors and staff. We pray God's blessings for George Carey, James Childers, Michael Dunkley, and Jonathan Egeler.

*Read: Matthew 28:1–15*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Second-century Christian apologist Justin Martyr wrote a book in which he defended the faith against the arguments of “Trypho, a Jew.” In his *Dialogue*, Justin accused, “[Y]ou have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but His disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where He was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that He has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven.”

A century after Jesus' death and resurrection, it appears that the lie manufactured by the Pharisees was still in circulation (v. 14). The religious leaders had remembered Jesus' prophecy of resurrection and asked for every precaution to be taken so that the body would not be stolen. The power of Rome sealed the tomb, but it wasn't enough!

Following the Resurrection, the Jewish leaders bribed the Roman guards to spread the lie. The soldiers, who could have been severely punished for their negligence, probably reported to the Jews out of fear. To believe that the same disciples who had fled somehow gained the courage to commit a serious crime made no sense, not to mention that sleeping soldiers could not have witnessed the

crime . . . but people believe what they wish.

The first witnesses to the Resurrection were the women who had remained faithful. To the news, “He has risen,” they responded with holy fear. They rejoiced because their Master was alive. They obeyed the angel's instructions, hurrying to share the good news with the remaining eleven disciples. When Jesus Himself appeared to encourage them, they bowed at His feet in worship and humility (vv. 8–10).

The Resurrection is the foundation of our faith. Without it, we are pitiable dupes; with it, we are saved sinners guaranteed eternal life. It proves Jesus' sovereign power over life and death. And it declares Him to be the one and only Son of God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12–21).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Quick quiz: What is the running theme throughout this year in *Today in the*

*Word*? “God's Wisdom for Real Life.” That's one reason we've entitled this study of Matthew, “Wisdom of Jesus' Kingdom.”

In keeping with this theme, review what you've learned this month. List truths, principles, and other bits of wisdom that you intend to use in your daily life. Of course, all Scripture is profitable in this way (see 2 Tim. 3:16), but try to note specific, practical lessons you've learned from Matthew's Gospel.

*Read: Matthew 28:16–20*

TODAY IN THE WORD



Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, died last July of pulmonary fibrosis, a progressive lung disease. Some of his last words are inspiring:

“Rejoice with me because I am no longer in this earthly tent. I am in the presence of the living God, satisfied at the deepest core of my being. . . . You are a child of the God of the universe. Surrender to Him. Become His slave. I can assure you, after more than 50 years of experience, there is no greater adventure than following Him. He cares for you. Take Him at His Word.”

Last words reveal a person’s character and priorities—the way by and reasons for which he lived his life. So we should pay close attention to the last words spoken on earth by our Lord Jesus, found at the end of today’s reading.

Before His Ascension, Jesus entrusted to His disciples the command and legacy we know as the Great Commission (vv. 18–20). Its foundation is the authority and presence of Christ. God gave Him all authority, which He demonstrated in His victory over death and sin. To have Him always by our side is a tremendous encouragement and perhaps the ultimate fulfillment of His name, “Immanuel—God with us.”

Because Jesus has all authority, we can and must do what He said: go and make disciples. “Go” implies that move-

ment or change of some sort is required—we think of Abraham and his journey of faith. “Make disciples” means we’re not trying to score mere converts, but to grow and cultivate lifelong followers of Christ. This reminds us that salvation is a holistic process—beginning with justification against the death penalty of sin, continuing with sanctification or progress toward Christ-likeness, and finishing with glorification, the climax of God’s redemptive work.

God’s vision of salvation is global, so we are to go to “all nations.” The work of preaching the gospel must include baptizing believers and teaching them to obey everything Jesus said. To live worthily and wisely, we must govern our lives by these parting words of our Lord.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Before we move on to next month’s study of Ecclesiastes, let’s make sure that the lessons from Matthew have sunk in. Matthew is a Gospel—a message of “good news.” The good news is that Jesus came to save sinners from death, offering us instead the gift of eternal life (John 3:16).

Have you believed this message and trusted Christ for salvation? We don’t want to assume that all our readers have already taken this step of faith. If you haven’t, we urge you to do so without delay!

*Surely I am  
with you  
always, to  
the very end  
of the age.*

MATTHEW 28:20



TODAY AT MOODY

As we conclude our prayer journey this month, join us in thanking God for Moody Aviation instructors: Keith Ericson, Roger Kuypers, and Keith Parker. What a privilege to participate in this way in the training of future aviation missionaries!

and Care Ministry, an outreach to the sick and bereaved, and then as Director of its Reach and Rescue Ministry, an outreach to delinquent and non-participating members of the church.

In 1996 White graduated from DTS with a Master's degree in Theology. He continued his work at the fire department and at church, but was increasingly dissatisfied. "I enjoyed working as a firefighter, but the yearning to be in full-time ministry was a fire that not even the fire department could extinguish."

"Since my days as a student I longed for the chance to come back to Moody and to serve Christ here. My thought through the years was that perhaps I might come back to teach. I never dreamed of the opportunity to come and to serve the Moody alumni," explains White. "I am incredibly thankful to God and His wisdom in creating this ministry opportunity that harnesses all of my experiences in church and in the fire department and yet still stretches me."

Through the efforts of the Alumni Association, White has the opportunity to touch the lives of over 34,000 men and women who are serving Christ around the world. "I consider this a deeply humbling privilege and a monumental responsibility," says White of his new role. "In the years to come, it is my passion that every alumnus and alumna of Moody Bible Institute senses that he or she is valued, respected, and supported through the ministry of the Alumni Association wherever and in whatever vocation they may be serving Christ in the world." ■

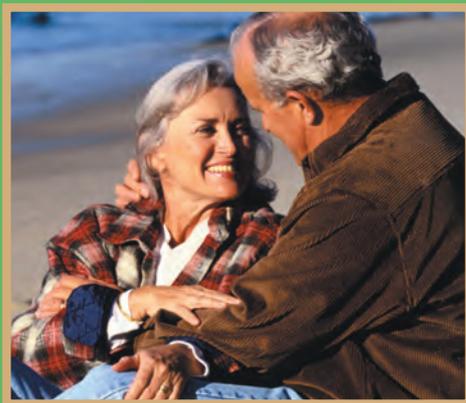


*The Alumni Association Staff (l. to r.): Walter White, Millie Benson, Byron Fujii, and Nancy Hastings*

## **The MBI Alumni Association offers several services and resources.**

- The *Moody Alumni* magazine is published and distributed to MBI alumni three times a year. It features interesting articles about life at Moody, timely information about the Institute, and updates about the work of alumni around the world.
- Up-to-the minute news, prayer networking, and career information are available at [www.moodyalumni.org](http://www.moodyalumni.org).
- Local, national, and international events are sponsored by the AA to bring alumni together for fellowship and encouragement.
- The AA recognizes and encourages faithful service and character through awards such as the Alumni of the Year and Faculty Citation award bestowed annually during Founder's Week. Throughout the year, the AA also bestows the Distinguished Service award to various alumni in recognition of their exemplary service for Christ.
- The Faculty Travel Endowment offers alumni the opportunity to encourage faculty members by providing funds for participation in overseas ministry to facilitate the faculty members' personal and professional growth.

# Do You Have the Best Plan Available?



*Even if you already have a will or estate plan, there may be a better plan for you.*

If you are not sure of the answer, then you should attend a **MOODY TRUSTS AND ESTATE PLANNING SEMINAR**.

This presentation is loaded with practical information with plenty of time for your questions. The seminars are **FREE** and you are under no obligation if you attend.

If you want more information or would like to attend one of these seminars, please call toll free at **1.800.801.2171**.



## Moody Trusts and Estate Planning Seminars

### UPCOMING SCHEDULE

#### Illinois, Iowa, & Indiana Estate Planning Seminars

**THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2004**

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Calvary Church

501 W. Bypass 61

Muscatine, IA 52761

**FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2004**

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Geneseo Evangelical Free Church

914 N. Chicago Street

Geneseo, IL 61254

**SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2004**

10:00 a.m. – Noon

The Lodge Hotel and Conference Center

I-74 at Spruce Hills Drive

Bettendorf, IA 52722

**MONDAY, MAY 3, 2004**

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Zionsville Fellowship

9090 E. State Road 334

Zionsville, IN 46077

**TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2004**

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Aletheia Fellowship

2505 Faith Drive

Anderson, IN 46013

*To register for a free seminar,  
please call 1.800.801.2171*

# What kind of plans have you made?

Will your estate  
plan avoid probate  
with its delays,  
attorney's fees, and  
court costs?



If your current estate plan is a will, you may be leaving probate costs and delays to your family. A revocable living trust is an option you may want to consider. A properly drafted and funded living trust avoids probate expenses, delays, and publicity. It also can provide a management plan if you were ever to become disabled. A living trust is a way to leave an important legacy to family and ministries.

If you would like to learn more about the revocable living trust, then you should request your FREE copy of Moody Bible Institute's *Legacy to the World* brochure, which presents an easy-to-understand overview of the revocable living trust. Learning more about how the revocable living trust works can help you determine if the living trust is right for your estate planning. Simply check the box on the attached reader reply panel, or call us at 1-800-DL MOODY (356-6639) and ask for *Legacy to the World*.

