



NG Study Guide: Matt. 23:37-39 “The King’s Sorrow” [6.11.17]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** *Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Jesus sorrow reveals His love for the lost but also His justice towards those who would reject Him. Through Jesus’ example we learn that we, too, should have a compassionate sorrow for those who are lost. We also learn that we must process emotions in a healthy and holy way that does not lead to sin, but instead motivates us to the action of loving God and loving our neighbors.

Context: Jesus has just finished addressing the problems of hypocrisy and empty ritual among the Jewish religious leaders, as well as eternal consequences of their rejection of Him. Now, Jesus begins to mourn as so many in Israel had rejected Him as Messiah. Through Jesus’ sorrow, we get some profound insight into the heart of our King.

I. Jesus’ sorrow is rooted in compassion (v.37-38)

In v.37, Jesus repeats the name ‘Jerusalem’ twice. This is usually indicative of a sorrowful tone. Jesus’ sorrow is not just for the city of Jerusalem but for the entire Jewish nation. Jesus’ comparison of His love for Israel to that of a mother hen is indicative of a deep and self-sacrificial love. Because of His great love, Jesus is saddened by Israel’s rejection of Him, and the ultimate consequence they face as a result of that rejection.

B. Jesus’ compassionate sorrow reveals God’s heart

While Jesus’ expression of sorrow reveals His humanity, His sorrow is also perfectly aligned with the heart of God, revealing His divinity. This shows us two things;

1. Jesus' response was due to the actions of people

Jesus experienced real emotions at the Israelites rejection of Him. Scripture shows us that God responds to the actions of people. A couple of times, in the Gospel accounts, we read that Jesus "marveled" at the faith (or lack of faith) of certain individuals (Mark 6:7, Luke 7:9). Additionally, in Eph 4:30, the Apostle Paul warns us against "grieving" the Holy Spirit of God. As followers of Jesus, God cares about the state of our hearts and how our hearts are revealed in our actions. When we allow Him to work in and through us, producing faith reflected in a life of outward obedience, then it brings Him joy. When we don't allow His transforming power to work in us, and we point our affections away from Him, it grieves our Lord.

2. Jesus is sorrowful for the destruction of the lost

Jesus is not only sad because the Israelites have rejected His offer of perfect, self-sacrificial love, but also because they will now face eternal consequences for their rejection of Him. 2 Peter 3:9 says that God does not desire that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Although there are inevitably many who have not and will not repent and receive Jesus, the Lord still takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked.

Q1: What are some of the ways people today might cause Jesus to experience sorrow?

II. Jesus' sorrow does not lead to sin (v.37-38)

Jesus was able to grieve for the Israelites without allowing His grief to cause him to sin

C. compassion without compromise

Although Jesus is mourning the destruction of the Jewish nation as a result of their rejection of Him, He allows for the eternal consequences of their sin to stand. Jesus makes no exception for sinners because, just as He is perfectly loving, He is also perfectly just. Jesus remarks in v.37 that Jerusalem had killed prophets and stoned those sent to her and that as a result, her house (the Lord's temple) was left "desolate". In other words, the Israelites had many opportunities to repent and believe in Jesus, but rather, they chose to continue in their rebellion and thus the Lord was removing His blessing and glory from them. The same principle is seen in John 8 when an adulterous woman is brought before Jesus. Although Jesus allows the woman not to be stoned according to Jewish law, He commands her to "go and sin no more"

Q2: How can we work to discover the balance of showing compassion without compromise as we seek to love our neighbors better?

B. processing emotions in a healthy and holy way

Jesus is able to demonstrate His sorrow in a way that does not lead Him to sin or compromise on God's standard. In Ephesians 4:26, Paul instructs us to "be angry, but do not sin". It doesn't seem that it's wrong to experience or even to display certain emotions. However, we often allow our emotions to cause sin in our lives. Part of this is due to the fact that our hearts are misaligned with God's, and we might experience anger, sorrow or anxiety for the wrong reasons. Another part of this is that we fail to process emotions the proper way.

Q3: What are some strategies you can implement for processing emotions in a healthy and holy way which brings glory to God?

III. Jesus' sorrow moves Him to action (v.39)

Despite the response of Jewish unbelievers, Jesus still went to the Cross and sacrificed Himself so that all who would confess and believe in Him as Lord and Savior would have everlasting life. Jesus did not stop action as a result of some people's rejection of Him, but continued His glorious plan of redemption which will culminate in the moment when, not only the Jews, but all will acknowledge His identity as King and worship Him.

D. God will finish the work that He began in Israel and in the Church

Although Jesus is decriing Jerusalem, and by extension, all of Israel, for their rejection of Him, Scripture is still very clear that God is not finished with Israel (Romans 11:23-26). Verse 39 has Jesus quoting Psalm 118:26 which is a Messianic Psalm. The Psalm foretells a day in which the Jews would acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The crowd had used these words on Palm Sunday (Matt 21:9) and believing Jews will use them again at the end of the age when Jesus returns to earth to defeat His enemies. In the meantime, God is continuing to work through His Church, comprised of all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. God's character is such that He finishes the good work that He begins (Phi 1:6). Though Jesus is sorrowful over the destruction of the lost Israelites, He is not deterred in continuing and finishing His work of redemption.

B. God's finished work & promised fulfillment of His plan should lead us to love Him and our neighbors

One of the beautiful aspects of the Gospel is that we get to join God in His work. The Church is the primary means God has chosen to advance His kingdom during this age. The Great Commission to make disciples of all nations by spreading the Good News about Jesus (Matthew 28:36-40) is build upon the Great Commandment Jesus gives in Matthew 22:16-20 which is to love God and to love neighbors. As followers of Jesus who are being conformed to His image, we should care about the same things God cares about. Our hearts should break as we look at the world around us and see so many who are rejecting Jesus' offer of forgiveness, redemption and salvation. As the Church, we should respond with a sense of urgency in learning to love God and our neighbors as we know eternity hangs in the balance.

Q4: Why should we have a sense of urgency when it comes to loving God and loving others?

Q5: What are some practical ways I can show love to the lost this week?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Look to bond with someone over a common interest or activity. If your hobbies or pastimes allow you opportunities to interact with others, use these as a platform to befriend and build relationships.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity** to get to know one another better.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.
 - b. How would each of us like to apply the truths we learned to our life?** This question may be answered simply by completing the study guide. Nevertheless, it will generally be beneficial for leaders to encourage each participant to conclude the study by considering how he or she desires to apply the lessons learned.