Last week we spoke about God the Son – Jesus. We read Matthew 8 which showed Jesus performing miracles, teaching His disciples and showing His listeners that there would be a cost to following Him.

Of course, there are benefits and rewards too – they come when you accept Jesus as your own personal Saviour – when you accept that you are a sinner who cannot have a full relationship with God, unless you come before Him with the right gift, which for us is reliance on Jesus’ atoning blood that was spilt on the cross.

This week we will continue look at God the Son, Jesus – from the perspective of some of His ways and sayings that were taught to enable us to live Godly lives.

Your life should be totally dependent on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for strength and guidance – whether you have a small or large amount of faith, whether you have taken that first step of trusting Jesus or have yet to do so, life cannot be lived fully without the God of Heaven, the God of the Bible, at the centre of your life.

Matthew’s account showed the power and authority of Jesus’ ministry as He calmed the waves – He was in total control of that moment and He remains in control of every moment now.

With that in mind, let’s **PRAY**.

It is good to have a role-model in life – someone to copy, because they know how to do things. Christians would agree that Jesus is the best role model to have. Even those non-Christians who won’t take the step of faith to follow Jesus, often describe Him as a ‘good man’ – so therefore, He must be someone worth following.

By looking at Jesus’ faith, perseverance, generosity and His wisdom, people see the best qualities that mankind can possess. The Bible teaches everyone to become more like Jesus, each and every day, so it’s helpful to learn about some of the character traits He had.

Friendship and a close relationship with someone should not be hard work - if it is, maybe there is something wrong.

The environment that Jesus had been born into, was a place where keeping God’s rules had become impossible. God’s laws were meant for good, but through years of human interpretation and the adding of more regulations, it had reached a stage where fully keeping God’s commands was impossible and that affected the ability for most people to have real fellowship with their God.

But Jesus makes a statement in **Matthew 11:28-30** that says following God’s ways should not be a burden **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

This is an invitation from Jesus, to all those who feel burdened in any way.

Christianity is not for those who feel their lives are perfect and without sin – it is for those who acknowledge the path they are on needs the guidance and assistance that only a Heavenly Father and His Son can give.

The danger to mankind lies with thinking they can call to anyone else but God.

Jesus is saying that He will share life’s burdens with us. As Christians we should not be trying to live out our lives in an isolated self-sufficiency.

Each rabbi in Jesus day had their own interpretations of the Scriptures and there was often disagreement on the interpretation that were made. The rabbi’s collective teaching was known as his yoke, so when Jesus says **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me… my yoke is easy and my burden is light...** He could as easily be teaching about taking a heavy load off the shoulders of someone in both a physical and a spiritual way.

Jesus says, follow My ways and **you will find rest for your souls**. You will have the eternal rest that God promises to His faithful followers – a birth right you inherit when you become a son or daughter of God.

Jesus promises to bear life’s burdens with us. With a human perspective, life can appear unbearable; but with Jesus it can and should be **easy** and **light**.

Jesus wants us to have compassion. **Matthew 9:36** says, when Jesus **saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd**. His focus was always to do the will of His Heavenly Father and that in turn was to bring the people back to their God – to restore a relationship of praise and worship.

Jesus knows the needs of the people – some needed physical healing, whilst others required spiritual help. Jesus took the time to help the people that God put around Him – His compassion drove Him to help them.

Our response should be to look at those around us, to be compassionate to them – whether that is family, friends, neighbours, or even strangers.

This leads into Jesus being a servant – He was and is the ultimate servant. Mark 10:42-45 says Jesus called His disciples **and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

In Jesus’ Kingdom, humble service is the greatest pre-requisite for leadership. Your human civic status, your money and your personal popularity mean nothing to God. Real ministry and real Godly leadership, as far as this statement by Jesus is concerned, is done for the benefit of those being ministered to, not for the benefit of the one carrying out the act.

If you want to get involved in Godly ministry, don’t do it for what you can receive (either materially or emotionally). Your motivation should be to serve God only.

In service, Jesus made sure to teach His followers by actually doing things Himself. Despite having the authority to get anything He wanted, have people praise and pamper him, He did the exact opposite by lowering himself and serving others.

Think of Jesus’ encounters with Satan in Matthew 4:8-9 and with Jesus’ own disciples in John 13:2-5.

**Matthew 4:8-9 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 9‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’**

**John 13:2-5 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.**

In Matthew’s account, Satan offered Jesus a seemingly easy route to achieve His ministry goal – the nations at His feet, if only He would worship Satan.

But that was not the way of the servant, His ministry had a cost attached – it needed to be achieved through servanthood, which is what John described as Jesus washed His disciples feet. It is no wonder that Peter was clearly embarrassed by Jesus’ act - that job was for the lowliest of servants, not the Messiah.

The servanthood and compassion that Jesus showed for others was driven by the love He had for others. Jesus claimed in **John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.** He certainly showed that love to you in a very practical way.

If you, or anyone doubts Jesus’, all they need do is look to the cross and see the agony that He took for your sake. There is no doubt His death was a voluntary act - all through that time He was in control, but we should remember the reason for that act – so that everyone (you, me, everyone), can be saved.

That is God’s perfect love for you in action. The sad reality is that many fail to accept God’s love and do not turn to Him for salvation. That is why we are called by God to tell others about Jesus.

Many people misunderstand God, thinking that they are too sinful to be able to be forgiven. Yet, even Jesus on the Cross asked His Father to forgive His executioners, when He said, **‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ Luke 23:34**

I have no doubt that God was willing to forgive, but were those people who Jesus prayed for willing to approach God and ask for His forgiveness.

Maybe pride got in the way – but that is another sin; telling us we want or need to be superior, that we don’t want to hand over control of our lives to anyone, even if that One is God.

Jesus remained focussed on forgiveness, even in His death on the cross. That might not sit well with today’s outlook of looking after yourself first – an attitude that may allow us to help others, but only after I have sorted out my personal rights first and as long as helping will not cause me too much personal inconvenience.

Jesus certainly didn’t follow that way – He just wanted to provide a way for forgiveness – but His ministry was all about commitment.

Jesus certainly cannot be accused of lacking commitment - nor should we as His followers.

Wherever He was and whoever He was with, He remained fully focussed on His Father’s work and fully committed to His goals.

Even in situations such as His prayers whilst in the garden of Gethsemane, where despite what appears to be a human desire to avoid the cross, with all the physical torture that would happen before and during the crucifixion, Jesus knew that route was the only way to pay for everyone’s sins. He stayed completely committed to His goal.

There were certainly many obstacles and other hardships during His ministry, but He stayed on track and finished focussed on His Heavenly Father.

Much, if not all of Jesus strength and endurance throughout His ministry was enabled by prayer. No matter how busy His ministry got, He found time to be alone and pray - time spent with His heavenly Father was a priority.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, Paul lists nine Spiritual fruits. It is actually one fruit made of nine parts, rather than nine characteristics from which we may pick and choose.

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control Galatians 5:22-23.**

One of those characteristics is gentleness. At times, Jesus was angry, but it was a righteous anger, driven by the injustice created by sin and Satan. But He displayed gentleness more.

Children seemed to love coming to him and He made sure the disciples knew not to hinder them when they did so. When speaking to people who were genuinely seeking the Messiah, He was always kind-hearted, gentle and prepared to spend time.

But, equally, if a rebuke or forceful argument was necessary – whether it be to Satan, the Pharisees or His own disciples, He would not hesitate to do so.

We have spoken about the fruit of the Spirit previously and how we measure up in our lives – Jesus was perfect.

He remained patient and self-controlled, even when surrounded by Pharisees and others who were constantly analysing His every word and action to find fault and bring accusation.

When not being scrutinised in that way, He was often surrounded by crowds who wouldn’t leave Him alone – many times just to see a sign or miracle, not really interested in looking for their Messiah, or wanting to commit their lives back to God.

Not many of us would remain constantly calm in those situations – we would either choose to leave the ministry or maybe retaliate in some way – but Jesus’ sole focus was to obey the Lord and accomplish what He had set out to do.

Jesus was also humble in everything He did. Being humble is described as having or showing a modest or low estimate of one's importance. That doesn’t mean Jesus was unimportant, it means He didn’t act as if He were.

As the Son of God, Jesus had every right to demand praise and honour from all around Him. He also had the opportunity to do that, as He did the miracles and teaching that clearly declared Him as the Messiah.

But He never did demand that from people - when **John 6:15** describes the crowds as wanting to make Him king, He got away from them. Jesus wanted people to accept and follow Him for who He really was, rather than someone who would attract followers merely to see a performance.

Jesus’ ministry was to seek and save the lost, to offer forgiveness for sinful people. That ministry has not changed in 2,000 years, yet in all of Jesus’ humbleness, His authority and power were still present. He remains the Son of God, before whom every knee will one day bow **Philippians 2:10**.

So, who is your role model? If your focus was anywhere else, I trust it will shift to the One who is the Son of God – one who is offers you the only route to eternal life, who is dependable, committed, powerful, yet humble, faithful, generous, wise.

One who wants to lighten your burden rather than weigh you down, One who is compassionate, One who was prepared to serve no matter what the cost, One who loved you to the point it killed Him, but in turn was ready to forgive, even before anyone had asked for forgiveness.

He was prayerful, gentle and always ready to give of His time.

The world doesn’t need more role models, apart from Jesus, who is the ultimate role model. By studying Jesus’ characteristics and copying them, you will find yourself closer to God.

Jesus was perfect – He was, is and always will be the Son of God and He is the only route to God.

In John’s gospel he writes that Jesus said, **‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him’ John 14:6.**

Our aim should be to approach Jesus now, so that we can start that great relationship with Him and His Father – one that has the potential to last for all eternity.

**OFFER / PRAY**