

*Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*  
*July 19, 2020*  
*“All In, Or Not”*

*Sunday school at 8:30, in-person Indoor Service at 9:15, Outdoor Service at 10:45 with King's Kids.*

*NEWS*

Be respectful of others by allowing them to deal with COVID 19 in their own way.

Movie Night July 23 at 7:00

Church camp at Little Bitterroot Lake, August 14-16.

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ [www.myaetheia.com](http://www.myaetheia.com)

Like us on Facebook (aletheiachristianfellowship)

Emails: [pastor@myaetheia.com](mailto:pastor@myaetheia.com), [stacey.sundt@myaetheia.com](mailto:stacey.sundt@myaetheia.com)

**MATTHEW 19:16-20:16 ~**

“The last shall be first, and the first last.”

We think in temporal, physical terms when we assume it literally means those who were first will end up last and those who are literally the last ones will be first. The entire point is that those who put Him first will be first.

In the parable, the first workers had to be paid what was agreed upon, but that does not mean that the last will enter the Kingdom... “Take what is yours and go.” (Luke 13:23-30).

The relationship you have with the God, right now today, is the relationship you will have if you leave this physical life right now. Of course, it will be greatly perfected, but the basis, is the basis.

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

In your near future, there will be two possible states of existence. The Kingdom of Heaven, or the Lake of Fire burning with Brimstone.

The first is where God's perfect Will is absolutely unopposed in any way, was because all who dwell in that reality are unified in complete harmony.

That is relational. God's love for us will finally be received as our resistance to it will be washed away forever and our fear will be ejected by that love.

Do you love God more than this life? Do you love your fellow Christian more than your freedom? More than your opinion?

Yes? Well, prove it. Love, my friends, love... Or don't.

I John 4:7-12, Proverbs 10:12

### **MATTHEW 20:17-19 ~**

We're worried about masks and riots... Jesus faced an unimaginable horror without wavering. Yes, Lord, all of me is Yours - ask what You will.

How could Jesus do that? Well, we focus on the betrayal, arrest, torture, and vicious murder... Jesus focused on the Resurrection.

Mark 10:33&34, Luke 18:31-34

What will you choose to focus on?

-----  
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon/Elder

---



---



---

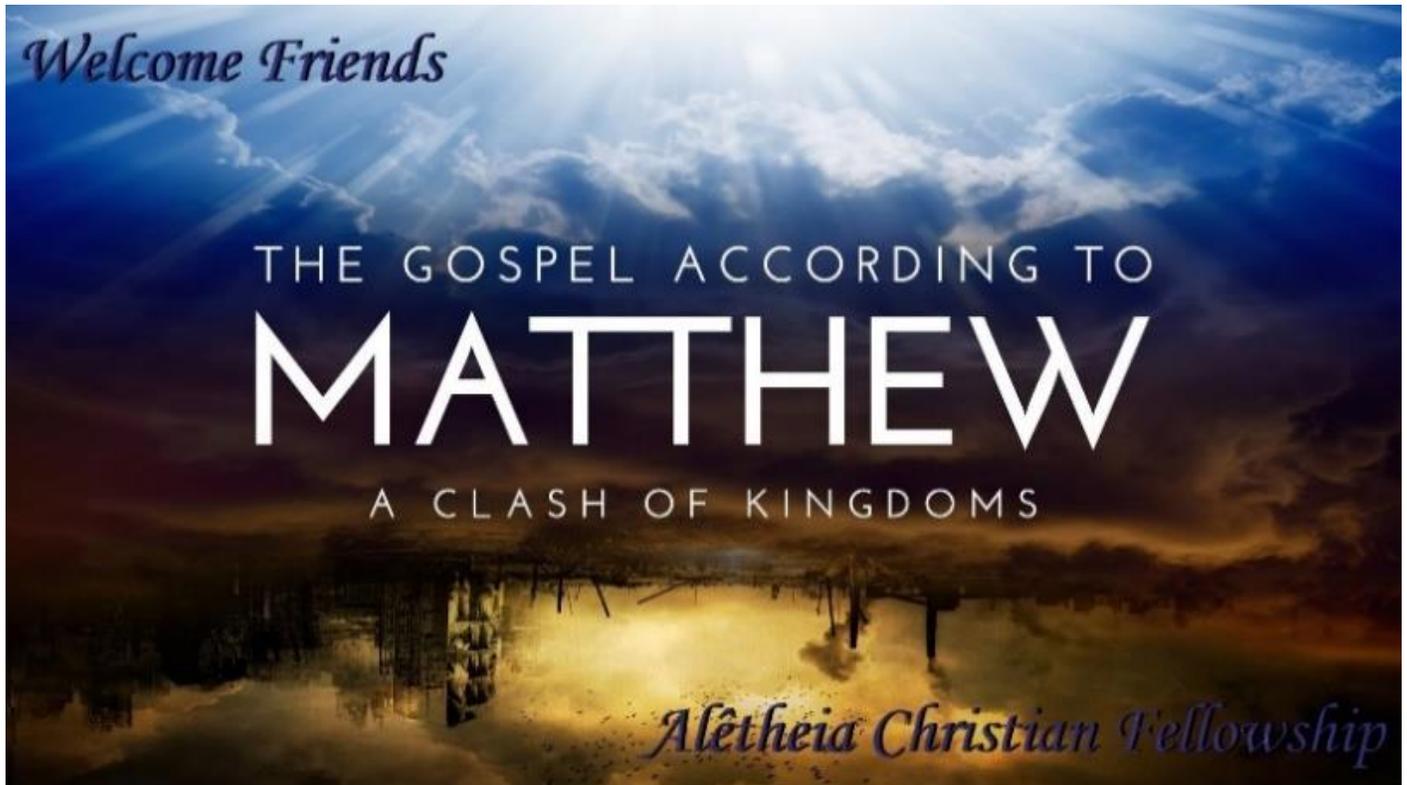


---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 20a ~ 071920  
“All In, Or Not”



Last week we finished the section on putting God first in your life that started with the Rich Young Ruler and concluded with the repeated statement, “The last shall be first, and the first last.”

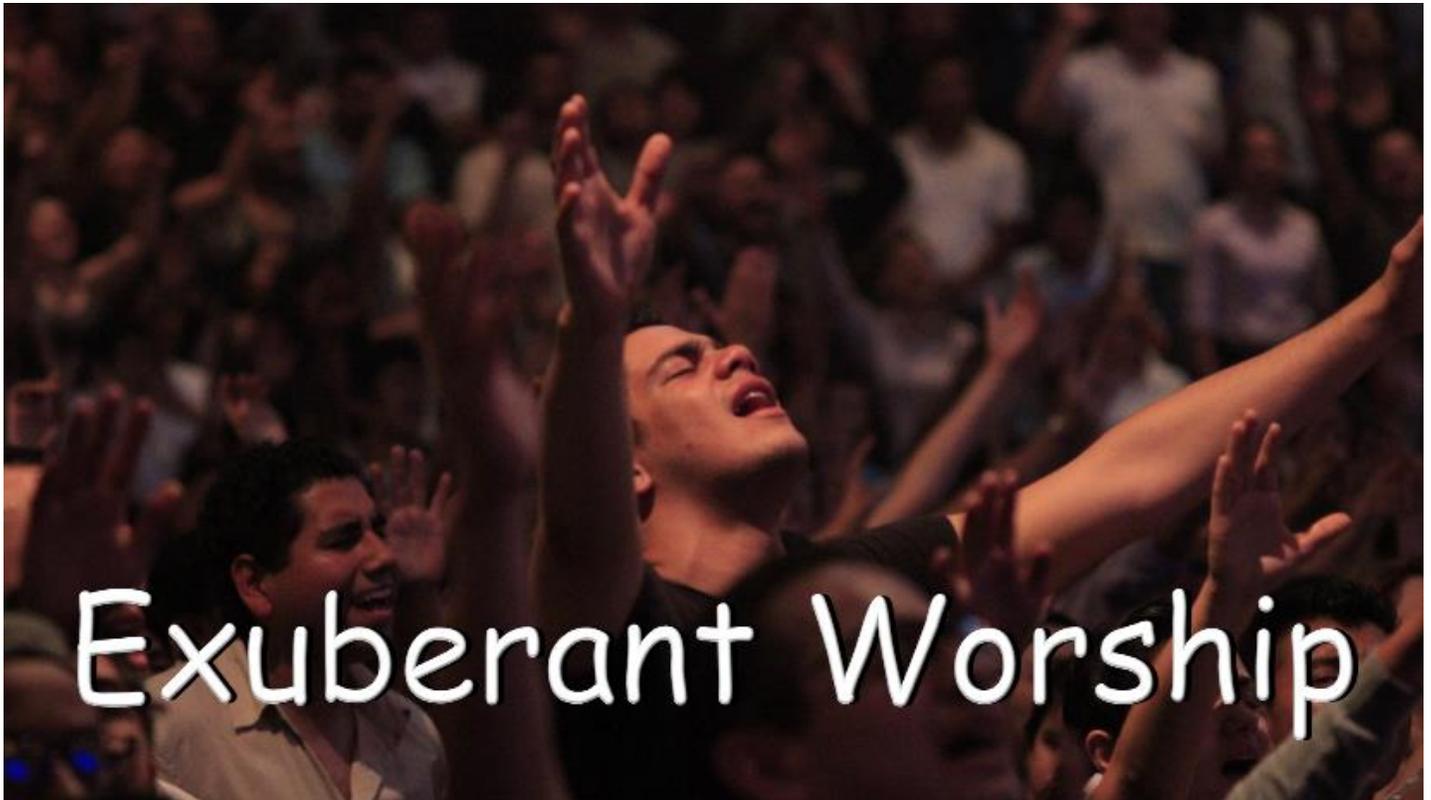
# PUT GOD FIRST

We think in temporal, physical terms when we assume it literally means those who were first will end up last and those who are literally the last ones will be first. The entire point of the exchanges, explanations, and storytelling, that God among us was making is that those who put Him first will be first.

The problem is that people closely associated with God oftentimes take Him for granted. Most of us have experience doing for others. Have you noticed that the longer you do for someone, the more they take what you do, for granted?

Ungrateful people are miserable people and they annoy God even more than they annoy me. Work on

being grateful for what you have, for what God grants you, and for the people whom He uses to bless you. Work on your so-called attitude of gratitude. Pray that God would help you be a humbly grateful person.



Because, at the end of the day, that's really what Jesus was talking about. Those people who are disenfranchised, down and out, despairing, depressed, trapped, no matter why... Whether the skid row bum, or the corporate executive... Whether the stressed-out mom, or the guy with an early mid-life crisis. When those people are touched by God, accepted by the Father, saved by Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit... They are on fire. They are exuberant, vocal, focused,

excited, and above all, humbly grateful. In that moment they are all-in with Jesus. They would give it all away - everything they have for a little more of Him - to follow Him. Meanwhile, those of us who have been following Jesus for a while, sit back, and smile, and think, "Pace yourself buddy, it's a marathon, not a sprint."

Well my friends, what if we're wrong? What if, in this sense, it is a sprint all the way to the finish line? We who were first, will be last, if we are unable to recognize what is so obvious to the person just saved.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots of old, all looked down their noses at the common, less committed, Jew, as well as looking down their noses at each other.

These super Jews of Jesus' day - these people who made their every-day life all about Judaism, had this in common... They all thought that they were right and everyone else was wrong. All of them were arrogantly ungrateful, because each one believed that they, and they alone, were sacrificing and serving God correctly. Every one of them felt that they deserved a full day's wage from the "Landowner."

What's changed? The names of the groups, I guess, but not much else. Religious people are missing the boat. According to Jesus they will be "Last."

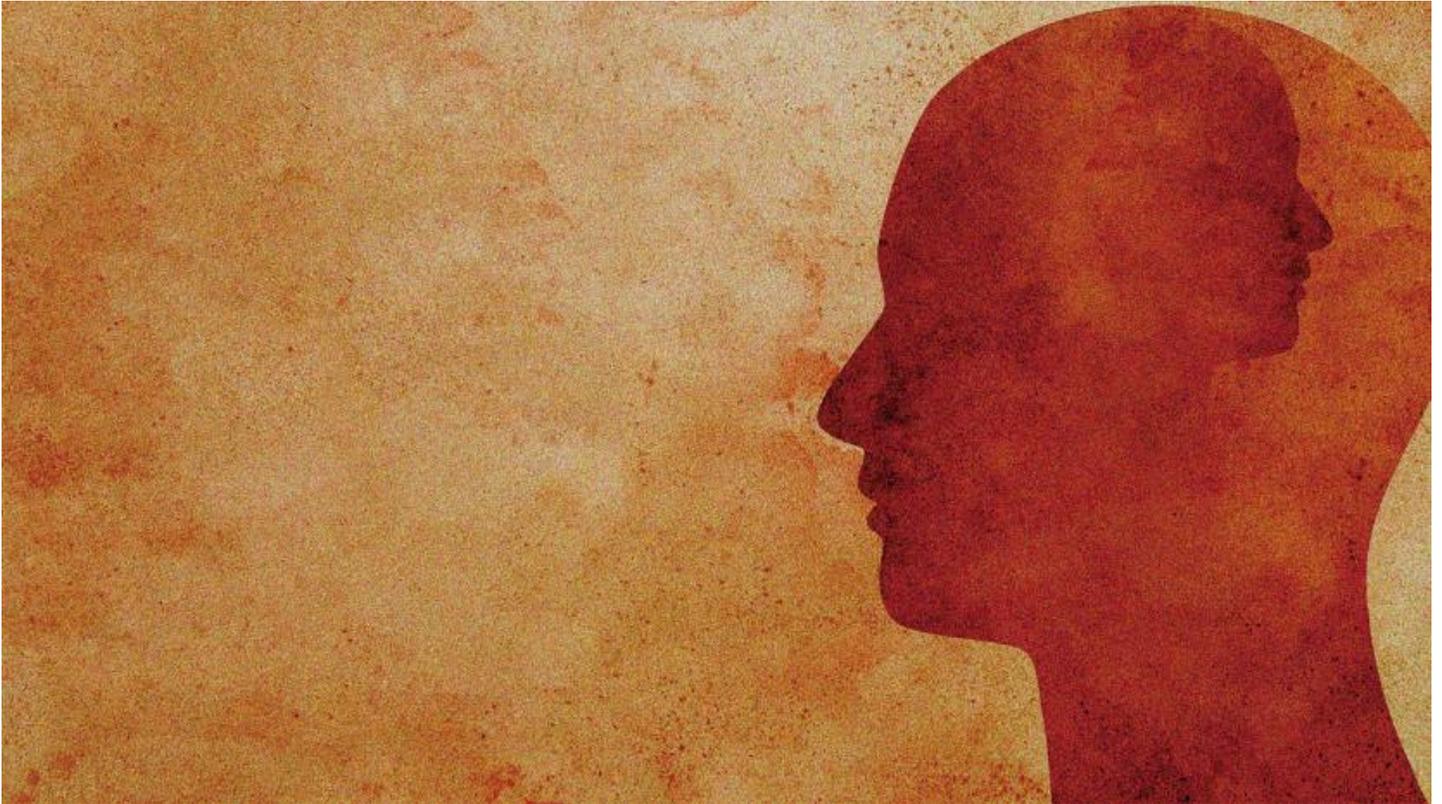
You might think, "Well, at least they will receive their pay." We saw the great parable of the "Laborers in the Vineyard," last week. The first workers were grumpy, but the "Landowner" did pay them, So, the thinking goes, that while some people labor more, labor longer, and are unhappy with the "Landowner" about His treatment of those who labor less. They still got their pay - they still made it into the Kingdom.

No, they didn't. Parables make a single main point. They are, by the very definition of their scope, story-examples, where not every part correlates to real life. Not every feature in the story is part of the example.

We do it all the time... We tell a story to help people see our point, but we never intend for every part of our story to be taken as analogous, comparable, part of our example.

In the parable, the first workers had to be paid what was agreed upon, but that has nothing to do with Jesus' point of the parable, nor does it have anything to

do with the reality of what happens to those who are first.



While Jesus couldn't say in His parable that the "Landowner" became angry and refused to pay, what He could say, is that those who labored the longest, grumbled against him, and that in the conversation that followed, the "Landowner" gave them what they earned and said to them (representatively), "Take what is yours and go." There is every indication here and throughout the Bible, that those who end up last, will be those who are lost.

Where else in the Bible is Jesus recorded as saying those same words about the first being last? How about Luke 13:23-30NirV, 23Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, 24“Try very hard to enter through the narrow door. I tell you, many will try to enter and will not be able to. 25The owner of the house will get up and close the door. Then you will stand outside knocking and begging. You will say, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you. And I don’t know where you come from.’ 26“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you. You taught in our streets.’ 27“But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you. And I don’t know where you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil!’ 28““You will sob and grind your teeth when you see those who are in God’s kingdom. You will see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets there. But you yourselves will be thrown out. 29People will come from east and west and north and south. They will take their places at the feast in God’s kingdom. 30Then the last will be first. And the first will be last.”

No matter who you are, or what you have, or how long you’ve been laboring already - none of it means a thing. Because, what matters is not the eating and

drinking with the Lord, or is it the listening to His Teaching... What matters is authentically interacting relationally with Him, and putting His teaching into actual personal practice.

We are all wasting our time if we think coming to church, and throwing a few bucks in the offering plate... Owning a Bible and putting our kids in Christian school, is going to save us.

Christianity, unlike so much in American culture isn't about window dressing - it isn't about putting on a good show. In short, it isn't about doing at all... Please hear this - please hear what I'm saying - please hear it... The relationship you have with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit right now today, is the relationship you will have if you leave this physical life right now. Of course, it will be greatly intensified there, because "Faith shall be sight" (It Is Well with My Soul), but the basis, is the basis.

See what I mean? The basis of your eternal relationship with Almighty God is the relationship you have now. If you don't want to spend time with the Lord now, what makes you think that you want to spend eternity with Him later?



Please get what I'm saying - think about it - comprehend it - it is one of the most important things you will ever hear. In your very near future there will be just two possible states of existence. Two, and only two, possibilities. The Kingdom of Heaven where God reigns unopposed, or the Outer Darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth - where the Lake of Fire burns with Brimstone.

Last week, I tried to show that the reason that God's perfect Will is absolutely unopposed in any way in the Kingdom of Heaven, was because all who dwell in that reality, are unified in complete harmony.



That is, once again, by definition, relational. God's love for us will finally be received without the hindrances to it, that we presently put up.

His love will finally be able to fully envelop us as our resistance to it will be washed away... And as that love envelops and infuses us, we will fully love as He does. The Kingdom of Heaven is a place where love dispels all fear, and so, every individual is utterly without guile, or agenda, or any other relationship destroying defense mechanism we presently employ without thought. Then it will be perfect, genuine, from the heart and from the soul, loving relationship... With God, and with each other, forever... that's what it is.

People, who in this life, choose to enter are choosing to relate in love, and unified harmony. The Truth of who you are now, will be actualized then...

The other place... Well, it is a place for those who didn't care enough in this life to genuinely drop their fear-driven personas and actually embrace the love offered by God, in the sacrifice of Jesus.

Those people are going to take with them all that fear and it will be greatly intensified over time...

One conception is that while it will initially be a place of arguing, bickering, fighting, violence and abuse... Eventually, as each person refuses to get along with anyone else, they all separate more and more from each other - drifting farther away from relationship into the void, until every one of them, is utterly and eternally alone. Self-centered, fear-driven people will get their wish - they will get to spend eternity with their very favorite person... Themselves.



Essentially, God honors who you are. Some, through Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit strive daily for a deeper connection to God... Intentionally driving into better relationship with Him... Putting that first... Just like the newly saved wretch... Fully willing to give up everything in this life to spend time at the feet of the Master.

Do you love the Father more than anything else? Do you love Jesus more than anyone else? Do you love the Spirit of God more than everything else? Do you love your fellow Christian more than your freedom? More than your opinion? A while ago, I said that, if you don't want to spend time with the Lord now, what makes you think that you want to spend eternity with

Him later? Likewise, if you don't want to spend time with your brothers and sisters in Christ now... Eternity is a very long time.

Give it lip service. Sure, I love because He first loved me... Yet, I have no qualms about tearing apart the church over the question of wearing masks, or not wearing masks. Sure, I'm all about unity - put me down for that. Yet, I have no problem disparaging other Christians for their attitudes and actions. Sure, I'm in for harmony - I love harmony. Yet, I have no misgivings about filling my heart with hate for all who disagree with me. Please realize that if you only have harmony with those who completely agree with you, you really only have harmony with yourself... Such people go where?



Can you see a disconnect? It is that very disconnect that Jesus was most keen to point out over, and over, and over again. You are either a person who is filled with God's love and are actively yielding to that love in order to love better, or you are not.

Figure out who you are. Then decide if that's who you want to be, or not. Make the adjustment, and then be that person!

Let me make it even more explicit. Are you a Holy Spirit filled Follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who desperately wants to be like Him... Lovingly obedient to the Father, perfectly yielded to the Holy Spirit, and actively working to love others more? Tangibly loving others by loving

yourself, and your opinions, less... Loving yourself, and your opinions, less than you love the church. Is that who you are - does that describe you?

If so, is that what you truly want, more and more, each day? If so, keep on, one foot in front of the other, with your entire focus on Jesus.



If you want that, but it's not an accurate description of you presently, why don't you humble yourself enough to fall on your knees right now, right where you are, and beg God to forgive you? Why don't you recognize that you will never be good enough to impress the One Who spoke the universe into existence? Why don't

you, at this very moment cry out, “I believe Lord, help my unbelief”?

My friends, today is the day. Ask God to accept Jesus’ perfect sacrifice to cover your guilt and ask Him to credit the righteousness of Christ to your account. Address Him as your Heavenly Father... Embrace His love poured out in Christ, and open your heart to the work of the Holy Spirit. Pray fervently, daily, hourly, for the God of Heaven to make you His own forever and ever, by conforming you to Jesus... Love, my friends, love... Or don’t.

Or don’t. It is your choice to make, but I promise you, it is impossible to play both sides against the middle... You cannot pull one over on the God Who sees all things, Who knows all things, Who judges “The thoughts and the intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).



John was, by tradition, and hints in the Bible itself, the youngest of the Apostles. He was the only one of them to die an old man. He wrote the Gospel of Love and the three letters that bear his name, as well as the Book of Revelation.

I've told the story about John that comes down to us from his students (from Jerome, by way of Irenaeus, who heard it from Polycarp) ... How in his extreme old age, his young disciples would help him to church services, and how, while they helped him, he just kept saying over and over, "Love." Agapê technically, but "Love, love, love" ... Finally, one of the young guys (Polycarp) asked him why he would repeat that word

over and over. To which John replied, “There are many things to Christianity, but if you would just love, it would be enough.”

It’s easy to imagine him saying that, because in the five Books in our Bible that he wrote, that is certainly the theme woven throughout. As an example, he wrote in I John 4:7-12NIV, 7Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also must love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Both James, the brother of Jesus, and Peter, the first Christian leader, wrote in the Bible that “Love covers a multitude of sins.” They were quoting the Old Testament of course... Proverbs 10:12NIV, “Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.”

As we've seen many times, Jesus confirmed that the most important thing was to love God, and the second most important thing was to love one another. Jesus gave His Followers a new command... "Love one another." He went on to say that it was a Christian's love for his, or her, fellow Christians that proved that he, or she, is, in fact, His.

You're not interested in love - loving God, more and more. Loving others, more and more. Loving in a tangible way, here and now... Get yourself a flame-retardant swimming suit.

Oh Scott, I do love. Okay, prove it by accepting each other in spite of your fear that they don't think just like you do... Accept each other in spite of your fear that things are getting out of your control. I've got news for you... Nothing was ever in your control - that's just a lie you tell yourself... Control is not an illusion - it is a delusion. That Truth should cause you to fear more, unless you realize that it's all in God's control.

Nothing has changed. God knows all about it. A wise person rightly discerned that all the turmoil in America today is God trying to get our attention... Not those who are dead - not the attention of the world, but our

attention. Trying to get His church, His people, His children to repent and put their priorities straight.



If we would spend as much time and energy praying, as we've spent on the craziness of the world... We wouldn't be tossed to and fro, like a wind-swept wave... We would be driven by the Spirit of God, rather than driven by the craziness of the world.

Matthew 20:17-19NASB, 17As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them,  
18“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, 19and will hand

Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

We're worried about masks and riots, about wars and rumors of war... Jesus already knew, without any hint of doubt, what awaited Him in Jerusalem and He set His face towards that fate in faithful obedience to the wishes of the Father.

Yes, Father, all of Me is Yours - ask what You will.

How could Jesus do that? Well, we would say it was easy - He was God. It is far too complex to get into here, but trust me when I say, it was harder for Him, than it would be for you. Leave it there for now. What Jesus did, was far more difficult than merely going to a brutal execution.

How was He able to do it? Please notice something. This is not even close to the first time that Jesus has spoken this way, and while we naturally focus on the betrayal, arrest, torture, and vicious murder... Jesus focused on the Resurrection.



We must do the same. Since this started with a rich person unwilling to give up his wealth let's take that single area of human life as an example.

The Jewish people gave the top 10% of their income as a Tithe. In addition to that, they gave other offerings, and paid other fees, and taxes, to what was essentially the church. Beyond that, they gave charity to the poor, and to other worthy causes. When we think about giving 12, 15, even 20 percent of our income away, we generally freak out - that's crazy - that's too much to ask - that's a big sacrifice. Incidentally, we feel that way, while simultaneously having no compunction about condemning the Rich Young Ruler for his attachment to his wealth. That's ironic.

My point... We think that it is a monumental sacrifice to give what the legalistic Jews gave, while they were simultaneously being heavily taxed and oppressed by their own civil leaders, and the Roman government to boot.

The reason we freak is that we look at the present discomfort, rather than at the future perfection. Jesus hasn't asked anyone to do more than He already did. The way we do it is, is the way He did it - we focus on the future, rather than the present.



Anyway, Jesus once again told the Disciples exactly what was going to happen. He had cryptically talked about His death and Resurrection in Matthew 12:40. He was explicit in Matthew 16:21, where Peter objected and was soundly rebuked - "Get behind Me Satan." Jesus was once again explicit after His Transfiguration in Matthew 17:9-12. Here He gave even more detail.

Especially, when we look at the parallel accounts... Mark 10:33&34NASB, has Jesus 33saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34" They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

Luke 18:31-34NASB adds a bit more, 31Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32" For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." 34But the disciples understood none of these things, and the

meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

As we've seen, the guys couldn't really grasp what Jesus was saying. They evidently chalked it up to Jesus being Jesus and they shook it off, in favor of enjoying the enjoyable.

Don't we do that too? When we hear something we don't like, or don't understand, we ignore it and enjoy the enjoyable. No sense suffering - no sense getting too invested in the serious side of Christianity. Let's roll into church when it suits us, sing some songs, hear an uplifting message, and drink some grape juice with our crackers... I'm sure it will all be fine.

I hope that you know that I love you and because I do, I'm telling you the Truth... The Truth is the God of Heaven loves you so much He gave up what was most precious to Him in order to facilitate a genuine, heart-felt practical relationship with you starting at the moment of Salvation and continuing without interruption forever more.

What are you going to do about that?