The Chosen S2E3: Matthew 4:24 Memory Verse: Psalm 139:7

September 29th, 2024 Scripture Reading: Psalm 2:1-12

**SLIDE 1**

 This week’s episode was a bit out of the ordinary. Our first clue that we were in for something a bit different comes from the title, which is simply the reference for a bible verse. Matthew 4:24. It reads:

**SLIDE 2**

“News about Him (that is Jesus) spread throughout Syria. People brought to him all those who had various kinds of diseases, those in pain, those possessed by demons, those with epilepsy, and those who were paralyzed, and he healed them.” Now this verse basically serves as a summary in Matthew’s account. It comes after Jesus calls his first disciples and falls just before the famous Sermon on the Mount. It tells us a lot of information:

**SLIDES 3-5**

A) News was spreading about Jesus. Word was getting around that there is a new teacher on the scene who can perform miracles. Now who wouldn’t want to see that? **S4** B) People were bringing their sick family members, their suffering friends, their injured neighbors. They had heard the hype and now they wanted to see it for themselves. And finally **S5** C) Jesus healed them. People heard, people came, and people were healed.

 But instead of portraying a day filled with miracles, the filmmakers decided to give us a look behind the scenes. We begin the episode at sunset as we explore the questions; what were the disciples up to on this busy day? What were they thinking? How might they have interacted? In fact, we only see Jesus at the very end of the episode as he staggers back to camp, weary and drained. He waves goodnight to everyone and drops off to sleep.

The rest of the time follows the various discussions of the disciples as they wait and wonder

**SLIDE 6**

 how long Jesus is going to keep up this healing business. So all the conversations that take place are speculative and imagined by the writers of the show, but they have one advantage when it comes to putting together a script like this, and that is that the writers and the disciples are in the same boat. Our questions would have been their questions. Our misunderstandings, would have likely been their misunderstandings. Our moments of doubt, would have been theirs as well. The one obvious difference between our perspective and that of the disciples was their commitment to Judaism. These followers of Jesus were Jews through and through. Their worldview was shaped by the scriptures and their faith was passed on from generation to generation.

**SLIDE 7**

At one point in the episode, the disciples begin to talk about their ideas of what the Messiah would be like. For most of them, they had always pictured a mighty warrior, a great military leader who would overthrow Rome and rescue God’s chosen people. After all, that is the story that is told over and over again throughout the Old Testament. From the Exodus where all of Egypt’s chariots are destroyed in the waters of the Red Sea, to the time of the Judges when violent rebellion was the way to overcome enemies. They would have had in mind the story of queen Esther, who successfully saved her people but only because they took up arms to defend themselves. Judas Maccabees is another example of a leader who led a revolt against the powers that be. In the Jewish mind, the Messiah would be like the great King David. He was a shepherd boy turned warrior king. In fact, even before he was king, it was said, “Saul had killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands.” Indeed, David went down in history as a hero precisely because he pulled off great feats on the battlefield. So naturally, some of these disciples were itching to know when the fighting would begin. When would the Romans get what is coming to them? When would this Messiah start up his war campaign?

 Make no mistake, Jesus does go to war. He clinches the victory! But it would be done through suffering, through death…even death on a cross. And little do these disciples know that, soon enough, their own lives will be taken from them, not as soldiers on the battlefield, but as prisoners bearing witness.

**SLIDE 8**

 I think the moment that resonated the most for me was an honest and blatant question posed by Thomas. He simply blurts out, “What are we a part of?” Another answers, “Is it wrong to say I have no idea?” To which Thomas replies, “No, it makes me feel better.” I have asked that question many times and in many situations.

**SLIDE 9**

 My father and I recently took on the task of changing the brakes on an old 2006 Town and Country minivan. I bought the parts and he helped replace old for new. And as we pulled that first tire off remember thinking to myself, “Y’know, there are people out there who do this for a living. We could take this behemoth into a shop somewhere.” But, it’s a change of brakes, how hard could it be? And sure enough we got through one of the front wheels and, wouldn’t you know, the second one went even more smoothly. But then we came to the back wheels. And we stalled out. We could not remove the old rotors that seemed to be welded on. We changed the brake pads anyway, buttoned it all up, started the van and took it for a test drive only to discover that one of the rear wheels was leaking brake fluid. Off again with the tire only to find that the piston inside the caliper was cracked. It was a mess and the voice inside my head started chuckling, “I knew this would happen. I am out of my depth. I have no business messing around with brakes. What am I doing here?”

 So it turns out, that the van went to the shop where it belonged in the first place. But one of the most frustrating aspects to working on a job like that is to go into it knowing that I do not have the proper tools. The entire time we were working on those brakes we were struggling to see properly and reach the right area. We were hunched over and bent funny. We had to improvise a few times to make things work. In a proper shop you can lift the whole car above you head…you can move freely and reach properly. You have all the tools you need to get the job done.

**SLIDE 10**

 That is where I tend to struggle in my own faith. I often feel like I do not have the right tools. Everything seems like it is a little harder than it should be, like I bend in funny positions and am just piecing things together. Certainly, when it comes to auto repair, I am out of my element. I have no business turning as wrench on a vehicle that transports people. The proper question for me to ask is along with Thomas, “What am I a part of here?”

 See, when it comes to ministry and working with people and studying the bible, I can at least say that I enjoy such work. It gets me excited and keeps me feeling involved in my faith. But is that really the crux of the matter? Is the value of what I do and the strength of my faith based on feelings? How much is my faithfulness to Jesus based on my feelings?

**SLIDE 11**

 This episode shows well the disicple’s struggle with this very problem. At the beginning of the episode, as the sun begins to set but the line to see Jesus seems to be growing, Philip and Matthew share in a discussion on a good passage to memorize from the scriptures. Philip suggests a portion of Psalm 139:

**SLIDE 12**

 “Where can I go to escape Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?” Philip finds great comfort in this truth about God but Matthew admits, “I don’t feel it.” Philip offers some guidance; “Sometimes you have to believe before you feel it.” Now although this conversation is imagined, I think it pegs us humans very well. Our emotions are important to us. We want to feel appreciated in what we do. We want to feel like it counts for something. We want to feel good about our decisions as we lay down to sleep at night. Life gets much harder when we don’t “feel it.”

 Psalm 139 is a song from David that declares to us the nature of who God is. So we get concrete and in-depth theological data all couched in a piece of Hebrew poetry. And poetry concerns itself with feelings. In fact, about 33% of the entire Bible is presented to us in poetry. To me, this means that God cares about our feelings. His word engages our feelings, expresses our feelings and in turn God communicates to us his own feelings. But while God acknowledges and allows for our feelings, we also understand, that in the end, our feelings are not the end all be all.

**SLIDE 13**

As we close today, I would like to read Psalm 139 in it’s entirety. I refer to this psalm as the “Onmi-Psalm” because it can basically be broken down into four sections. Verses 1-6 reflect God’s omniscience…he knows everything. Verses 7-12 explain God’s omnipresence…he is everywhere. Verses 13-18 speak about God’s omnipotence…he is all powerful. And finally, verses 19-24 focus on us, humanity, and how we are none of these things. And we are in need of this all knowing, ever present, and all powerful God. And I would like you to listen closely and take note of a few things. First, what is the psalmist feeling? What does he express and secondly, what do you feel as you hear these verses? Then, underneath these observations, we can land on the concrete truth about God that is revealed to us in these words. So take a pen and just jot down a few feelings as I read Psalm 139…(READ)

**SLIDE 14**

 A few thoughts on this psalm: God’s omniscience, his all-knowing nature includes everything about me! That feels unnerving, invasive. We are used to something called a right to privacy. But the focus of the psalm is not so much on the information that God knows, the dirt he has on each of us, but rather David expresses complete awe. God is beyond me! He is incomparable. The depth of his knowledge leads me to wonder and to worship. Similarly, God is present everywhere and yet the purpose and intent of his presence is in verse 10. He is there to lead us and to hold us. We read that God is light, God is the creator, and it strikes me as very strange that all these amazing things about God end in a feeling of hatred, what David calls a “perfect hatred.” But this feeling does not come from any malice toward his fellow man, but rather out of a loyalty to God. David is speaking here of people who “invoke You deceitfully” and “swear by You falsely.” This misuse of God’s name, this blasphemy makes them enemies of God, and David makes clear where his loyalty lies. Those who have made themselves enemies of God are also his enemies. He, and we, cannot be loyal to both sides.

**SLIDE 15**

 But to close out this psalm, David ends by inviting God into his innermost thoughts, but giving God permission. “Search me oh God…test me…See me…” David knows full well that God needs no permission, access is always granted, but yet he understands that God’s heart desires permission. This is the essence of being in relationship with another. To know and be known. We are not simply specimens that God studies, we are children that he loves. And we enter into that relationship with him when we respond by saying, “Since you know everything about me, search me…test me…”

 The psalm ends with this phrase, “Lead me in the everlasting way.” By asking God for this provision, David is fully admitting that, on his own, he does not know the way. He needs guidance, he needs insight from someone who knows it all. So despite how we might feel as readers, despite how David might feel as the author, despite how Thomas or Matthew feel about how their ministry is going, we are shown here what our proper response should be. “Search me God…and lead me.” Amen.