

Spiritual Activism - Bucking the System

One of the things I plan to do with the Foundation is to offer scholarships, but not to "straight-A" students; I intend to offer them to good people, at any level of the educational process, who are struggling.

Here's my Christ-centered inspiration & justification for doing so:

Matthew 9 (MSG)

¹ Back in the boat, Jesus and the disciples recrossed the sea to Jesus' hometown. ² They were hardly out of the boat when some men carried a paraplegic on a stretcher and set him down in front of them. Jesus, impressed by their bold belief, said to the paraplegic, "Cheer up, son. I forgive your sins." ³ Some religion scholars whispered, "Why, that's blasphemy!" ⁴ Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why this gossipy whispering? ⁵ Which do you think is simpler: to say, 'I forgive your sins,' or, 'Get up and walk'? ⁶ Well, just so it's clear that I'm the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both. . . ." At this he turned to the paraplegic and said, "Get up. Take your bed and go home." ⁷ And the man did it. ⁸ The crowd was awestruck, amazed and pleased that God had authorized Jesus to work among them this way.

[Jesus Meets Matthew]

⁹ Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, "Come along with me." Matthew stood up and followed him.

[Now Come the Downtrodden]

¹⁰ Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit, and lit into Jesus' followers [the Disciples]. "What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and riff-raff?"

[Now Here is God's Point for Jesus' Entire Ministry]

¹² Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? ¹³ Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders."

[Clarification for The Disciples (and for Us)]

¹⁴ A little later John's followers approached, asking, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees rigorously discipline body and spirit by fasting, but your followers don't?" ¹⁵ Jesus told them, "When you're celebrating a wedding, you don't skimp on the cake and wine. You feast. Later you may need to pull in your belt, but not now. No one throws cold water on a friendly bonfire. This is Kingdom Come!" ¹⁶ He went on, "No one cuts up a fine silk scarf to patch old work clothes; you want fabrics that match. ¹⁷ And you don't put your wine in cracked bottles."

[More Miracles]

¹⁸ As he finished saying this, a local official appeared, bowed politely, and said, "My daughter has just now died. If you come and touch her, she will live." ¹⁹ Jesus got up and went with him, his disciples following along. ²⁰ Just then a woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years slipped in from behind and lightly touched his robe. ²¹ She was thinking to herself, "If I can just put a finger on his robe, I'll get well." Jesus turned - caught her at it. Then he reassured her: "Courage, daughter. You took a risk of faith, and now you're well." ²² The woman was well from then on.

²³ By now they had arrived at the house of the town official, and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and the neighbors bringing in casseroles. ²⁴ Jesus was abrupt: "Clear out! This girl isn't dead. She's sleeping." They told him he didn't know what he was talking about. ²⁵ But when Jesus had gotten rid of the crowd, he went in, took the girl's hand, and pulled her to her feet - alive. ²⁶ The news was soon out, and traveled throughout the region.

²⁷ As Jesus left the house, he was followed by two blind men crying out, "Mercy, Son of David! Mercy on us!" ²⁸ When Jesus got home, the blind men went in with him. Jesus said to them, "Do you really believe I can do this?" They said, "Why, yes, Master!" ²⁹ He touched their eyes and said, "Become what you believe." ³⁰ It happened. They saw. Then Jesus became very stern. "Don't let a soul know how this happened." ³¹ But they were hardly out the door before they started blabbing it to everyone they met.

³² Right after that, as the blind men were leaving, a man who had been struck speechless by an evil spirit was brought to Jesus. ³³ As soon as Jesus threw the evil tormenting spirit out, the man talked away just as if he'd been talking all his life. The people were up on their feet applauding: "There's never been anything like this in Israel!"

[The Unbelieving Men of The Cloth Who Should be Ashamed of Themselves]

³⁴ The Pharisees were left sputtering, "Hocus pocus. It's nothing but hocus pocus. He's probably made a pact with the Devil."

[Jesus' Ministry Gains Momentum]

³⁵ Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. ³⁶ When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. ³⁷ "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! ³⁸ On your knees and pray for harvest hands!"

This may confound, defy and challenge conventional wisdom, but in my view, it's not the people who are already doing well in life who so desperately need our help; It's the ones with potential, but for whatever the reason(s) are having to struggle in order to press-forward in their lives who need it. This was once my story, and hence my empathy. So you can probably imagine my delight at studying this particular Chapter of Matthew.

I pray that you have an amazing day, and that you find many Scriptures that touch your heart & soul the way this one touches mine.

Blessings!!

- Jack