

MOTHER'S DAY

DATE: SUNDAY, 9TH OF MAY 2021 | MESSAGE FROM MATTHEW 23

PSALM 91:2-4

I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

JAMES 4:8

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

Flourish 2021 will be live-streamed on the 18th & 19th of June. We hope you will open your hearts and homes to your friends and host a Flourish watch party.

There is no cost to "attend"; however, if you're hosting a watch party, you need to register as a host at www.flourishwomensconference.co.za so that we can give you a host pack and all the details about our programme.

START TALKING

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. Share a "high-five" moment (something to celebrate) from the past week.

START THINKING

1. On Sunday, Jax shared about the fierce, strong and protective love that God has for us. How do you think people's lives would change if they knew the extent of God's love for them?
2. The Bible often uses metaphors to talk about God's relationship with us (e.g. in Matthew 23:37, Jesus uses the picture of a mother hen with her chicks). What is your favourite metaphor/word picture of God's relationship with us? And why?

START SHARING

1. Read Psalm 91:1-4. What stands out to you most from these verses? Which is the No 1 area in your life that you are looking to God for His shelter, encouragement or comfort?
2. On Sunday, Jax shared that God wants us to recognise and trust His voice? Can you think of a time recently when you felt God speaking to you? What has He been saying to you? How has He been guiding you?

START PRAYING

Father God, please forgive us for the times we have been motivated by our own agenda instead of Yours. Please forgive us for the ways in which we can outwardly be seen to 'doing the right thing', yet in reality, our hearts are far from You. Thank you that You are merciful and that because of Jesus, we can be assured of forgiveness. Please refresh us with Your Spirit so that we might more clearly orient our hearts and lives sincerely for Your glory. Amen.

START DOING

Jax said that when Jesus looks at our hearts, he wants to see a willingness to draw closer to Him. So let's examine our hearts this week and ask God where we need to take a step closer - whatever that means for each of us. Try something new...carve out some time, close the bedroom door and get down on your knees, go for a walk and speak to God.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Jax Wimble shared a message from Matthew 23. In this chapter, Jesus is having a go at all the religious leaders of the time. But we also see a picture of Jesus that not many other scriptures give us - a beautiful glimpse of His character and desire for a relationship with us.

Jesus starts by telling the crowd...

- ...not to do not do what they do, because they do not practice what they preach.
- ...that everything they do is done to impress others. To make themselves look good.
- ...they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues.

And then he calls them Hypocrites - strong words!

- ...You look good and polished and righteous on the outside, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.
- ...Blind guides! More worried about following rules, than what's going on in their hearts.
- ...You snakes, you brood of vipers.

Then suddenly, the whole tone of the chapter changes, and we catch a glimpse of not just the passion Jesus has for His people, but His longing for them, maybe even some of his heartache. In verse 37, He says: *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."*

He chooses to use the picture of a mother hen - a beautifully intimate, tender, and vulnerable picture. But there's also something fierce and sacrificial about in this picture because a mother hen puts her own body on the line to protect her chicks. Jesus chose this picture on purpose!

What can we learn about Jesus from this picture?

1. He wants to draw us close.

He doesn't want us just to do what He says and live a good life. He wants a close connection with us. When we draw close to Him, we experience His comfort and compassion.

- *"As a mother comforts her child, so will I [God] comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."* Isaiah 66:13
- *"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I [God] will not forget you!"* Isaiah 49:15.

The reason He uses a picture of a mother because mothers don't forget their children.

Compassion means recognising the suffering of others and then take action to help. It embodies a tangible expression of love for those who are suffering. We need compassion, and we need to ask God to help us be more compassionate towards others.

We live in a judgmental world that's low on compassion. In turn, we often expect judgment from Jesus - we don't want to draw close to Him because we don't understand that He leads in with compassion. But when we draw near to Him, we experience comfort, connection, and compassion.

2. He wants to protect us.

It's not all on us - having to fend for ourselves and fight for ourselves; take on every situation. The chicks are pretty helpless and vulnerable out on their own, but under their mother's wing, they're safe and protected.

The Bible says that God fights for us. For some of us, the enemy is saying things that are stopping us from walking into the things the Father has for us, but the Father wants to protect us: *I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.* Psalm 91:2-4.

3. He wants us to recognise and trust His voice.

24 hours before a chicken hatches, it starts to communicate with its mother. Once it's born, it already knows her voice and heeds her chirps of direction and warning.

Sometimes we're scared we're going to miss God, but He is a really big target. He wants to draw close to us, speak to us, comfort us and protect us.

God wants us to know His voice. Do we listen for His voice? Do we trust His guidance?

When we pause and listen, God meets us right there to speak to us and direct us. *Come near to God and he will come near to you.* James 4:8

What should our response be?

Our response to this beautiful picture is important. There is only one requirement for this: willingness. And it's clear in this verse: *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."* Matthew 23:37.

It's a really sad final sentence, "you were not willing". When Jesus looks at our hearts, he wants to see a willingness to draw closer. So let's take a step closer - whatever that means for each of us. Try something new...carve out some time, close the bedroom door and get down on your knees, go for a walk and speak to God.

Hear the longing in his voice in this picture. Our hearts cry should be "I don't want to be found unwilling".