

Introduction:

A. The other day I googled “Plans for World Domination.” It’s really none of your business why. Just curious, you know. I discovered that a lot of other people must be thinking about this too. One guy even posted his “Plot to Infiltrate the System.” I took some notes.

- Step #1 – Write books (check)
- Step #2 – Gain worldwide attention (check)
- Step #3 – TALK TO PEOPLE (in large #'s)
- Step #4 – Get ideas in schools
- Step #5 – Slowly increase # of subversive ideas

Other people’s plans run along these lines, too. It’s clear that along the way they expect lots of turmoil and some people might get hurt. But you know what they say: *if you’re going to make an omelet, you’ve got to break some eggs.*

B. One plan I ran into was completely different than the others. There’s nothing about it I’d have thought of myself. Completely counterintuitive! It was Jesus’ plan for world domination. It’s based on his rather gentle-sounding invitation in **Matt 11:28-30**, “*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.*” In our study of Matthew this summer we’ve seen that for several chapters **the emphasis has been on Jesus’ authority, and this is an expression of his authority—but such a counterintuitive one.** “*I am gentle and humble in heart,*” says the King of kings. “*My yoke is easy and my burden is light,*” says the Lord Jesus Christ.

- C. Let's backtrack just a little to **vv.25-26** where we find Jesus praying.

*At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because **you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.** Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do."*

The heavenly Father hides his kingdom strategy from the wise and learned and reveals it to "little children." He doesn't mean children in *age* but children in *spirit*. He means humble, teachable, and unnoticed disciples. But what does he mean? What's revealed?

- D. **V.27:** *"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."* So the things committed to Jesus by his Father are the things that will be revealed to "little children" type disciples. And what Jesus, the Son of God, will reveal to his little-children-disciples is Jesus' own knowledge of the Father. I thought we were going to hear a *plan*, a *strategy*. Not really. The Lord's strategy begins with Jesus making God the Father known to us.

I. THE REST FOR OUR SOULS THAT JESUS OFFERS US COMES FROM HIS REVELATION OF GOD THE FATHER TO US

- A. Jesus said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." He said, "I and the Father are one." He said that everything he said or did was at the Father's direction.
- B. Jesus is God in the flesh, but most people still don't really see the Father in him. The only way we can really know God is by being born again through Jesus. That is how *"the Son chooses to reveal him."*

- C. In turn, being reconciled to the heavenly Father and knowing him gives us rest for our souls. God's rest, his Sabbath, enters into us so that knowing and serving him is an easy yoke and a light burden in league with Jesus. Now our relationship with God means we have nothing to prove. No guilt to hide. His love, peace, joy, hope—all freely given to us all the time. We have become his beloved people. *“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

After that declaration, Matthew took us to two stories in Mt. 12 where Jesus is accused by the Pharisees of violating the Sabbath. When they accused Jesus' disciples of working on the Sabbath (which God forbade), even tho' they had merely plucked some grains of wheat to eat, Jesus said that God wants to show mercy, not to pile up sacrifices in order to satisfy him. Then, when they tried to trap him by asking if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, Jesus *did* heal the withered hand of a man, saying that it is lawful to do good on the Day of Rest, and showing that he had God's authority to heal, for Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. So...

II. TO LIVE IN GOD'S SABBATH REST REQUIRES JESUS' MERCY AND GOODNESS, WHICH WE, IN TURN, GIVE TO OTHERS.

- A. We have become a people of Sabbath people. Not because we take off a day a week, but because God's own rest is implanted in us through the Holy Spirit. We are a people who have found rest for our souls.

Look at what Matthew tells us next, in **vv. 14-16**, *“But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. He warned them not to tell others*

about him.” This is Jesus’ strategy for world domination played out in miniature, and it is a strange strategy indeed!

III. JESUS’ STRATEGY FOR WORLD DOMINATION DEMONSTRATED (12:14-16)

Notice three counterintuitive things:

- A. When the Pharisees plotted against him, Jesus withdrew. That’s unexpected because Jesus had the crowds on his side and the Pharisees were afraid of the crowds, as we learn elsewhere.
- B. The key thing that stands out about Jesus’ time with this large crowd was that *“he healed all who were ill.”* That’s a great kindness, of course, but what’s his end game. What is Jesus up to?
- C. Then this strange command: *“He warned them not to tell others about him.”* Why? It wasn’t like there were people around who didn’t know. Jesus wasn’t really a secret any longer. Besides, wouldn’t more people knowing his good deeds be good protection? Again, what is his end game?

Next Matthew explains, *“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah.”* So Jesus’ seemingly strange strategy actually fulfilled a key Old Testament prophecy? Yes, it has been God’s plan all along. Is. 42:1-4 is one of four passages in Isaiah describing the coming Messiah as God’s Servant. We call those four passages the Servant Songs. But Matthew uses it here to decode Jesus’ counterintuitive strategy for us, to tell us what Jesus’ end game is.

IV. THE LORD’S COUNTERINTUITIVE STRATEGY WILL RESULT IN THE VICTORY OF JUSTICE FOR ALL PEOPLES

Let’s look at this prophecy which cracks the code of the Lord’s strategy.

- A. First, let’s be sure we know the role that Jesus fulfills here. V.18,

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.”

Remember what happened when Jesus was baptized.

Matthew told us in **3:16-17**:

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

So God the Father made clear right from the beginning that Jesus was his chosen Servant, as Isaiah had promised.

B. Notice his assignment: “**he will proclaim justice to the nations.**” When we look at our world, we cannot imagine how things will ever be set right. Everything we know is tangled in a strangle hold of injustice. But God’s Messiah “*will proclaim justice.*” That means he will declare how justice will be accomplished in the end, and it comes down to this:

1. “All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory;” i.e. because of our sin no one has a pass to heaven.
2. “All who call upon the name of the Lord for salvation will be saved” and welcomed into God’s good graces now and forever, because Jesus died in our place. That is God’s just solution to our sin.
3. All who do *not* seek salvation in Christ will be judged and condemned, for they have ignored God’s gracious offer.

That is the justice that God’s Servant, the Messiah, came to proclaim.

C. Isaiah said “**he will proclaim justice to the nations,**” i.e., the Gentiles of the world. That, too, is a stunning strategy,

because at least some Jews were responsive to Jesus, but Gentiles knew nothing of God’s Messiah, had *no* faith at all, and had no inclination to seek him. In other words, the nations are incredibly unlikely candidates to welcome God’s message of justice—either of salvation or judgment. Yet, that is the strategy because “*God loved **the world** so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*”

- D. So how will Jesus, God’s Servant, get the world’s attention? Here’s where things really *are* counterintuitive! **First**, according to **v.19**, “*He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.*” When the Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus “*he withdrew.*” He didn’t have to, of course. How does that make sense!?! **In the face of intense unbelief and rejection, how is Christ to make his case to the world if he doesn’t raise his voice?** The sense here is that he won’t blow his own horn. No bombast. No bellicose belligerence. No incendiary speeches stirring up his followers. That is what is behind Jesus’ instruction that the people he healed were not tell others. They’d do what they wanted, of course, but no one could ever say that Jesus was a self-promoter! But how can he “*proclaim justice to the nations*” if he won’t ever raise his voice?

Secondly, v.20 says, “*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.*” Remember the adage, “*You can’t make an omelet if you’re not willing to break some eggs.*” Not true for Jesus. Isaiah was speaking of people, of course—not reeds and wicks. He isn’t simply saying that weak people won’t get hurt, but that they will be the Messiah’s chief concern—the focus of his attention. Jesus fulfilled that in the way he healed all the sick who came to him. We are living in the era where Jesus

is still walking among the bent and nearly-extinguished people, healing and welcoming them--us.

We've been hearing all about these people throughout Matthew. Mt. 9:35-36 says, "*When [Jesus] saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*" Bruised reeds and smoldering wicks. Jesus revealed the Father, not to the wise and learned but to "*little children-like disciples.*" Bruised reeds and smoldering wicks. Jesus' invitation in **11:28** was, "*Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" He told the Pharisees that the Sabbath is to be characterized by mercy instead of crushing sacrifices and healing for those whose souls are withered. "*Bruised reeds and smoldering wicks*"

Do you remember how Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount in Matt.5? "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*" Those words and the rest of the Beatitudes are also describing those "*who are weary and burdened*" but who come to Jesus. **The blessing Jesus offered them was rest for their souls**—the kingdom of heaven, the comfort of God, inheriting the earth, filled with righteousness. They wouldn't be snapped off or snuffed out. Instead, they will be blessed!

- E. **V.20c-21**, "*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.*" Through the most counterintuitive of strategies—keeping his voice down and investing in broken people—Jesus is on a mission to bring "*justice through to victory.*" Justice takes time but it will

come out with the high hand of the victor. Victory is when all whom God has called, no matter how broken, find rest for their souls through Jesus, becoming a nation of Sabbath people—people who are characterized by their peace with God the Father.

- F. That is why, “In his name the nations”—yes, we seemingly hopeless Gentiles—“*will put their hope.*” It isn’t God’s great desire to judge the wicked (tho’ he will). His loving desire is to reach throughout all the neighborhoods and nations of the world with the good news of Jesus so that they can rest all their hopes on him.

Conclusion

That is Jesus’ counterintuitive strategy for bringing hope to the world. So what are your takeaways?

- If you fit these categories: harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, weary and burdened, then accept Jesus’ offer of rest for your souls. Come to him like a little child to their loving Father.
- For those of us who have welcomed Christ’s rest, live in that rest. When your soul becomes downcast and unsettled, return to Jesus and the Father.
- One more thing, as Jesus’ people, do as Jesus does—move among broken people with his mercy and goodness. He will speak, even if you don’t hear him raise his voice or argue people into his kingdom.

Do you know where that will get you? Rev. 7:9-17...