MATTHEW

Matthew
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew was a disciple of Jesus. His other name was Levi. Jesus called him from his tax office, and changed him from a public sinner and outcast into Saint Matthew, a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the theme of this book--as well as the major theme of Jesus' preaching. Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy that introduces Jesus as the King, a descendant of Abraham and of King David. In chapter two, the visit of the mysterious Magi reinforces and universalizes his kingship. Jesus is the promised Messiah. His birth, his life, and his ministry fulfill Old Testament prophecy. Matthew may have had Jewish readers in mind when he wrote, but his Gospel proclaims Jesus to be the universal King and Savior.

This book contains five blocks of teachings, each identified by the concluding phrase, "When Jesus had finished saying these things..." [chapters 5-7;10; 13;18;24-25]. These teachings are directed primarily toward his disciples. The most famous of these teachings is the Sermon on the Mount (5-7). This has been called the "Constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven." The flow of events in this gospel is the same as that of Mark's Gospel and similar to that of Luke. For this reason, these three Gospels are called the “Synoptic Gospels.” As we study Matthew, may we welcome Jesus as our King and build our lives on the Rock by hearing and obeying Jesus' words.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Matthew 1:1-17

Key Verse: 1:1,17

1. Jesus Christ, son of David and Abraham (1-6,17)

This genealogy divides Israel's history into 3 periods: From Abraham to David; from David to the exile; from the exile to Jesus. It is the genealogy of King Jesus. In Jesus, God fulfilled his promise to David to establish his kingdom forever, and his promise to Abraham to bless all people through his offspring. From the time of the exile, the low point of Israel's history, people longed for the promised Messiah.

2. The women (3,5,6,16)

There are 5 women in this genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Uriah's wife, and Mary. Each of them reveals one facet of God's amazing grace and each has a special kind of faith. Tamar overcame a fatalistic life problem; Rahab, a prostitute, and Ruth, a Moabite, were Gentiles. Bathsheba was a woman who needed God's forgiveness, and Mary was an unmarried virgin who was given grace to be the mother of God's Son.

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand in your redemptive history by faith.

One Word: God of grace; God of history

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Matthew 1:18-25

Key Verse: 1:21

1. Joseph's dilemma (18-19)

Joseph loved God and did his best to keep God's laws. He was engaged to Mary, a beautiful and pure woman. Though they were engaged, they honored God and each other by having no intimate relations before marriage. Then, Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant. He thought she had been unfaithful to him; he could not marry an unfaithful woman. He was angry and hurt, but he did not want to expose her to public disgrace. So he decided to break up quietly.

2. Immanuel Jesus (20-25)

God sent his angel to help Joseph. Mary's Son was God's Son. His name was Jesus, "The Lord saves," for he would save his people from their sins. This baby fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. He would be born of a virgin. He would be Immanuel, "God with us." God was coming to dwell with sinners to save us from our sins. Joseph overcame his feelings and obeyed by faith. He took Mary home as his wife, but he had no union with her until after Jesus was born.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the obedient faith of Joseph. Thank you for Immanuel Jesus, my Savior.

One Word: Immanuel

WHERE IS THE KING?

Matthew 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:2

1. We have come to worship him (1-2)

God alone is worthy of man's worship. The Magi were scholars who were searching for truth. They were searching for God. They studied the stars and the Old Testament. God showed them the star of the promised Messiah (Nu 24:17a), and they boldly set out on a long, hard, dangerous journey to find the one worthy of worship. They were not seeking material gain; rather, they wanted to give their treasures to the King of kings. Life has meaning only when we know and worship the one worthy of our worship.

2. They were overjoyed (3-12)

The Magi lost sight of the star. They were sure that the new king would be in the palace--but they were wrong! Herod tried to use them for his own evil purpose, but God protected them. When they left Herod, they saw the star again and were overjoyed. The star led them to the baby. They worshiped him and joyfully went home another way. May God raise up a few truth-seekers in our time.

Prayer: Lord, help me to follow your star until I know you personally and can lay my treasures at your feet.

One Word: Worship the King

GOD PROTECTS HIS SON

Matthew 2:13-23

Key Verse: 2:13

1. Take the child to Egypt (13-18)

God was at work in the most evil of times. An angel warned Joseph to go to Egypt. He got up in the middle of the night and did so. His obedience came from his faith. God used him to protect Mary and Jesus. The family stayed in Egypt until Herod died, thus fulfilling a prophecy hidden in Hosea 11:1. God was in control, working through faithful men. But the devil was also pouring out his rage through Herod's evil action. The mothers of Bethlehem wept for their babies, fulfilling another prophecy (Jer 31:15).

2. Go to the land of Israel (14-23)

After Herod died, the Lord told Joseph to go back to Israel. Again, he did so. They went to Galilee, to the town of Nazareth, where the angel had first appeared to Mary–and to Joseph. There they raised Jesus. He was a Nazarene from Nazareth and another prophetic saying was fulfilled.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for quietly working out your purposes in the worst of times. Help me to be an obedient instrument of your work as Joseph was.

One Word: God works through obedient men

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

Matthew 3:1-12

Key Verse: 3:2

1. Repent, for the kingdom is near (1-6)

In "those days" Rome ruled the world and the evil King Herod ruled Judea. The good news was "the kingdom of heaven is near." John prepared the way for the king, Jesus, by calling people to repent. His life and ministry fulfilled scripture (Isa 40). People are miserable, not because they live in an unjust society, but because of the burden of sin. So, many people came to repent and be baptized.

2. Bear the fruit of repentance (7-10)

The Pharisees came because everyone was coming. They were proud because they thought they were special. But neither pedigree nor past achievements can save a sinner from God's wrath. God wants to see the fruit of repentance--a changed heart and life. The true children of Abraham are those who have the faith of Abraham.

3. Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (11-12)

Jesus takes away our sins and gives us his Spirit. He will come again as Judge.

Prayer: Lord, help me to repent and bear fruit of repentance.

One Word: Repent and bear fruit

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Matthew 3:13-17

Key Verse: 3:15

1. To fulfill all righteousness (13-15)

Jesus came to be baptized by John. From a human point of view, Jesus should have baptized John. But Jesus had a sense of history. He did not come to "do his own thing." He came to fulfill God's promises and accomplish God's redemptive work. John was his forerunner in God's history, so he asked John to baptize him. The gospel is God's gospel; Jesus was God's Servant.

2. With him I am well pleased (16-17)

Jesus was the Son of God. He had come to do his Father's will. God loved his Son. He also loved helpless, sinful mankind, so he sent his Son to die for the sins of the world. At his baptism, he accepted his Messianic mission and God was pleased. God poured out his Spirit on Jesus. The Spirit of God empowers God's servants to do God's work. God is pleased when his children take up the mission he gives them to do.

Prayer: Lord, help me to find my small place in your history and obey your will for my life by doing the work you give me.

One Word: To please our Father

MAN DOES NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE

Matthew 4:1-4

Key Verse: 4:4

1. Temptation in the desert (1-3)

Just after accepting his mission and hearing God's declaration of love and approval, Jesus was tempted by the devil. God led him to meet his adversary, because he needed hard training before he began his work. This was the first of many attempts Satan would make. This first temptation was on the physical level. Jesus had not eaten for 40 days, and he was hungry. The tempter asked him to prove his Sonship by making bread from the stones. This sounds reasonable. Why should one starve when he can make bread so easily? God gave him the power; why not use it in an emergency?

2. "It is written..." (4)

Jesus' answer came from the Bible (Dt 8:3). Man must not live as a slave to physical desire. He cannot depend on his feelings and reason. He must live by God's word. This is the way of truth and life. God's children must listen to God and never listen to Satan.

Prayer: Lord, plant your word in my heart, and teach me to follow it so that I may defeat the tempter.

One Word: Obey God, not Satan

WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND HIM ONLY

Matthew 4:5-11

Key Verse: 4:10

1. Do not put the Lord to the test (5-7)

The devil took Jesus up to the top of the temple, the only sky-scraper around, and challenged him to jump off. "You'll be okay. After all, you're God's Son--aren't you? Anyway, the Bible says that God's angels will save you." He was testing Jesus' personal faith in God's power and in God's love. He cleverly interpreted the Bible in his own way. But Jesus was not fooled. He answered with God's word (Dt 6:16). We should not listen to Satan even when he quotes scripture. The Bible should not be manipulated to fit anyone's ideas. We must study to find out what the author is saying.

2. Worship the Lord your God (8-11)

Satan's final temptation offered Jesus a quick, easy way to accomplish his mission. One bow to Satan, one small compromise, and the kingdoms of the world would be his! He could become a king without the cross. But Jesus was not fooled. Look at his unequivocal answer (Dt 6:13).

Prayer: Lord, I trust your love and believe your power. Help me to follow your word without compromise.

One Word: Worship God and serve him alone

A LIGHT DAWNS IN THE DARK NIGHT

Matthew 4:12-17

Key Verse: 4:16,17

1. Jesus begins his work (12-16)

John's arrest reveals the darkness of the times. Herod the king lived in sin and oppressed the people. Nazareth did not welcome Jesus, and so he moved to Capernaum, which was to be the center of his Galilean ministry. Thus he began to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy. Galilee was a backward area. Its people had suffered from numerous foreign invasions. Jesus taught God's word and cast out demons and healed the sick. He was a great light who shined on those living in the land of the shadow of death.

2. Repent (17)

John had preached this same message. This was why he had been arrested. But this call to repentance is God's grace and love for those living in darkness and gloom. When we receive Jesus' word and repent, his great light shines into our souls.

Prayer: Lord, give me a repentant heart so that I may not be a prisoner of the darkness of my sins or a prisoner of these times. Let the light of your salvation shine from my life.

One Word: Repent and let the light in

JESUS CALLS DISCIPLES

Matthew 4:18-22

Key Verse: 4:19

1. Simon Peter and Andrew (18)

When Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and Andrew casting a net into the lake. Perhaps they had been disciples of John the Baptist before his arrest (Jn 1:35-42). They were

hard-working fishermen, but they had no mission from God. They worked to survive in a hard world.

2. Come, follow me (19)

Jesus called them to follow him. It was an invitation to become his disciples. He would train them until they became fishers of men. It was an invitation to leave a selfish, family-centered life and share in Jesus' life and mission. Fishing fish was for themselves; fishing men was for God and others.

3. They left their nets and followed (20-22)

They heard Jesus' call and made a decision to leave their nets and follow him. James and John were working with their father when Jesus called them. They left their boats, nets and father and followed.

Prayer: Lord, help me to follow Jesus until I can be a fisher of men and a fruitful servant.

One Word: I will make you fishers of men

JESUS HEALS THE SICK

Matthew 4:23-25

Key Verse: 4:23

1. Jesus preaches the good news (23)

Jesus focused his attention on training his disciples; his schoolroom was the dusty roads and small villages of Galilee. He preached the good news of the kingdom of heaven to all the sinsick and physically sick people whom he met as he traveled. His healing touch was good news. God's love for these poor, oppressed people, forgotten by the worldly rulers, was good news.

2. Crowds of people came to Jesus (24-25)

The good news of God's love and his power to save anyone with any problem spread. So crowds of miserable people with all kinds of problems came to Jesus. They came from all parts of Palestine and Syria. Each one who met Jesus went away full of joy, wholeness and peace. Many were set free from the bondage and power of Satan.

Prayer: Lord, let the good news of the kingdom fill my heart and life and be on my lips. Teach my hands and feet to move in a way that reveals your love.

One Word: Jesus' coming is good news

THE BLESSED LIFE

Matthew 5:1-4

Key Verse: 5:3

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit (1-3)

The multitudes of suffering people needed shepherds like Jesus. When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside with his disciples and began to teach them. He taught them the Sermon on the Mount--the "Constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5-7). Matthew 5:1-10 are the Beatitudes. The Sermon on the Mount is a description of Jesus' own character and his personal life principles. The poor in spirit are those who know their spiritual poverty and are eager to learn. They know that they need Jesus' Spirit. The kingdom of heaven is promised to disciples like these.

2. Blessed are those who mourn (4)

Those who know the taste of sorrow can also know the joy of God's comfort. Those who have never been sorry for their sins or repented of the things that make God sorry can never know the depth of God's love and comfort.

Prayer: Lord, I need your Spirit. Give me a compassionate heart like yours so that I may share in your suffering and share in your comfort and joy.

One Word: For theirs is the kingdom

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

Matthew 5:5-6

Key Verse: 5:5,6

1. Blessed are the meek (5)

The bold and aggressive seem more likely to take over the earth; but Jesus promises that the meek will inherit it. Who are the meek? Jesus was meek (Mt 11:29 KJV). Moses was meek (Nu 12:3 RSV). Meek people are humble. They do not use their power for themselves; they do not use strength to exploit or crush others; they use it to serve. Those who have the mind of Jesus are truly meek. They will be entrusted with the stewardship of the world.

2. Those who hunger for righteousness (6)

Jesus promises those who hunger and thirst for righteousness that they will be satisfied. In a world full of people who lust for power and pleasure, who talk about gourmet food and are full of physical desire, it is not easy to give spiritual desire priority. But those who have spiritual desire will be satisfied. On the other hand, those whose physical desires control them will always be dissatisfied.

Prayer: Lord, teach me your meekness; clothe me in your righteousness.

One Word: Blessed are the meek

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

Matthew 5:7-9

Key Verse: 5:8

1. Blessed are the merciful (7)

All of us need mercy, for all of us are sinners. How can we ask God's mercy and refuse to show mercy to others? How can we ask God's forgiveness and hold a grudge against some person in our hearts?

2. Blessed are the pure in heart (8)

Jesus promises the pure in heart that they will see God. We are not naturally pure in heart, so we need forgiveness. When we are cleansed by Jesus' blood, we are pure in heart (1Jn 1:7). Then we can draw near to God. We can know his love and have his peace.

3. Blessed are the peacemakers (9)

The world's peace is based on compromise. Jesus' peace is based on unconditional love; Jesus died to give us peace with God. The gospel brings peace, so gospel workers are the real peacemakers. We must make peace, not war in the world.

Prayer: Lord, purify my heart and life through Jesus' blood, so that I may walk with you and share your gospel with others.

One Word: Blessed are the pure in heart

THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF JESUS

Matthew 5:10-12

Key Verse: 5:10

1. Blessed are the persecuted (10)

The kingdom of heaven is promised to two kinds of people: to those who know their spiritual poverty and to those who are persecuted because of righteousness. It is not easy to stand on Jesus' side in a world that hates truth and righteousness. It is not easy to be faithful to Jesus to the end. But the reward for doing so is very great--it is the kingdom of heaven. One who has the kingdom has everything.

2. Rejoice and be glad (11-12)

No one enjoys suffering. But Jesus says that we should rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted for his sake. Why? Because our reward in heaven will be great (12). We stand in God's redemptive history with great servants of God like Moses, Elijah and Isaiah. Meaninglessness is a sickness of our times. When we find our small place in God's history and faithfully stand there, we find the meaning of our lives.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful to you to the end and receive your promised crown of life.

One Word: Rejoice to suffer with Jesus

SALT AND LIGHT

Matthew 5:13-16

Key Verse: 5:13,14

1. You are the salt of the earth (13)

Jesus' disciples must be salty. Salt preserves and prevents corruption; it makes tasteless food tasty. Salty Christians are those who do not compromise with the world or accept its standards. They may be laughed at, and/or persecuted, but their influence is felt. Those who lose their saltiness by compromising with the values and morals of society are worse than useless.

2. You are the light of the world (14-16)

God wants his people to shine the light of his truth and love into the world. Our Puritan forefathers wanted America to be an exemplary Christian nation, like a city on a hill, giving God's light to the whole world. May God fulfill in this land the original purpose of our forefathers. When we obey God's word, and do good deeds for his glory, his light shines from our lives. This brings honor to our Father in heaven.

Prayer: Lord, remove our inner corruption and make America like a city on a hill that gives the light of God's love and salvation to all the people of the world.

One Word: Be salt and light

JESUS FULFILLS THE LAW

Matthew 5:17-20

Key Verse: 5:17

1. I have not come to abolish the Law (17-18)

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He believed the Bible and lived by it. The Old Testament points to him. Without Jesus, the Old Testament is a story without a climax, a book without a point. His life as the suffering servant fulfills the words of the prophets (Isa 53). Jesus, Messiah and King, fulfills the promises made to Abraham and David and reiterated by the prophets. His sacrifice on the cross as the Lamb of God and his glorious resurrection give the sacrificial system (part of the Law) meaning. He taught us to love God and to love each other--and he showed us how to do it by his example.

2. You must be better than the Pharisees (19-20)

The Pharisees studied the Bible and thought they lived righteous lives. But Bible study must lead men to repent and come to God. It leads us to Jesus. The Pharisees did not repent and they did not come to God. They rejected Jesus. They lived before men and became self-righteous and proud.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live by your word and come to you with a repentant heart.

One Word: Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets

DO NOT MURDER

Matthew 5:21-26

Key Verse: 5:22a

1. Do not murder (21-22)

Human life is precious because man is created in God's image. Giving and taking life is something that only God has the right to do, for life belongs to him. Here, Jesus teaches that "Do not murder" touches the thoughts of our hearts. It means that we must not hate others or hold grudges. To give way to anger is like murder. And if we let our anger erupt in harsh and insulting words, we are in danger of going to hell.

2. Be reconciled (23-26)

Not only am I responsible for my own feelings toward my brother, but I am responsible also for his feelings toward me. If, while I am offering a gift to God, I remember that my brother has something against me, I must first go and do all I can to be reconciled with him. Even in worldly relationships, it is wise to be reconciled with anyone who is an adversary. How much more important it is to be reconciled to God!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus whose shed blood reconciles me to you. Cleanse anger and self-pity from my heart and give me faith to be reconciled to all others.

One Word: First be reconciled

DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

Matthew 5:27-32

Key Verse: 5:27,28

1. Sexual immorality (27-30)

God made sex for a good purpose--to create a fruitful and blessed union between a man and a woman. Sex outside of marriage is sin; lustful thoughts, sexual fantasies and pornography corrupt the heart and corrupt society. If gouging out an eye could uproot lust from the heart, then we should do it, for it is better to lose an eye than to go to hell. But surgery on our body parts does not solve our sin problem. Only Jesus' gospel applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit can set us free from sin and make us pure.

2. Divorce (31-32)

Jesus teaches that divorce only sets the stage for adultery. God said, "I hate divorce" (Mal 2:16a). Divorce is not an option for believers; but in a sinful world, divorce happens. Those who divorce and remarry must receive God's forgiveness and live by God's grace as forgiven sinners.

Prayer: Lord, I am too weak to overcome temptations around and within me. Wash me, Lord Jesus, and make me pure.

One Word: Avoid sexual immorality

DON'T SWEAR

Matthew 5:33-37

Key Verse: 5:37

1. Keep your vow to the Lord (33)

To make a vow or oath to God is a serious matter, so one should not make such a vow in pride or passion. Once Jephthah made a foolish vow (Jdg 11); in order to keep it, he had to sacrifice his daughter. He should not have made such a vow and perhaps he should not have kept it. Once King Saul made a vow which he did not keep. It cost him greatly (1Sa 14:24-46). Some vows should be made. Marriage vows should be made before God and kept with God's help. God swore by himself to keep his covenant with Abraham (Ge 22). God keeps the new covenant made with every believer, for it is sealed in Jesus' blood.

2. Don't swear at all (34-37)

When Jesus says, "Don't swear at all," he is saying, "Don't swear to affirm the truthfulness of what you are saying." God's people should always tell the truth, so we have no need to swear.

We have no power to keep rash vows. Jesus reminds us that we cannot make even one hair black or white. When we say "Yes" we should mean it; when we say "No" we should mean it.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be truthful and sincere.

One Word: Tell the truth

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Matthew 5:38-48

Key Verse 5:44

1. Turn the other cheek (38-42)

The Old Testament Law brought justice into a chaotic slave society. However, Jesus' disciples are called to live by the higher law of love. When another person perpetrates an injustice on us, our first reaction is to pay him back--get even. But Jesus says, "turn the other cheek." This is what Jesus himself did. But only Jesus' grace and his cleansing blood can remove our rising tide of anger and replace it with the patience and love that overcomes evil.

2. Be perfect (43-48)

Sometimes we can love those who love us; and we can even love rebellious sheep. But Jesus says, "Love your enemies...pray for those who persecute you." This is what Jesus did on the cross. He wants us to grow in his image. His standard is high--"be perfect!" So we need his gospel. We need his forgiveness. We need Jesus dwelling in us. He alone can take our anger and bitterness and replace it with his love.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart like yours.

One Word: Love enemies as well as friends

THE SECRET LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

Matthew 6:1-4

Key Verse: 6:1

1. Giving (1-2)

Giving to the needy is called an act of righteousness. It is something that we should do. God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others; he gives to us freely so that we can give to others freely. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Ac 20:35b).

2. The Father's reward (3-4)

The Pharisees made a great show of giving alms. They wanted everyone to see how sacrificial and pious they were. Jesus said that if one gives to the needy from such motives he has no reward from God. We must give to others as though we are giving to Jesus. To "not let your left hand know what the right hand is doing" means that our giving should be for God's eyes alone. Furthermore, it should have no strings attached. We should not expect praise or even thanks. When we give before God, then our Father who sees all secrets will reward us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be generous in giving and to give before your eyes alone.

One Word: Give in secret to please God only

PRAY IN SECRET

Matthew 6:5-8

Key Verse: 6:6

1. Do not pray like the hypocrites (5)

The Pharisees liked to be seen dressed in their long robes, standing in the synagogue praying long prayers with many pious words. They wanted everyone to see that they were devout. Even pagans babble prayers. Pagans are people who don't worship God; they worship themselves and act and react according to the opinions (real or imagined) of other people. The reward they receive is worthless. People's opinions are as changeable as the Chicago weather.

2. Pray to your Father who is unseen (6-8)

Jesus taught us that God is our heavenly Father. He loves us and he wants us to spend time talking with him. So, even though we sometimes pray with others or pray a representative prayer in the worship service, we must also make time to be alone with God. He already knows what we need, but he wants us to come and ask him--and thank him when he answers. Prayer is like spiritual breathing. It is necessary to spiritual life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to give priority to personal prayer time.

One Word: Pray to your Father--he knows

THE LORD'S PRAYER (I)

Matthew 6:9-10

Key Verse: 6:10

1. Our Father in heaven (9)

When we pray we must come to God like children come to their Father. God is not an impersonal force. He created us in his own image. He made us for a good purpose. We come, knowing that he loves us. Our first prayer topic is "hallowed be your name." God is greater than any human father. He is the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth. We must come to him with deep humility and awesome respect.

2. Your kingdom come (10)

First, we must pray for God's kingdom to come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We pray for what God wants most--the restoration of creation order in a world that is in rebellion against its Creator. When God's rule is restored in the heart of a sinner, his kingdom comes there. When Jesus comes again in glory, all things will be restored. When God rules, mankind is happy.

Prayer: Father, bless and use the preaching of your gospel to bring your kingdom to the hearts of people everywhere. May your will be done in and through me.

One Word: Your will, not mine, be done

THE LORD'S PRAYER (II)

Matthew 6:11-15

Key Verse: 6:14

1. Give us today our daily bread (11)

We depend on God for our basic needs. God knows what we need before we ask, but he wants us to ask him for our daily bread anyway. He wants us to remember that all things come from him. He wants us to be full of thankfulness, not full of complaints. He wants us to come and ask him every day. (See Ex 16:15-31.) He does not want us to be selfish in our asking, so we must pray for "our" daily bread.

2. Forgive us our debts (12-15)

Our bodies need food to survive; our souls need forgiveness. Forgiveness of sin is God's gracious gift. We were all born with sinful natures. We commit sins intentionally and unintentionally every day. The wages of sin is death. Jesus came and died on the cross to purchase our pardon. If we do not forgive others, there can be no room in our hearts for God's forgiveness. And we need our Good Shepherd to deliver us from the evil one and lead us in paths of righteousness every day.

Prayer: Father, thank you for giving me all I need today. Forgive my sins and deliver me from the evil one.

One Word: Daily bread and forgiveness

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE IN SECRET

Matthew 6:16-18

Key Verse: 6:18

1. Fasting (16-17)

Fasting is not very popular. But Jesus sometimes fasted, and he recommends it to us as spiritual discipline. The Pharisees fasted regularly. They made sure that everyone knew they were fasting. Their reward was people's praise. We should desire to please God, not to impress people. Fasting should be done to help us concentrate in prayer. Perhaps fasting is a way to challenge pleasure-seeking lifestyles, as well as our inclinations to avoid all suffering.

2. Our Father sees in secret (18)

All such spiritual discipline should be done for God's eyes alone. "Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." This idea is repeated three times in this chapter. God, who was concerned about the imaginations of men's hearts in Genesis 6, still cares about what we do in secret. He wants us to reserve a place in our lives for him alone.

Prayer: Lord, help me to maintain spiritual discipline for your eyes alone.

One Word: Seek rewards from God

NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS

Matthew 6:19-24

Key Verse: 6:24

1. Where is your treasure? (19-23)

Treasures on earth cannot last forever: Cars break down; clothes get old or out of style; houses become a burden; money loses its value; people disappoint us. More importantly, if our treasures are in heaven, our hearts are turned to God. If our treasures are on earth, our hearts are earth-bound. If our treasures are in heaven, then we can have spiritual eyes to see people and the world from God's point of view. If our hearts are fixed on the things of the world, we are spiritually blind.

2. You cannot serve God and money (24)

The Pharisees thought that they could have the peace that comes from God and also enjoy the world. They did not seek to please God--they only wanted benefits from him. Jesus said that no one can love God and money at the same time. We must choose between them. If we love and serve God, we can rule money. If we love money, it rules us, and we cannot serve God.

Prayer: Lord, give me eyes to see people and things from your point of view and help me to give you first place in my heart.

One Word: Love God, not money

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

Matthew 6:25-34

Key Verse: 6:33

1. Do not worry about your life (25-32)

Our most basic instinct is for survival. We want to live. We must have food, clothes and shelter if we are to live and not die. But the life God gave us has meaning and purpose beyond just being physically sustained. Godless people run after money, food and clothes. But Jesus tells his disciples not to be anxious about these things. Why? First, worrying doesn't solve any problems. No one can add a single hour to his life by worrying. Second, our Father God who created us knows what we need (6:8). He cares for those who put their trust in him. Faith in God and anxiety about life cannot co-exist in the same heart.

2. Seek first God's kingdom (33-34)

God created mankind for mission, not for food and clothes. The self-seeking life can only be miserable. When we seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, then he supplies our real needs and gives us eternal life. We do not need to worry about tomorrow; we must do our best to serve God today.

Prayer: Lord, help me to seek first your kingdom and your righteousness.

One Word: Seek God's kingdom first

DON'T JUDGE OTHERS

Matthew 7:1-6

Key Verse: 7:1

1. Take the plank out of your own eye (1-5)

Only God is the righteous judge. We are always blinded by our own sinful natures; so Jesus says, "Don't judge others." When we study the Bible, we begin to learn the difference between right and wrong. Our first tendency is to apply God's standards to others and become very critical of their failures. But God's word teaches us what sin is so that we ourselves can repent and be forgiven and cleansed by him. The speck in my brother's eye may need removing, but I can't see how to help him until the plank has been removed from my own eye.

2. Don't give dogs what is sacred (6)

This seems almost a contradiction to Jesus' admonition not to judge others. (Who is a dog or a pig?) But it is not a contradiction--it is a counterweight. We need spiritual discernment so that we can give our love and lives to God and to others in ways that will produce fruit for God.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me of my critical spirit. Help me to be strict with myself and generous toward others.

One Word: Don't judge; repent

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

Matthew 7:7-12

Key Verse: 7:7

1. Don't give up--pray (7-8)

Sometimes we are judgmental or critical of others because we are competitive or envious. But we don't need to struggle with people; we must struggle with God in prayer. We must ask our Father God for what we need. James 4:2b-3 says that we do not have because we do not ask God, and we do not receive because we ask with wrong motives.

2. God gives good gifts (9-12)

Even sinful people love their children and want to give them good gifts. How much more does our loving heavenly Father want to give us the very best gifts. Luke 11 says that the best gift God can give us is his Holy Spirit. God wants us to ask him for his good gifts because he wants us to know him and love him and depend on him. When we receive God's good gifts, we can be generous with others.

Prayer: Father, teach me how to pray persistently, until I know you better and love you more and walk with you every day. Give me your Holy Spirit.

One Word: Ask, seek, knock

THE WAY THAT LEADS TO LIFE

Matthew 7:13-23

Key Verse: 7:14

1. The narrow way (13-14)

There are only two directions our lives may take: The wide gate, through which the majority of people pass, opens to the broad way that leads to destruction. The small gate opens onto the narrow way. People must go through this gate and travel this path single-file. It is not a popular way, but it leads to life.

2. A tree and its fruit (15-23)

There seems to be a whole forest of good and bad trees, but actually, there is only one good tree--Jesus. When we are attached to him, we bear good fruit. When we are attached to any other tree, we produce bad fruit. False prophets seem to be good. They look gentle and kind and seem to be understanding. Some call themselves humanists or altruists. But they are ferocious wolves because they lead people to destruction. The fruit they produce is no good in the long-run. These trees will all be cut down and burned on the day of judgment.

Prayer: Lord, help me to walk the narrow way with joy and confidence, and bear good fruit.

One Word: Walk the way that leads to life

THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

Matthew 7:24-29

Key Verse: 7:24

1. The house on the rock (24-25)

Each of the two men in this parable built a house. One man, however, was wise. He chose a strong foundation of rock on which to build. So when the torrents and floods came, his house stood. The person who studies the Bible from his heart and obeys God's word is like the wise man. He will stand in the storms of life.

2. The house on the sand (26-29)

The second man built his house on a very unstable foundation. Perhaps he followed his own reason; or perhaps he was faithful to his own feelings and conscience; or perhaps he did what everyone else was doing. In any case, he was foolish, because such foundations cannot survive the storms of life. When the storm came, his well-built house collapsed. We must not only study the Bible, but also we must accept it as God's word, hide it in our hearts, and, with God's help, obey it.

Prayer: Lord, help me to hide your word in my heart, obey it and build the house of my life on the rock.

One Word: Be a wise builder

JESUS MEETS A MAN WITH LEPROSY

Matthew 8:1-4

Key Verse: 8:3

1. Lord, if you are willing...(1-2)

Crowds of people pushed and pressed one another to get close to Jesus. But when the man with leprosy came near, the crowds melted. No one wanted to be near him. This man believed that Jesus had power to cleanse him of his putrid, life-destroying disease. He was not sure, however, that Jesus would accept him--for no one else did. But he overcame his doubts and the hostile glares of the crowd, and knelt before Jesus. "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

2. Jesus said, "I am willing" (3-4)

Jesus reached out his hand and touched him and said, "Be clean." Jesus did not shrink back from touching him. Jesus' loving touch cut through all the rules. It broke through his loneliness. He was healed. Jesus sent him to the priest to make a thanksgiving offering and to be certified as clean. He could go back to his home and family a new man, and live a life based on God's grace. Jesus' touch of love brings forgiveness, cleansing and restoration.

Prayer: Lord, you touched and cleansed me. Help me to share your love with others who need your touch.

One Word: Jesus is willing

THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION

Matthew 8:5-13

Key Verse: 8:8

1. Just say the word (1-9)

The centurion was a Gentile, a soldier in the Roman army of occupation. But he had a compassionate shepherd's heart for his servant, and he believed that Jesus had authority to heal. He humbled himself and asked Jesus for help. He had a soldier's simple understanding of authority and obedience; he knew the power of the word. So he said, "Just say the word and my servant will be healed."

2. Such great faith (10-13)

Jesus was astonished by this centurion's faith in the power of Jesus' word. This was the kind of faith the people of Israel should have had. Jesus looked at this man and saw the whole Gentile world. Someday Gentiles with faith like his would come from every part of the world to take their places at the great heavenly banquet. And those with human privilege, but with hard and

unbelieving hearts, would be thrown into outer darkness. Jesus spoke a gracious and powerful word of command and blessing, and the servant was healed.

Prayer: Lord, help me to humbly accept the authority of your word and obey joyfully.

One Word: "Just say the word"

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 8:14-22

Key Verse: 8:20

1. He took up our infirmities (14-17)

Jesus' healing work was very personal. Peter's mother-in-law was an example. He saw her in bed, suffering with a fever. He touched her hand and she was healed. She got up and served them. In the evening, many came who needed his help. He drove out evil spirits with a word and healed all the sick. Jesus' healing work reveals not only the power of the Messiah, but also the love of God for each person.

2. Two would-be disciples (18-22)

As Jesus prepared to leave the crowds to concentrate on training his disciples, a man volunteered to be a disciple. He was moved by Jesus' love and thought that being a disciple was meaningful and secure employment. Jesus told him that he could offer no worldly security (20). Jesus invited another man to follow him. This man had urgent business to do first (21). Jesus told him that following Jesus must be a disciple's first priority.

Prayer: Lord, I want to follow you, trusting you alone to be my security; help me to make following you my first priority.

One Word: Follow Jesus

JESUS CALMS THE STORM

Matthew 8:23-27

Key Verse: 8:26

1. Where is your faith? (23-26a)

Jesus' disciples were experienced fishermen; they were familiar with the sudden storms that sometimes swept down on the placid Sea of Galilee. But as they crossed the lake, a storm struck with such suddenness and intensity that even the experienced sailors were terrified. Jesus was sleeping in the stern of the boat, exhausted by the demanding crowds. He did not even wake up

when the storm struck. He could sleep deeply because he trusted God completely. The waves swept over the boat and it seemed to be sinking. The disciples awakened Jesus: "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" In the time of crisis, they let fear rule their hearts. Fear is the opposite of faith. So Jesus rebuked them. Their problem was not the storm; it was their lack of faith.

2. What kind of man is this? (26b-27)

Jesus then rebuked the winds and waves, and all became calm. The winds and waves knew their Creator, even if men did not.

Prayer: Lord, you are the Creator. You are in control of men and history. Help me not to give in to fear, but to trust you in every crisis of life.

One Word: Why are you afraid?

THE HEALING OF TWO DEMONIAC

Matthew 8:28-34

Key Verse: 8:32

1. Two violent men (28-29)

The region of the Gadarenes was Gentile territory. The two violent men who met Jesus and his disciples had terrified the countryside. They were prisoners of Satan. Perhaps the inhumanity and materialism of society had pushed them to open their hearts and let Satan in. They recognized Jesus as the Son of God, enemy of Satan, and they strongly objected to his being there. They feared him, for Jesus has authority over even the most powerful demon. Jesus sent them out of the men into a herd of pigs, and the pigs rushed into the lake and died.

2. A town that didn't care about people (30-34)

When the townspeople heard what had happened to the pigs and to the men, they came and asked Jesus to leave. They did not praise God for saving two men from Satan's power. They were angry because they had lost a lot of pigs. So Jesus left.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on our materialistic society that freely invites Satan to destroy men. Raise up leaders who care more about people than about money.

One Word: Jesus can save men from Satan

JESUS HEALS A PARALYZED MAN

Matthew 9:1-8

Key Verse: 9:2b

1. Take heart, son (1-2)

Some men brought a paralyzed man to Jesus. This man was living in deep despair and fatalism, and he was burdened by guilt. He depended on others for everything. But the friends who brought him to Jesus refused to give up. They believed in Jesus. Jesus blessed their faith. He loved this ugly, helpless man and called him "son." He encouraged him and said, "Take heart." Then he said, "Your sins are forgiven." Only God can forgive sins. Jesus is God. Fatalism and despair are sins.

2. The Son of Man has authority (3-8)

The teachers of the law were shocked by Jesus' words. They did not believe that he was Christ, the Son of God, so they condemned him for being presumptuous. He demonstrated the authority of God to heal and to forgive sins. He completely changed this man's life. The crowd saw it and praised God, for they saw that Jesus indeed had God's authority to forgive and heal.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my sins and make me whole. Help me to bring my friends to you for healing and forgiveness.

One Word: Jesus has authority to forgive

JESUS CALLS MATTHEW

Matthew 9:9-13

Key Verse: 9:9

1. Follow me (9)

Matthew, who wrote this Gospel, was a tax collector. This was synonymous with "sinner." It was also synonymous with "selfish, greedy guy." Tax collectors were quislings who sold their own people for personal gain. But they paid a price of inner misery of soul. They were lonely outcasts, spiritual lepers. Matthew was tired of this kind of life, but there seemed to be no way out. Then Jesus walked by and said, "Follow me." It was a call to repentance and faith. Matthew accepted. Jesus changed him from a tax collector into a servant of God.

2. The sick need a doctor (10-13)

Matthew celebrated his new life with a dinner party. He invited his old friends to come and rejoice with him, and meet Jesus. It was a joyful party, for a dead man had come alive. But the Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with a "sinner." Jesus taught them from God's word that he had come to show God's mercy.

Prayer: Lord, continue to change me from a selfish person into a selfless follower of my Lord Jesus.

One Word: Jesus calls sinners

NEW WINESKINS

Matthew 9:14-17

Key Verse: 9:17b

1. The question about fasting (14-15)

Jesus' disciples didn't seem to be religious enough. Some of John's disciples asked Jesus why his disciples didn't fast like they and the Pharisees did. Jesus' answer explains why the gospel is good news. First, the Christian life is joyful like a wedding feast. Jesus is the bridegroom. His disciples are like the guests (or the bride). When Jesus is present, it is the time to rejoice and feast. When he is not there, then we must fast and pray.

2. The changing power of the gospel (16-17)

Religious ceremonies and a pious appearance cannot change a person's heart. The gospel is good news because it makes us new. People who don't want to be changed reject the gospel. They are like old wineskins or an old garment. If the new wine of the gospel is put in old wineskin-like people, they only become angry and defensive because they don't want to be changed or grow as disciples of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the joy of being your disciple. Help me to grow and change until your image is formed in me.

One Word: Be a new wineskin

A DEAD GIRL AND A SICK WOMAN

Matthew 9:18-26

Key Verse: 9:22

1. Put your hand on her and she will live (18-19)

A ruler of the synagogue came to Jesus. His daughter had just died, but he refused to give up. His faith in Jesus was amazing, for he believed that Jesus could defeat even death. Jesus got up and went with him.

2. Take heart, daughter (20-22)

A despairing woman slipped up behind him. She had had a shameful bleeding problem for 12 years. She felt too worthless to ask Jesus for help, but she had faith. She came up behind him and

touched his cloak, and was healed. Jesus did not want her to be fatalistic. He said, "Take heart." He did not regard her as worthless. He called her daughter. He healed her body and her heart.

3. She is not dead but asleep (23-26)

When Jesus reached the ruler's house, he found a noisy crowd of mourners. They laughed at faith. So he put them out, went to the girl, took her hand, and healed her.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my fatalistic calculations; help me to come to you by faith.

One Word: Jesus blesses faith

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

Matthew 9:27-34

Key Verse: 9:33b

1. Do you believe I am able to do this? (27-31)

Jesus raised a girl from death, and news of him spread. Two blind men followed him crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." They believed that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior about whom Isaiah prophesied (Isa 35:5). Jesus gave them an opportunity to confess their faith, then he touched their eyes, and their sight was restored. Jesus never turns anyone down who comes to him in faith and asks his mercy.

2. He makes the mute speak (32-34)

A man who could not speak was brought to Jesus. He was mute because of a demon. Jesus drove out the demon and the man could speak. The crowds were amazed because they saw Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled. There had never been anyone like Jesus. Those who saw and heard with unbiased eyes and ears knew that Jesus was the Christ sent by God. But the Pharisees' sight was impaired by their preconceived ideas. They attributed the gracious work of God to demons, and committed a great sin.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on me and open my spiritual eyes; open my mouth to testify to your glory and greatness.

One Word: Jesus is my merciful Savior

THE COMPASSIONATE SHEPHERD

Matthew 9:35-38

Key Verse: 9:36

1. Like sheep without a shepherd (35-36)

Jesus was the true Shepherd whom God had promised to send (Ezk 34:15, 23-24). He went everywhere preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing the sick. He saw the people oppressed by greedy and self-seeking religious leaders and by ruthless kings and governors. He had compassion on the directionless crowds because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He knew that man's real oppressor is Satan, for all men are trapped in his dark kingdom until the Savior rescues them. Jesus proclaimed the good news that men can repent and believe and enter God's kingdom.

2. The harvest is plentiful (37-38)

Jesus saw that the people were waiting for shepherds who could teach them the word of God and show them God's love. So he told his disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest might send out workers.

Prayer: Lord, there are so many people who are like sheep without a shepherd. The workers are few. Please send workers into your harvest field.

One Word: Ask the Lord for shepherds

JESUS SENDS OUT TWELVE

Matthew 10:1-10

Key Verse: 10:7

1. Jesus calls the Twelve (1-4)

Jesus prayed for harvest workers, then he called the Twelve disciples. These were the men whom he would pray for and teach and train until they could grow to be shepherds and Bible teachers for the shepherdless people. They must grow until they could be disciple-makers. Memorize their names. Perhaps each one could be a shepherd for people like himself.

2. Jesus trains the Twelve (5-10)

Jesus gave them spiritual authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal (1). He limited what they were to take with them and where they were to go, because this was a training mission. He sent them only to the lost sheep of Israel--later he would send them to the whole world. He did not want them to depend on material things--they must depend on God alone. He told them to preach the good news, "The kingdom of heaven is near," and to share God's love freely with all who were in need.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to depend on your word and your Spirit, not on my own ability or on material things. Help me to preach your gospel and share your love.

One Word: Disciples must obey Jesus

SEARCH FOR A WORTHY PERSON

Matthew 10:11-16

Key Verse: 10:11

1. Stay with one person (11-13)

Jesus sent disciples out on a short field trip to teach them the basic principles of bringing the gospel to the world. One person is important in God's history. So Jesus told his disciples to search for one worthy person in each town and stay with him until they left that town. If one person can be changed by the gospel, then the whole town (or campus or nation) can be changed.

2. Sheep among wolves (14-16)

If there is not one worthy person, then the disciples were told to shake the dust off their feet and leave. To reject God's messenger and his message is to invite God's judgment. God's servants must not compromise God's word. Jesus knew that the world into which he would send them was full of wolves. Disciples must also know this. But they must not fight spiritual battles with worldly weapons. They must be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves.

Prayer: Lord, raise up one worthy person on this campus, in this city, in this nation.

One Word: Find one worthy person

HE WHO STANDS FIRM TO THE END WILL BE SAVED

Matthew 10:17-23

Key Verse: 10:22b

1. Don't worry about what to say (17-20)

Jesus looked ahead to the time after his death and resurrection. His disciples would be persecuted, first by the Jews and later by the Romans. When they were brought before councils and courts and kings, they were not to fear; they were to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would help them and tell them what to say.

2. He who stands firm to the end (21-23)

There would be another kind of persecution which would be harder to bear. Close family members, those they love, would hate them and persecute them because of their faith in Jesus. But Jesus tells them and us to stand firm on God's side to the end. He promises to come again before the evangelization of Israel is finished.

Prayer: Lord, I have no strength and I cannot trust myself. Please give me your Holy Spirit and teach me how to turn every difficult situation into an opportunity to witness to Jesus. Help me to stand firm to the end.

One Word: With God's help, stand firm

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF MEN

Matthew 10:24-33

Key Verse: 10:28

1. A student is like his master (24-25)

It is enough for us to be like Jesus. We must be like him in his gracious, loving character. And we should expect to be misunderstood and rejected as he was.

2. Fear only God (26-31)

Fear is the devil's great tool to keep men in chains. But God's servant doesn't need to fear men or to fear death. We must fear God. To fear God means to love him. He loves us and knows all about us--even how many hairs are on our heads. “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.” When we fear and love God in our hearts, then all inner fears are driven out and we are free.

3. Acknowledge Jesus before men (32-33)

It is not enough just to overcome fear of men. Jesus wants his servants to be his witnesses to all men. This is how the gospel of salvation is spread throughout the world.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for my human fears. Teach my heart to love and fear you so that I may freely acknowledge you anywhere, anytime, to everyone.

One Word: Fear God and be free

LOVE JESUS FIRST

Matthew 10:34-42

Key Verse: 10:37

1. Lose life to find it (34-39)

Jesus wants us to put him first. Sometimes the people close to us humanly don't understand that by loving Jesus first we can love them more, so they resent our love for Jesus. Then a person's enemies become those of his own household. What can we do? Jesus says that unless we take the

cross of mission, the cross of rejection and misunderstanding and follow him, we are not worthy of him. He promises that if we give our lives to him, we will find life. If we give up Jesus' calling in order to hold onto people, we will lose the very life we are trying to save.

2. He who receives you receives me (40-42)

Jesus' disciples are those who put Jesus first in their affections. Jesus promises to bless anyone who welcomes a disciple of Jesus. Even a cup of cold water given to one who loves Jesus will be rewarded. We can be a blessing to those we love only if we keep on loving Jesus first.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love you first and trust you to bless those I love. Help me to take up my cross and follow you to the end.

One Word: Love Jesus first

REPORT WHAT YOU HEAR AND SEE

Matthew 11:1-6

Key Verse: 11:4

1. Are you the one who was to come? (1-3)

John the Baptist had prepared the way for Jesus the Messiah. He called people to repent; he baptized Jesus and announced that Jesus is the Lamb of God, and the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. But now, while Jesus' ministry flourished in Galilee, John was languishing in prison. John's disciples must have struggled with doubt. John did not doubt Jesus; he was not a reed swayed in the wind; he wanted his disciples to know Jesus and believe in him, so he sent them to Jesus.

2. Go tell what you see and hear (4-6)

Jesus did not give John's disciples a theological answer. His life and ministry fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah (35:4-6; 61:1). He told John's troubled disciples to look and listen, and then to go tell John what they saw and heard. John's disciples would be blessed if they trusted God and believed in Jesus to the end.

Prayer: Lord, give me eyes to see beyond my own situation; help me to see Jesus. Help me to base my faith on your word, not on my feelings.

One Word: Go and see; believe and tell

A TRULY GREAT MAN

Matthew 11:7-15

Key Verse: 11:11

1. What did you go out to see? (7-10)

Jesus knew that John was in prison. A fickle crowd could despise John because of this. Jesus rebuked the crowd, for they had gathered like a bunch of sightseers. He told them about John's greatness. John did not dress in fine clothes, nor did he live in a lakeshore apartment. He had lived a humble life in the desert. His true greatness was in the greatness of his mission. He was sent by God to prepare the way for the Messiah.

2. The greatest man (11-15)

Prophets had long prophesied the Messiah's coming, but John announced that he had come. Like Elijah, he called men to repent. Both John and Jesus forcefully attacked the strongholds of Satan with the truth of God. John was a great man; but one who repents and receives Jesus and takes hold of God's kingdom with all his strength is greater!

Prayer: Lord, forgive my uncommitted, sightseer's heart, and help me to take hold of your kingdom with all my strength.

One Word: Be great in God

CHILDREN IN THE MARKETPLACE

Matthew 11:16-24

Key Verse: 11:16

1. Children in the marketplace (16-19)

There was a children's song which fit the rebellious spirit of the times. The music of the flute was an invitation to dance--but rebellious children didn't dance. A dirge is a call to mourn--but rebellious children didn't respond. The people of Jesus' day were like this. John lived a humble, austere life that challenged the corrupt culture. People who did not want to repent said he had a demon. Jesus hobnobbed with sick and sinful people to minister to them. But people criticized him, and rejected God's blessing.

2. Woe to the unrepentant (20-24)

The cities of Israel in which Jesus worked were so privileged--but the people in them did not repent; they did not welcome Jesus. However, outsiders who received the gospel and repented would be saved. Privileges don't save; Jesus does.

Prayer: Lord, take away my proud mind and give me a humble heart that always welcomes Jesus.

One Word: Hear God's word; repent and welcome Jesus

JESUS' YOKE

Matthew 11:25-30

Key Verse: 11:29

1. Only for little children (25-27)

The world-weary, sophisticated, seemingly smart people did not receive Jesus; they did not repent and accept God's forgiveness and blessing. But Jesus' childlike disciples were men of humble hearts. They were teachable. They simply accepted Jesus and God's word. God reveals his truth and his love to such people.

2. Come to me and find rest for your souls (28-30)

Jesus' invitation is for all who are tired in their souls and burdened by guilt and fear and sin. He takes our burdens and gives us his yoke. A yoke enables an ox to use his strength for a good purpose. It enables him to co-work with the farmer and with other oxen. To take Jesus' yoke means to commit oneself to follow Jesus and to obey his word. Only when we obey Jesus from our hearts can we learn of him and find real rest for our souls.

Prayer: Lord, give me your yoke; take away my burden of sin and worldly anxiety and guilt. Enable me to serve you fruitfully.

One Word: Come to Jesus; take his yoke; find rest

THE LORD DESIRES MERCY

Matthew 12:1-8

Key Verses: 12:7,8

1. Hungry disciples (1-2)

One Sabbath day Jesus' disciples plucked and ate some grain as they walked through the grainfields. The Pharisees, who were always busy trying to find something to criticize, rebuked Jesus for allowing his disciples to work on the Sabbath. Pharisees who only engage in criticism and nit-picking can never see the work of God.

2. Lord of the Sabbath (3-8)

Jesus taught them from the Bible about David, a great king and soldier who loved God and loved his men. He was not legalistic. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of the priests who worked on the Sabbath offering sacrifices in the temple. Then he told them who he was and why he had come. He did not come to make men religious. He came to show sinners God's mercy. If one does not

know God's mercy and forgiveness, religious activities are meaningless. Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath, is the Messiah.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for understanding my weakness and showing me your mercy. Help me to show mercy.

One Word: God wants mercy, not religion

A MAN'S HAND MADE WHOLE

Matthew 12:9-14

Key Verse: 12:13

1. A man with a shriveled hand (9-10)

When Jesus went into the synagogue one Sabbath day, a man with a shriveled hand was there. A man's hand is his life--he works with it; he fights with it; he plays the piano with it; he caresses with it. A shriveled hand means a shriveled spirit. The Pharisees did not see this man's sorrow. They only saw him as bait to be used in trapping Jesus.

2. Stretch out your hand (11-14)

Jesus ignored the trap. He answered their questions with the truth of God: "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." He taught them the value of one man. Then he commanded the man to stretch out the hand he had carefully kept concealed. The man surrendered his useless pride and extended his ugly, useless hand. He overcame himself and obeyed Jesus, and he was healed. Jesus risked his own life to help this man.

Prayer: Lord, I stretch out my weakness and ugliness to you. Thank you for healing me--at the cost of your own life.

One Word: Stretch out your hand

GOD'S CHOSEN SERVANT

Matthew 12:15-21

Key Verse: 12:18

1. Jesus withdrew (15-16)

The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus because he had challenged their authority by healing a man on the Sabbath. He revealed himself to all people as the true shepherd of all shepherdless people. So even though he withdrew, the people who needed him flocked to him.

2. He will not break a bruised reed (17-21)

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. He was God's chosen servant, the one who pleased God. He boldly proclaimed the good news of God to the nations. He was a gentle shepherd. He did not fight or argue. He was especially gentle with the weak and helpless people. The man with the withered hand was a bruised reed and a smoldering wick. Jesus welcomed and healed him. He will surely lead justice to victory. He is the hope of the nations.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for restoring a bruised reed. Help me to be your servant and share your love and mercy in a broken world.

One Word: God's chosen servant

ONLY JESUS CAN BIND THE STRONG MAN

Matthew 12:22-37

Key Verse: 12:29

1. The Son of David (22-23)

Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. The people who saw and heard him knew that he was the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel sent by God.

2. One who binds the strong man (24-29)

The Pharisees saw the work of God in Jesus' ministry, but they didn't want to admit it--so they said that he worked by the devil's power. This was a lie. Jesus drives out demons by the Spirit of God. He is the strong man who robs Satan's house.

3. Careless words (30-37)

The words one speaks reflect what is in his heart. A heart that is full of bitterness and grudges is the well-spring of criticism and wounding words. Thoughtless words that plant doubt--words that do not build up but scatter--will be punished by God on the day of judgment.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for binding the power of Satan and setting me free. Rule my heart and my lips so that I may honor you and encourage your people.

One Word: Jesus is stronger than Satan

THE SIGN OF JONAH

Matthew 12:38-42

Key Verse: 12:39

1. Sign-seekers (38-39a)

The Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign to prove his Messiahship. But a sign-seeker never makes a commitment. Jesus called sign-seekers wicked and adulterous. Instead of seeking signs, men should repent.

2. The sign of Jonah (39b-41)

Jesus offers only the sign of Jonah. Jonah, the reluctant prophet, was swallowed by a great fish. After 3 days he came out and preached to the city of Nineveh. The people and even the cattle there repented. Jesus is greater than Jonah. He died for the sins of the world and rose after 3 days in the tomb. He is the sign of God's love. Those who reject this gospel of God's love will be condemned by the people of Nineveh on the day of judgment.

3. Solomon's wisdom (42)

The Queen of Sheba had more spiritual insight than the people of Jesus' time. She recognized even Solomon as a man of God, and came to listen to him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to repent before your word and commit my heart to you.

One Word: Don't be a sign-seeker; repent

JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS

Matthew 12:46-50

Key Verse: 12:50

1. Jesus teaches the crowd (46-47)

Jesus was God's servant, a man of mission. He

ministered to shepherdless crowds. He cast out evil

spirits and healed the sick; he preached the good news of the kingdom of God. He became so busy that his family worried about him (Mk 3:20,21). They thought he should take a little time off and come home and be with his family. So they came and stood outside, waiting to see him.

2. Here are my mother and brothers (48-50)

Jesus received the message, "Your mother and brothers are outside." They did not come into the stream of God's life-giving work, but stood outside, clinging to their human attachment and seeking to make human demands of Jesus. Jesus taught them and us about his true family. He pointed to his disciples and said, "Here is my family." All who do God's will are Jesus' family. Jesus was clear about his family. So, one day, Jesus' mother and brothers would repent and

become faithful disciples. Prayer: Lord, I want to be a part of your family. Help me to do your will.

One Word: God's family is my family

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matthew 13:1-9

Key Verse: 13:3

1. Jesus teaches from a boat (1-3)

Jesus went out by the lake to teach the people. Such large crowds gathered that he had to teach them from a boat. He taught in parables. The people had come to him for many reasons, but he scattered the seed of God's word among them all. The seed sown by the farmer was good seed. Each seed had life in it; each one had the possibility of growing and producing good fruit.

2. The soils (4-9)

The kind of soil on which seed falls determines its productiveness. Most of the seed seemed to be wasted. But the few seed that fell on good soil more than made up for this. The heart-soil of the people in the crowd would determine the fruitfulness of the seed of God's word. Those with ears to hear are those with a heart's desire to receive God's word and obey it.

Prayer: Lord, help me to plant the living seed of your word, trusting the harvest to you. Help me to prepare good heart soil each time I study your word.

One Word: The sower sows good seed

THE MYSTERY OF THE PARABLES

Matthew 13:10-17

Key Verse: 13:11

1. Why do you speak in parables? (10-15)

Jesus' disciples knew that the parables were hard for the crowd to understand. Jesus agreed. Jesus told secrets of the kingdom of heaven in parables so that only those who had made a commitment to follow him could understand. When a disciple who loves Jesus receives God's word in his heart he can understand it and grow in faith. If one has faith, he is given more faith. But if one rejects God's word because it seems unreasonable, or because he prefers an easy-going life, he can never understand. His heart then becomes harder and harder. Even the small amount of spiritual desire he had will be taken away.

2. Blessed are your eyes (16-17)

Jesus' disciples were privileged because they knew the long-awaited Christ. The patriarchs and prophets believed the promises and looked forward to his coming. We also are privileged because we can see that God kept his promises. By faith we can know Jesus personally and follow him.

Prayer: Lord, I want to follow Jesus. Please enlighten my eyes and heart to understand your word and help me to obey it.

One Word: Blessed are eyes that see

THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

Matthew 13:18-23

Key Verse: 13:23

1. Three unproductive soils (18-22)

The path represents the heart-soil of one who re- jects God's word because he does not understand it. His problem is not ignorance; it is pride. One with a humble heart receives God's word because it is God's word. He holds on to it until God works. Then he understands. The rocky soil represents one who receives the word joyfully--but only in his head. He doesn't let the roots go down into his heart--so he never repents. So, when people criticize him, or his family or friend oppose his Bible study, he quits Bible study. The thorns represent the person who is busy-minded. Perhaps he is worried about his future; or perhaps he is a pleasure-seeker. So the seed of the word in his heart can't grow.

2. Good heart-soil (23)

One who receives the word in his heart and obeys it is good soil. His life bears good fruit--30, 60, 100 times what was sown. His life makes up for the three unfruitful heart-soils.

Prayer: Lord, let my heart and life be good soil each time I study your word or listen to a message.

One Word: Be fruitful soil

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS

Matthew 13:24-30

Key Verse: 13:30

1. Weeds and wheat (24-26)

Jesus told a kingdom parable. God is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. His enemy, the devil, secretly came and sowed weeds. No one knew about the devils' mischief until the weeds and wheat formed heads. The devil is a very hard worker--and very sneaky.

2. What shall we do? (27-30)

The servants suggested pulling up the weeds, but the master said, "No." If the weeds were pulled up, then some of the wheat would be uprooted. It was hard to wait, doing nothing, and just watch the weeds grow. But the owner assured his servants that at the harvest time everything would be straightened out. On the day of judgment, there will be a clear separation of the work of God and the work of Satan. We must do the work of God diligently and wait on God to deal with Satan's work.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be more diligent than the devil. Give me patience to obey you and wait on you-- even when the devil makes a sneak attack.

One Word: Do God's work

THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND YEAST

Matthew 13:31-35

Key Verse: 13:31

1. God's kingdom is like a mustard seed (31-32)

The mustard seed is very small. The gospel message is also short and simple. But when the mustard seed grows, it becomes a tree so big that it can shelter the birds of the air. The gospel seed, when planted in a person's life, grows until the person is changed and his life becomes a blessing to the worl d. One person can also be a seed. Gospel workers are humble and seem to have no human power. But if a faithful man of God is planted in a nation or a campus he can be used by God to change a hard, materialistic campus or nation into a campus or nation under God.

2. God's kingdom is like yeast (33-35)

Yeast is a tiny enzyme. But when it is put into a small lump of dough, it spreads throughout until the lump becomes a large loaf. The gospel also has the power to permeate and transform a person's life

Prayer: Lord, I believe that you are working through one-to-one Bible study to change people and to change the nation. Grant one man of God for each campus of the world.

One Word: A mustard seed grows

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS EXPLAINED

Matthew 13:36-43

Key Verse: 13:43

1. The sowers (36-39a)

Jesus' disciples were eager to learn. They were the good seed. Jesus was planting them in the world by training them in the word of God. But Satan is also busy planting weeds. Those who are slaves to sin, who invert creation order by their materialistic and ungodly lives, are weeds. They are a curse, not a blessing.

2. The final judgment (39b-43)

We cannot live in a weedless world. We cannot get rid of evil by trying to remove evil people. But we can be sure that on the day of judgement, Jesus will send his angels to pull up all the weeds and burn them in the fiery furnace. Until that day, we can serve him and wait for his return and produce good fruit in the world. When he comes, his righteous children will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Prayer: Lord, continue to work in me to make me a good seed and let my life be a blessing, not a curse.

One Word: Don't be a weed

THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE

Matthew 13:44-46

Key Verse: 13:46

1. Hidden treasure (44)

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. A man unexpectedly stumbles on it. He conceals it, then goes and sells all he has to buy the field. An easy-going, directionless man almost "accidentally" stumbles on the deepest truth of life. It galvanizes him. He now has a clear goal; he knows that he must make any sacrifice to possess what is really valuable. Eternal life is such a treasure.

2. The pearl of great value (45-46)

This parable also concerns one's value system and priorities in life. The pearl merchant does not find the one priceless pearl by accident. He is looking for it. When he finds it, possessing it becomes his highest priority; he sells everything to get it. A person who searches for truth sincerely must be prepared to commit his whole life to following that truth. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.

Prayer: Lord, I'd rather have Jesus than anything. Help me to keep my priorities clear.

One Word: One pearl of greatest value

THE PARABLE OF THE NET

Matthew 13:47-52

Key Verse: 13:49

1. The kingdom of heaven is like a net (47-51)

Just as a fisherman finds all kinds of fish in his net, all kinds of people come to a Christian fellowship. The visible church is full of all kinds of people. Every- one is not necessarily Christian. Just as a fisherman sorts out the good fish from the worthless, at the judg- ment God's angels will separate the wicked from the righteous. The wicked are those who continue in their rebellion against God; the righteous are those who accept God's offer of forgiveness and salvation.

2. New treasures as well as old (52)

A Bible student must not only study the Bible; he must come to Jesus--the one to whom the Bible points--and accept him as his Lord and King. Then he can be like the owner of a house who has both new and old treasures. He can be included with the righteous in the day of judgment. But if he rejects the gospel, he will be thrown out with the wicked.

Prayer: Lord, put your kingdom in my heart, so that I may stand with the righteous.

One Word: New and old treasures

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR

Matthew 13:53-58

Key Verse: 13:57b,58

1. They were amazed (53-54)

Jesus had been teaching the multitudes. He healed the sick and cast out demons. People who recognized him as their true shepherd were blessed. Jesus wanted to share God's love and blessing in his hometown too, so he taught in the synagogue in Nazareth. The people were impressed by his popularity and amazed at his wisdom and power. They had the opportunity to accept him and receive God's blessing.

2. Isn't this the carpenter's son? (55-58)

They had second thoughts about Jesus and began to talk about his human background. They did not accept him as God's servant, so they missed his blessing. Jesus cannot work in an atmosphere of unbelief and human thinking. When we look at God's servant and God's work from a human point of view, we become spiritually blind. Then Jesus cannot work in or through us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see your servants and your work from your point of view. Take away my proud mind and give me a humble heart and spiritual eyes.

One Word: Believe God's word; see his work

JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

Matthew 14:1-12

Key Verse: 14:5

1. Herod's guilty conscience (1,2)

When Herod heard about Jesus, he thought about John the Baptist. Jesus also preached repentance. He spoke about the kingdom of God and he healed many people. Herod had committed a terrible sin against God; he had killed John, God's servant. He lived in fear because of his sin and guilt. Of course, Jesus was not John! But guilt and fear made Herod think that John had come back to haunt him. 2. Herod's weakness (3-12) Herod was a king, but he could not rule his own family. When John rebuked him for his immoral life, he did not repent; he put John in prison. Herodias had no scruples. She coached her daughter to ask for John's head. Herod was too weak. He was a slave to his wife, his guests, his pride and his fear--so he had John beheaded. An immoral lifestyle seems to be an expression of freedom, but it makes even a king a slave.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus who alone sets me free from sin and pride and fear.

One Word: Don't be a slave; repent

JESUS FEEDS 5000

Matthew 14:13-21

Key Verse: 14:1

1. You give them something to eat (13-16)

Jesus was sorry about John. He wanted to be alone with his disciples, so he withdrew to a solitary place. But the place did not remain solitary! Crowds seeking a shepherd were waiting for him. Jesus had compassion on them and he served them all day long. The disciples waited patiently until evening. They made a reasonable suggestion: "The people are hungry; send them away to buy food." Jesus' reply was shocking. "You give them something to eat." Jesus wants his disciples to learn his shepherd's heart and learn faith that overcomes the world.

2. Five loaves and two fish (17-21)

They only had 5 loaves and 2 fish, and the task looked impossible. But when they brought what they had to Jesus, he blessed the loaves and fish and enabled the disciples to feed the crowd abundantly.

Prayer: Lord, accept our loaves and fish and feed the people of our world with the word of God.

One Word: You give them something to eat!

JESUS AND PETER WALK ON WATER

Matthew 14:22-36

Key Verse: 14:29

1. Storm training (22-27)

After feeding the crowd, Jesus sent his disciples to cross the lake. He dismissed the crowd and went to pray alone. The disciples struggled against an adverse wind and high waves. Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. They were terrified, because in their struggle, they didn't recognize Jesus. He had not come to frighten them but to give them courage and teach them faith.

2. Peter's bold faith (28-36)

Peter took courage. He asked Jesus to command him to come to him, and Jesus said, "Come." As long as Peter obeyed Jesus' command and kept his eyes on him, he could walk without fear on the water. But he looked down at the waves and forgot about Jesus. He began to sink; Jesus pulled him out and gently rebuked him for his doubt. Fear is the opposite of faith. Faith is looking steadily at Jesus and calling on him for help. Peter confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. And Jesus continued the work of the Messiah (34-36).

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to walk by faith and faith to keep on looking at you.

One Word: Obey Jesus and walk by faith

GOD'S COMMANDS OR MEN'S TRADITION

Matthew 15:1-20

Key Verse: 15:3

1. God's word in the heart (1-9)

The Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands before they ate. It was not a matter of hygiene but of religious ritual. They claimed that tradition superseded God's word. Jesus rebuked them for teaching men's tradition instead of teaching the Bible. He used one of the ten commandments, “Honor your father and mother,” as an example. If we love God and live to please him, then we will honor his word and hold it in our hearts.

2. A clean heart and clean lips (10-20)

To Jesus, dirty hands were not a big problem, but a dirty heart and a dirty mouth were. God's word hidden in our hearts keeps evil and impure thoughts out (Jn 15:3; Ps 119:11). If God's word is not in our hearts we are plants that God has not planted. We are spiritually blind. Our hearts become full of evil thoughts--lust, jealousy, and complaints, and our mouths speak words that hurt or tempt or tear down others.

Prayer: Lord, purify my heart by Jesus' blood and plant your word there.

One Word: God's word must be in my heart

THE FAITH OF A CANAANITE WOMAN

Matthew 15:21-28

Key Verse: 15:27

1. The cry of a Canaanite woman (21-24)

When Jesus withdrew to Gentile territory, he did not intend to start a ministry there. He focused on the lost sheep of Israel, for he was their shepherd, the "son of David", who fulfilled the hopes and expectation of the prophets. Later, he would send his disciples to all nations. But there was a woman who couldn't wait. She recognized him as the Messiah and came, begging his mercy. She came by faith with a broken, compassionate heart.

2. Even the dogs eat the crumbs (25-28)

This woman believed in Jesus and she loved her daughter. Jesus tried to ignore her but she persisted. She knelt before him and asked his help. When Jesus told her that he could not give the children's bread to dogs, she humbly accepted his words and begged for crumbs. Jesus was moved by her faith. He granted her request and blessed her. Jesus' blessings are not for the privileged, but for those who have faith and compassion.

Prayer: Lord, give me the persistent faith and deep love of this Gentile woman.

One Word: Jesus blesses persistent faith

JESUS FEEDS THE 4000

Matthew 15:29-39

Key Verse: 15:32

1. They praised the God of Israel (29-31)

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would make the blind see, the lame walk, and the mute speak (Isa 35:4-6a). When the motley crowds--which included many Gentiles--saw these things happening, they praised the God of Israel. They came because they heard of Jesus' compassion for one Gentile woman (15:21-28). They came because they longed for the Good Shepherd's mercy.

2. Jesus' compassion (32-39)

Jesus had a mother's love and a father's sense of responsibility for the crowds. He called his disciples and shared his concern: "I don't want to send them away hungry. They might collapse on the way." The disciples had fed one crowd, but they were still aware of their human limits. They asked, "Where can we find bread?" Jesus told them to bring what they had. He gave thanks for the loaves; then he broke them and, through the disciples, fed the crowd.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your compassionate heart. I believe your almighty power.

One Word: Compassionate Jesus knows our needs

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Matthew 16:1-4

Key Verse: 16:3b

1. Weather signs (1-3)

The Pharisees who came to Jesus seeking a sign had no spiritual insight.They had seen many signs of his Messiahship, but they did not believe. They could look at the sky and make predictions about the weather. But they rejected the obvious spiritual signs and refused to believe in Jesus. They were selfish and did not want to make a commitment.

2. The sign of Jonah (4)

Jesus described his times as "wicked and adulterous." Wickedness is godlessness. Adultery is unfaithfulness. Adulterous people live by feelings, not by truth. Spiritual adultery is unfaithfulness to God. Sign-seeking, with no intention of making a commitment, reveals an unfaithful heart. The "sign of Jonah" looks forward to Jesus' death and resurrection and calls people to repent (Jonah 3; Mt 12:39-41).

Prayer: Lord, give me a faithful and repentant heart and spiritual insight. Help me to live by gospel faith.

One Word: The sign of Jonah

A SENSE OF HISTORY

Matthew 16:5-12

Key Verse: 16:8

1. Forgotten bread (5-7)

When Jesus and his disciples crossed the lake, they forgot to take bread. They were getting hungry. So when Jesus warned them to guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, they thought he was talking about bread.

2. Yeast of the Pharisees (8-12)

The Pharisees had seen God's work in Jesus, but they did not believe because they did not want to commit themselves to him. This unbelief springs from selfishness and easily spreads to others. Jesus rebuked his disciples for their unbelief and reminded them of the two crowds of hungry people they had fed. They needed a sense of history. We must guard against bad influence. We can do this when we remember God's grace with thankful hearts.

Prayer: Lord, you saved me from sin and death and put joy and meaning into my life. Help me to have a sense of history and a growing faith.

One Word: Have a sense of history

PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

Matthew 16:13-20

Key Verse: 16:16

1. Who do people say the Son of Man is? (13-14)

Jesus' disciples reported what people were saying about Jesus. He had done many good works. He was famous and popular. But throughout history God has sent prophets to warn, bless, and help people. There are many great teachers, saints and martyrs. If Jesus is no more than one of these, then there is no need to make an absolute commitment of our lives to him.

2. Who do you say I am? (15-20)

This question calls for soul searching. Its answer determines a person's destiny. Peter was ready. He made the confession which every Christian must make: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living Creator God. One who makes this confession must commit his heart and life to Jesus. God himself reveals Christ to those who seek him. It is on this rock of confessing faith that Jesus builds his church.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the Christ, the Savior of the world. You are my Savior and Lord.

One Word: Who do you say Jesus is?

IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME

Matthew 16:21-28

Key Verse: 16:24

1. "Never, Lord!" (21-23)

After Peter's confession, Jesus began to teach him what the Christ must do. But when Jesus spoke of death, Peter reacted. He said he believed in Jesus, but he did not accept Jesus' word. Jesus' words didn't fit his ideas; they ran counter to his feelings. His mind was full of human plans, so without realizing it, he tempted Jesus as Satan had done. When we reject God's word because of our human feelings, we become God's enemies.

2. The way to life (24-28)

Jesus tells us that if we struggle only to improve the quality of our physical lives, and only try to protect ourselves and our own families, we will lose the very life we seek. The way to find life is to follow Jesus. We must deny our own feelings and ideas and accept Jesus' word; we must take up the cross of mission he gives us. We follow him wherever he leads and grow in our inner lives in his image.

Prayer: Lord, help me to take my cross and follow you today.

One Word: Follow Jesus

A VISION OF GLORY

Matthew 17:1-13

Key Verse: 17:5

1. Listen to him! (1-8)

Jesus planted a vision of glory in the hearts of his 3 disciples. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as light. Moses and Elijah (representing the Law and the Prophets)

talked with him. God was pleased with the obedient life of his Son. His suffering and death was not a failure, but a glorious victory. Peter wanted to stay on the mountain and not go back to the problem-filled valley. But God's word to him and to us was: "Listen to him."

2. The Son of Man will suffer (9-13)

On the way down, they wanted to talk about theology--but Jesus told them again that he must suffer, die, and be raised. John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah and had been killed by unrepentant men. Jesus' death and resurrection was God's way of bringing forgiveness and life to sinful people.

Prayer: Lord, let the glorious image of Jesus fill my heart. Help me to listen to your word and obey you today.

One Word: Listen to him!

ONLY BY FAITH

Matthew 17:14-21

Key Verse: 17:20

1. Bring the boy here to me (14-17)

When Jesus came down the mountain a crowd had gathered. A man with a demon-possessed son came and knelt before him. The demon had planted fear of death in the father's heart, and Jesus' nine waiting disciples had compounded the problem by their failure to help the boy. Jesus was very sorry about the unbelief of his disciples and the unbelief and crookedness of the people of his time. He rebuked the demon and it came out. Jesus' word is powerful enough to drive out the forces of Satan. Jesus always answers a plea for mercy. No problem is too big for him--and no problem too small.

2. Faith the size of a mustard seed (18-21)

The disciples asked Jesus why they had failed. He told them that their problem was too little faith. Even faith the size of a mustard seed is big enough. They had depended on themselves and had not prayed. Prayer is the evidence of faith.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my lack of faith. Teach me to call on you in prayer.

One Word: Faith as small as a mustard seed

FAITH AND TAXES

Matthew 17:22-27

Key Verse: 17:22

1. The gospel message (22-23)

When Jesus told his disciples that he must suffer and die and be raised to life, they were full of grief and did not accept his words. They were so full of their own human thoughts and plans that they could not accept God's will and work. There are still disciples who only accept the things in God's word that seem reasonable and right to them. The cross and resurrection are still stumbling blocks to proud people.

2. The temple tax (24-27)

Peter was caught off guard when a man came and asked him if Jesus paid the temple tax. He forgot that Jesus was God's Son; that he was the Master of the temple. Jesus taught Peter his divine Sonship and showed him that he is the Sovereign Lord of all things--he even owns the fish in the sea. We all need training until our reactions reflect faith.

Prayer: Lord, let your gospel be in my heart and be reflected in my life.

One Word: He died and rose to give me life

TO ENTER LIFE

Matthew 18:1-9

Key Verse: 18:3

1. Become like little children (1-4)

The disciples' question gave Jesus an opportunity to teach them what is really important. To enter the kingdom of heaven one must be humble and childlike. One must welcome Jesus with love and trust and one must regard Jesus' sheep as very precious.

2. If anyone causes another to sin (5-9)

"What I do is my own business." This is the idea of people who live pragmatically. But this is blatant irresponsibility. We are responsible for our influence on others. Parents influence their children by what they do as well as by what they say. Pornography, alcohol and values taught by TV are some of the things that cause people to sin. Those who discourage others and plant fear and doubt must answer to God. Jesus says that we should deal drastically with whatever causes us to sin, for sin is a life and death matter. Only Jesus the Lamb of God can take away our sin and give us life.

Prayer: Lord, I come to you like a child. Change me into one who can be a good influence on others.

One Word: Come to Jesus and be changed

THE LOST SHEEP

Matthew 18:10-14

Key Verse: 18:12

1. Don't look down on the little ones (10)

Every person is precious to Jesus. He does not calculate about whether people are tall or short, able or not-so-able, bright or stupid. We should not look down on any of Jesus' sheep, but should learn to see them as God sees them. God has an angel assigned to watch over each one.

2. Find the lost one (11-14)

God's love is positive. He cares for lost sheep even though they are dirty, rebellious and scratched up. He loves each of us so much that he sent Jesus the Good Shepherd to find us--even at the cost of his own life. The Shepherd does not calculate saying, "Oh well, I have 99 more sheep; one lost sheep doesn't make any difference." Our Father is not willing that any of his little ones be lost. He leaves the 99 and goes looking for the lost one. When he finds him, he rejoices. Jesus wants us to learn his shepherd heart for the lost.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the shepherd heart of Jesus who regards every person as precious.

One Word: Each one is precious

IF YOUR BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU

Matthew 18:15-20

Key Verse: 18:19

1. Go to him (15-17)

This is not easy. We are naturally inclined to complain to others about one who has wronged us. But Jesus says, "Go and show him his fault just between the two of you." If he doesn't repent, then take one or two others and try again. Finally, if he refuses to listen even to God's servants, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. This means that he becomes one to whom the gospel must be preached.

2. Unite in prayer (18-20)

Jesus wants his people to be one in him. This is why we can't ignore the small or large sins that divide the fellowship. When we unite in prayer, he hears us. When even two or three come

together in Jesus' name, Jesus is there. We can agree on a prayer topic if it is Jesus' prayer topic. We can be one if Jesus is living in each of us. There is no unity apart from Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to solve problems your way. Help us to be one in Jesus and help us to unite in prayer.

One Word: Two or three gathered in Jesus' name

FORGIVE

Matthew 18:21-35

Key Verse: 18:21,22

1. Lord, how often shall I forgive? (21-22)

Peter thought that some people might take advantage of a Christian's good heart and keep on sinning and repenting. Surely there must be some limit to forgiveness. But Jesus said that there are no limits to forgiveness. Why?

2. A debt too great to pay (23-35)

Jesus told a parable about a king whose servant owed him several million dollars. The servant deserved to be sold as a slave to pay back even part of the debt. However, the king had mercy and forgave him. But the servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a few dollars. He demanded payment, ignoring his fellow servant's pleas for mercy. We are great debtors to God. He forgave all our sins for Jesus' sake. We deserve to die, but Jesus died for us. How can we refuse forgiveness to anyone?

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me of all self-righteousness and give me the humble heart of a forgiven sinner.

One Word: I am a forgiven sinner

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

Matthew 19:1-15

Key Verse: 19:6

1. Is it lawful to divorce? (1-9)

The Pharisees asked Jesus a hard question. They wanted to accuse him of contradicting the Bible. And they had adultery in their hearts. Jesus taught them Genesis 2 to show that marriage is not just an arrangement for human convenience; each marriage is created by God. The bond of

marriage should not be broken by men. Moses made a concession to men's hardness of heart in order to restrain, not to encourage it.

2. Let the children come to me (10-15)

Jesus' disciples were shocked by Jesus' words. They had thought of marriage as a purely personal matter. If marriage is so binding, maybe it's better not to marry! Jesus told them that people are different and each person must follow God's leading in his own life. Children are most hurt by divorce. Jesus welcomed and blessed the children. We must all come to Jesus with the uncalculating hearts of children.

Prayer: Lord, help me to accept your absolute word simply, like a child.

One Word: Only God can establish a home

THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Matthew 19:16-22 (Sun.) February 7

Key Verse: 19:21

1. What good thing must I do? (16-19)

This young man had spiritual desire. He knew that he lacked something. By human standards he was morally upright, but by God's standards, he was a sinner. So Jesus taught him that only God is good. Jesus asked him about the commandments having to do with human relations in order that he might realize his spiritual need. Superficially, he seemed to keep these, but actually, he did not love his neighbor as himself. His great problem was that he did not have a personal relationship with God.

2. What do I still lack? (20-22)

Jesus opened the way for this young man to be his disciple and to become a child of God. Jesus invited him to exchange worldly treasures for treasures in heaven. This young man was not free. He had become a slave to his possessions, so he turned and went away sadly.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love you first, others next and myself last. Thank you for the gift of eternal life.

One Word: Follow Jesus

THE REWARDS OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Matthew 19:23-30

Key Verse: 19:29

1. With God all things are possible (23-26)

Jesus was sorry when the rich young man went away. He commented on how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, it is impossible for any person to save himself. But with God, all things are possible. When we simply come to Jesus and follow him, trusting him for our salvation, he does not fail. He keeps his promises and gives life, peace and the kingdom of God.

2. We have left everything (27-30)

Peter and the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. But they still had some things to leave--their selfish ambition, their pride, their own ideas. But still, they were disciples. They had committed themselves to Jesus, so they would receive the reward he promised. Someday we who belong to Jesus will reign with him; we will receive a hundredfold for all we leave for his sake. A sacrifice made for Jesus' sake and the gospel's is not a sacrifice. It is the only really safe investment.

Prayer: Lord, train me in faith until I can leave everything for your sake.

One Word: For Jesus' sake

THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matthew 20:1-16

Key Verse: 20:16

1. Go and work in my vineyard (1-7)

The vineyard owner hired laborers in the marketplace early in the morning. He promised to pay them minimum day's wages. Later, he went to the marketplace again and found many jobless men. So he hired more laborers. He hired some at noon, others at 3 p.m. and finally, some at 5 p.m. At the end of the day he asked his foreman to pay each man a day's wages, beginning with those who were hired at 5 in the afternoon.

2. Are you envious? (8-16)

Those who worked all day grumbled when they received the minimum day's wages. They were envious because they compared themselves with others. They said that their master was unfair. But God's servants should not make such comparisons. Envy denies God's sovereignty; it arises from a self-righteous heart. We are all sinners, saved by God's grace. By his grace only God gives us his work to do.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your great grace. Help me to do the work you give me to do with a diligent and thankful heart.

One Word: "Go, work in my vineyard"

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SERVE

Matthew 20:17-28

Key Verse: 20:28

1. Jesus predicts his death (17-19)

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He taught his disciples again that he must suffer, die and be raised to life. This is why he came. His death and resurrection is the good news that saves us from sin and brings us from death to life.

2. A mother's request (20-28)

The mother of James and John asked Jesus to give her sons the highest places in his coming kingdom. James and John--and the others, too--didn't understand the nature of Jesus' messiahship, or the nature of true greatness. They all thought that to be great was to be like Caesar. Jesus taught them about true greatness. The one who serves others, not the one who lords it over others is truly great. Jesus lived as a humble servant and died as a ransom sacrifice to save sinners. He is truly great. Those who drink his cup by sharing in his suffering are also great.

Prayer: Lord, help me to learn Jesus' loving, serving heart and life so that I may have true greatness.

One Word: He gave his life for me

TWO BLIND MEN RECEIVE SIGHT

Matthew 20:29-34

Key Verse: 20:30

1. Lord, Son of David, have mercy (29-31)

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to die. A large crowd followed as he and his disciples left Jericho. Two blind beggars sitting by the road heard that Jesus was passing by. They believed that he was the Messiah who came to make the blind see and the lame walk, so they shouted with all their might, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us." The crowd rebuked them because they seemed noisy and presumptuous. But the beggars didn't care. They shouted even more loudly. They had more spiritual sight than James and John (21-22), or the crowd (31).

2. What do you want? (32-34)

Jesus didn't rebuke the beggars. He never rebukes those who ask him for mercy. When he asked what they wanted, they said, "We want our sight." Jesus had compassion on them and healed their blind eyes. Jesus wants to heal our spiritual blindness.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on me, and on sin-sick young people who don't even know that they are blind.

One Word: Jesus makes the blind see

YOUR KING COMES

Matthew 21:1-11

Key Verse: 21:5

1. The Lord needs them (1-6)

Jesus wanted to announce his kingship. He chose to do so by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, as Zechariah the prophet had prophesied (Zec 9:9,10). He sent 2 disciples to a nearby village to commandeer a donkey and her colt. Jesus is the owner of all things. He taught his disciples a lesson in obedience that helped prepare them for the hard events ahead.

2. "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (7-11)

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred. The people used their cloaks for the donkey's saddle; they cut branches and spread them with their cloaks on the road before him. This was the way kings of Israel once had been welcomed into the city (2Ki 9:13). But Jesus was a humble and gentle king. He did not come with an army to conquer by force; he came in peace to save and give life, to rule men's hearts in righteousness and peace.

Prayer: Lord, I welcome you as my Savior and King. Come, rule my heart in peace.

One Word: See, your King comes

MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER

Matthew 21:12-17

Key Verse: 21:13

1. Jesus cleansed the temple (12-13)

When Jesus entered the house of God, he saw that the religious leaders were doing their own business; they were not praying; they did not care about God's work or God's people.

2. The blind and lame healed (14)

Jesus healed the blind and the lame who came to him in the temple. This was the work of the Messiah.

3. The children shout, "Hosanna!" (15-17)

Even though Jesus taught God's word and healed the sick, the religious leaders did not listen or believe. They were angry when the children welcomed Jesus as Messiah with shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David." Jesus taught them from the Bible that the children were right. Their welcoming songs and shou ts fulfilled scripture.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my heart and make in it a place of prayer. Give me eyes to see your work and zeal to do it.

One Word: Make God's house a house of prayer

BELIEVE AND PRAY

Matthew 21:18-22

Key Verse: 21:22

1. The fig tree withers (18-19)

Jesus saw the fruitless fig tree with its luxuriant foliage as a kind of parable of the temple. The temple and the priests' robes were beautiful; there were many ceremonies and much formal worship. But there was no real prayer or worship of God, and no faith. Such a religion was already dead. Jesus taught the disciples a lesson in faith by rebuking the fig tree.

2. Believe and ask in prayer (20-22)

When the disciples were amazed by the withered tree, Jesus taught them how to have living faith, faith that moves mountains. First, have faith in Jesus, for he tells the truth; second, cast out the sickness of a doubting heart; third, pray. Let us cast out the doubt and unfruitfulness of the past and learn the prayer that moves mountains.

Prayer: Lord, cast doubt from my heart and teach me faith that moves mountains. Help me to pray, claiming your promises and thanking you for your faithful answers.

One Word: Do not doubt; believe and pray

WHO GAVE YOU THIS AUTHORITY?

Matthew 21:23-27

Key Verse: 21:24

1. By what authority? (23)

Jesus had driven the merchants from the temple; he rebuked the chief priests. When he taught in the temple, people listened. The chief priests were jealous of his power and popularity. He had no formal education; he had no license. He had never been to seminary; he was not ordained. So they asked him for proof of his authority. Their implication was that he had none.

2. Jesus asks one question (24-27)

Jesus answered by asking a question: Was John's baptism from heaven or from men? John the Baptist was a hero. When he had preached repentance, thousands had repented. He had died a martyr's death for rebuking the evil and immoral King Herod. This same John had proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah sent by God. So the religions leaders refused to answer Jesus' question. Men who do not follow truth, but follow expediency, are evil. Jesus is the Christ of God; we must obey him.

Prayer: Lord, you have all authority in heaven and on earth. Teach me to obey.

One Word: Jesus has authority

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Matthew 21:28-32

Key Verse: 21:32

1. Two sons (28-31)

One son sounded rude and rebellious. When his father asked him to work, he adamantly refused. But he thought about his father's request and about his own curt refusal. He repented and went to do his father's work. The second son was polite. He didn't want to hurt his father's feelings. When his father told him to go and work, he quickly said, "I will." But he was lazy, selfish, and busy with his own affairs. So he did not go. It is easy to see which one pleased his father.

2. Repent and believe (31b-32)

The Pharisees were like the second son. They seemed to be religious and they knew all the right answers. But they only did what they wanted to do. The tax collectors were rude and sinful. But they listened to Jesus' words and repented. Their lives were changed. God wants repentance and the obedience that comes from faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to believe, obey your word, and do your work.

One Word: Repent, believe, and obey

THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

Matthew 21:33-46

Key Verse: 21:42

1. The selfish tenants (33-39)

This parable is about God's redemptive history. Even though God and his Messiah are rejected by selfish men, God is not defeated. The landowner in the parable is God; his vineyard, Israel. He blessed the Israelites and wanted them to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). They took his blessing, but did not give him the fruit of obedience and love. They rejected the prophets because they didn't want to repent. Finally, he sent his Son, and they killed him. Those who reject God and his Son in order to live for their own pleasure and profit are like the tenants.

2. The rejected stone (40-46)

Jesus' faith and understanding of history was based on the Scriptures. He saw beyond his own suffering and death to victory. God would make him--the rejected stone--the cornerstone and capstone of his redemptive history. Indeed, God took the vineyard away from those who rejected Jesus and gave it to the new Israel, the people of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a faithful steward of my life and offer fruit to you.

One Word: Give fruit to God our Redeemer

THE WEDDING BANQUET

Matthew 22:1-14

Key Verse: 22:2

1. Come to the wedding banquet (1-7)

The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding banquet. It is overflowing with happiness and joy. Jesus the Son is the Bridegroom. In this parable, the king sent word to the invited guests (the Jews) to come to the wedding banquet. But they were too busy with their own affairs, so they refused. The king was very angry. God is our King. His business must come first.

2. Go to the street corners (8-10)

The king sent his servants to go and invite everyone they could find. This is a parable of God's mission to the lost Gentile world. The servants did so, and the wedding hall was filled.

3. A man without a wedding garment (11-14)

The King provided wedding garments for everyone. When we come to the heavenly banquet, we must put off our own dirty clothes--our sin and self-righteousness--and put on the righteousness of Chris t.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your invitation. Clothe me in Jesus' righteousness.

One Word: Wear the wedding clothes of Christ

CAESAR'S THINGS...AND GOD'S

Matthew 22:15-22

Key Verse: 22:21b

1. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's (15-17)

The Roman army enforced Roman peace in Israel. The Jews especially resented paying taxes to Rome. Some felt that it was disloyal to God to support such an evil system. The Pharisees were trying to entrap Jesus when they asked him about paying taxes. But their patriotism was a mask for selfishness--they did not want to give anything to anyone. Jesus exposes selfishness which wears religion as a mask.

2. Give to God what is God's (18-22)

The Roman coin bore Caesar's image and inscription, but God's image is in every person. He is our Creator. We belong to him. When we give ourselves to God, worldly power cannot control us. Jesus taug ht us that we should pay what we owe. Most importantly, we must give our hearts and our bodies to God our Creator by obeying his word and accepting his sovereignty.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my selfishness; help me to fulfill my human obligations and to give myself to you.

One Word: Give to Caesar; give to God

GOD OF THE LIVING

Matthew 22:23-33

Key Verse: 22:32

1. You do not know the Scriptures (23-29a)

The Sadducees did not believe in heaven or in spiritual reality. They wanted to make resurrection from the dead look absurd, and they invented a gloo my story about a woman who married seven brothers in succession--according to the levirate law. Their question to Jesus arose from their ignorance of the Bible. So Jesus taught them the Bible. Moses speaks of the Patriarchs in the

present tense; they were dead, but they are living with God. The God of the living is still their God.

2. The power of God (29b-33)

God is the Creator. He gives and takes away physical life. He gives eternal life. People who are preoccupied with death and who allow fatalism and materialism to rule their hearts cannot know the power of God. People's relationships in heaven are far more beautiful than the highest and holiest of earthly ties.

Prayer: Lord, because you live, I shall also live forever. Praise your name!

One Word: He is God of the living

LOVE GOD, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Matthew 22:34-40

Key Verse: 22:37

1. Love God (34-38)

When the lawyer asked Jesus, "Which is the greatest commandment?" Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5. The first and greatest commandment is to Love God with all one's heart and soul and mind. God is our Creator. He made us for his own glory. He wants to be first in our affections, first in our decisions and first in our commitments. St. Augustine said, "Love God and do as you please." If we truly love God, then our greatest joy is to please him.

2. Love your neighbor (39-40)

Jesus quoted Leviticus 19:18, and added the second commandment. Some people think: "If I love God with all my heart, then there isn't room for anyone else." But spiritual mathematics doesn't work like this. If one loves God, then he is enabled to love others rightly. If one does not love God, then he only loves himself.

Prayer: Lord, fill me with your love. Help me to love Jesus first, others next and myself last.

One Word: Love God with all your heart

CHRIST IS LORD

Matthew 22:41-46

Key Verse: 22:43

1. Whose son is Christ? (41-42)

The Pharisees and Jewish leaders were expecting a political or military Messiah. They wanted a powerful king like David, who would improve their human conditions. So they rejected humble Jesus who came to set men free from sin and establish God's kingdom in men's hearts. When Jesus asked them, "Whose son is the Christ?", they said, "He is the son of David."

2. Who is it that David calls Lord? (43-46)

Jesus quoted Psalm 110, a psalm about the Messiah written by David. In it he speaks of the Messiah as his Lord. This means that the Messiah is more than just a human descendant of David. The Messiah is God himself. Furthermore, those who oppose and reject him will be defeated and put under his feet. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and those who belong to it will reign with him.

Prayer: Lord, you are my Christ. Come and rule my heart and life. Hasten the day when your enemies will be put under your feet.

One Word: Jesus Christ is King and Lord

TO BE EXALTED

Matthew 23:1-12

Key Verse: 23:11,12

1. Obey God's word (1-3)

The Pharisees were Bible scholars. They studied the Bible diligently, but they did not obey its teachings. Instead of humbly repenting before God's word, they burdened other people with many rules and enjoyed the honor and prestige of being Bible teachers. Jesus told his disciples to study the Bible so that they might obey God's word; but Jesus' disciples must not become like the Pharisees.

2. Do not exalt yourself (4-12)

God's servants must live before God. They must exalt God, not themselves. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We must all love and obey our Father God, and learn from our Teacher, Christ. One who stops learning and growing cannot be called a disciple. Jesus' disciples must be servants who respect and honor others. We must learn from each other and encourage one another.

Prayer: Lord, transform my proud heart into a humble and learning heart. Help me to grow in love.

One Word: Seek God's glory

DON'T NEGLECT THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Matthew 23:13-28

Key Verse: 23:23b

1. They shut the door of heaven (13-15)

The Pharisees lived by the tradition of the elders, and they were faithful to follow Jewish culture. But they did not seek God himself through prayerful and obedient Bible study. They branded Jesus as a cult leader and tried to stop people from coming to him. They worked hard to win converts to their way of thinking. Jesus called them sons of hell.

2. Blind guides (16-22)

Jesus calls them "blind" five times. They are blind because they see everything physically or materially. They have no spiritual sight.

3. Don't neglect important things (23-28)

Justice, mercy and faithfulness are important. The inner man is important. We must clean our hearts and let Jesus reign there. Then we can practice justice, mercy and faithfulness. We must not neglect the important things.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my heart and give me spiritual insight.

One Word: Obey God; do the important things

O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM

Matthew 23:29-39

Key Verse: 23:37

1. The blood of the righteous (29-36)

The Pharisees who rejected Jesus stood in a long tradition of men who persecuted and killed God's servants. All people who don't want to repent are a part of this tradition. Prophets who teach the word of God and call people to repentance, and men and women who challenge the culture of their times by seeking to obey God's word are always targets of persecution, from Abel, the righteous man whom Cain slew, to the prophet Zechariah. This Zechariah is probably the prophet murdered by King Joash (2Ch 24:20-22) for speaking out against idolatry. It has always been costly for a person to stand on God's side and speak truth.

2. Jesus weeps (37-39)

Jesus came with open arms of love and blessing to God's people. He came to save them from their sins and shelter them in his bosom. How sorry God is when people reject his love! When

people reject his love, they must experience his righteous judgment, for Jesus will come again as Judge.

Prayer: Lord, I welcome you into my heart. Fill me with your love and compassion.

One Word: Welcome Jesus, whatever the cost

THEN THE END WILL COME

Matthew 24:1-14

Key Verse: 24:14

1. False security and false messiahs (1-8)

Jesus' disciples were country boys. They were impressed by the big building--especially the temple building--in Jerusalem. But Jesus taught them that the things in this world that look so solid and secure will all be destroyed. The end of the age will come climactically, when Jesus comes again (3). We must not be deceived by the false security offered by material things; we must not be fooled by false messiahs or false hopes.

2. The gospel must be preached (9-14)

As the end approaches, stress increases. God's people are hated and persecuted; many people are and will be deceived by false cults. When wickedness increases, people become fearful and distrustful and love grows cold. God's people must (i) stand firm to the end; (ii) preach the gospel to the whole world.

Prayer: Lord, warm my cold heart at the fires of your love. Help me to stand firm to the end and preach the gospel to all nations.

One Word: The gospel will be preached

THE SON OF MAN WILL COME

Matthew 24:15-35

Key Verse: 24:30

1. Terrible times (15-29)

Jesus spoke about two terrible times. One was the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 A.D. The other will be when Jesus comes again. When holy things are desecrated and God is insulted rather than worshiped, we can know that terrible times are coming. In such times, God's people must not be overwhelmed by fear, nor should they seek security by holding on to material things. We must not be deceived by false Christs. God will protect his elect.

2. The Son of Man will come (30-35)

Jesus will come again with great power and glory, on clouds of the sky. It is the day of judgment for all nations, and the day of salvation for all who belong to Jesus. When he comes, everyone will know it, for it will be like lightning that enlightens the whole sky. He will gather his elect from the four corners of the earth.

Prayer: Lord, help me so to live each day that I may be ready to welcome Jesus when he comes again in glory and power.

One Word: Jesus will come in glory

BE A FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT

Matthew 24:36-51

Key Verse: 24:45

1. Keep watch, be ready (36-44)

No one but God knows when Jesus will come agai n. Those who claim to know are liars. In the days of Noah, no one expected the flood. Everyone was busy doing his own thing. They were engaged in the ordinary activities of physical life. They thought about food, clothes, cars, boyfriends or girlfriends, computers, etc. They had no spiritual struggle and no room in their lives for God. They were not ready to meet God when the flood came suddenly. People who live like this today are not ready to meet Jesus when he comes again. Jesus tells us to keep watch and be ready.

2. Be faithful servants (45-51)

How can we be ready? By following the example of the faithful and wise servant. He was entrusted with his master's household. He gives food at the proper time. He works hard; he doesn't procrastinate. One who lives before men's eyes will not be ready; one who lives before God will be ready whenever Jesus comes.

Prayer: Lord, help me to await your coming with an eager and ready heart.

One Word: Be a faithful and wise servant

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Matthew 25:1-13

Key Verse: 25:4

1. The waiting ten virgins (1-5)

Jesus, the Bridegroom, will surely come and bring his kingdom. How then should we live? In this parable, ten girls went out to meet the bridegroom. They all took lamps full of oil, but five of them took extra oil, just in case he was delayed. The extra oil is persevering, committed faith--faith that doesn't give up when the night is long and the going gets tough.

2. The Bridegroom comes (6-13)

At midnight there was a joyful shout: "The Bridegroom is coming!" But the five foolish girls were out of oil. They asked the wise ones to share, but they were refused. One must meet Jesus with his own faith--no one can borrow the faith of another. While the foolish girls were out buying oil, the bridegroom arrived, went in, and closed the door. They missed their chance to meet him and they missed the banquet.

Prayer: Lord, I love you. You are my true Husband and Friend and Savior. Help me to persevere in faith and in love with a prepared heart as I await your coming.

One Word: Take your own oil

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matthew 25:14-30

Key Verse: 25:21

1. Well done, faithful servant (14-23)

The kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a journey, who entrusted his property to three servants--each according to his ability. Two servants took what was entrusted to them and put it to work. Each worked hard and doubled what he had received. When the master returned, he settled accounts with his servants. He said to the two servants, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" He rewarded them with greater responsibility, more opportunity for service and a share in the master's happiness.

2. The wicked and lazy servant (24-30)

The third servant took no chances. He hid his money in a hole in the ground. He seemed wise, but he was only fearful and lazy. When he appeared self-righteously with his one talent and his excuses, his master was furious. God wants his servants to use the time, talents and the life he has given us to serve him and to serve our own generation. We must live by faith, not by fear.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful in small things.

One Word: Be faithful in small things

THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Matthew 25:31-46

Key Verse: 25:40

1. The Son of Man will come (31-33)

Jesus came the first time to die as our Savior. He will come in glory the second time to judge the earth.

2. The sheep on his right hand (34-40)

Who are the blessed sheep who will have an inheritance in his kingdom? They are those who live with the mind of Jesus--as brothers and friends to the hungry, the homeless, the sick, the prisoners, the lonely. Those who serve the needy with Jesus' heart, for Jesus' sake, have an inheritance in Jesus' kingdom.

3. The goats on his left hand (41-46)

Some people don't believe in hell. But Jesus teaches that those who live in this suffering world without Jesus in their hearts are destined for eternal punishment in the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. We can only have the mind and heart of Jesus when we confess our sins and receive him as our Savior and Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help me live as your sheep, and grow until I can be a shepherd of your flock.

One Word: Have the mind of Christ

SHE HAS DONE A BEAUTIFUL THING

Matthew 26:1-16

Key Verse: 26:10b,13

1. Two days before the Passover (1-5)

The Passover celebrated God's deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt (Ex 12). The blood of the Passover lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts. Those under the blood were saved when the angel of death passed over Egypt. Jesus came to be the Passover Lamb. He delivers us from slavery to sin and death (Jn 1:29). Evil men plotted Jesus' death. They fulfilled prophecy and condemned themselves.

2. She has done a beautiful thing (6-16)

Jesus was eating dinner in Bethany when a woman came in and poured some very expensive perfume on his head. Perhaps she was Mary of Bethany (Jn 12). Perhaps she was a woman made dirty and useless by her sins, but now made whole and pure by Jesus' love. Jesus' disciples

(Judas) did not think about Jesus' love or God's grace (or the poor). They only thought about money (14-16). Jesus accepted this woman's act of love and gratitude and drew her into gospel history.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love Jesus more than anything else, and to share his love with others.

One Word: A beautiful thing

THE BLOOD COVENANT

Matthew 26:17-30

Key Verse: 26:28

1. Woe to the betrayer (17-25)

Jesus ate the last meal with his disciples. It was a meal which symbolized his love for them. His heart was burdened because of the man who did not receive his love, but had allowed Satan to come into his heart. When Jesus warned them that one would betray him, each man realized the possibility of betrayal in himself. To the end, Jesus tried to turn Judas from the way of destruction.

2. For the forgiveness of sins (26-30)

Jesus taught them the meaning of his death and planted hope in the kingdom of heaven in their hearts. Jesus gave thanks and broke bread and gave it to his disciples. He asked them to share his suffering. He took wine, gave thanks, and offered it to them. It represented his blood, shed to seal the new covenant between God and all believers. When we accept Jesus--believe in him--we are forgiven our sins and set free. We have the glorious hope of eating and drinking with Jesus in the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, I belong to you, for you made a covenant with me, and sealed it in your blood.

One Word: Now I belong to Jesus

JESUS PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE CROSS

Matthew 26:31-35

Key Verse: 26:32

1. You will all run away (31-32)

Jesus told his disciples that on that very night the shepherd would be struck and the flock would scatter. This fulfilled Zechariah 13:7. Jesus also gave them a promise: “After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” This was a promise of resurrection and a promise to meet them

again. But the disciples were so preoccupied with their own sorrow that they didn't listen to what Jesus was saying.

2. “I will never run away” (33-35)

Peter was confident of his own love for Jesus and confident of his loyalty. But Jesus knew him better than he knew himself. Peter was hurt by Jesus' suggestion that he would disown Jesus. But Jesus was preparing him for failure and opening a door for his repentance and return.

Prayer: Lord, I don't want to betray Jesus, but I am very weak. O Risen Jesus, come and dwell with me and help me to be faithful to death.

One Word: The Risen Jesus is our good shepherd

GETHSEMANE

Matthew 26:36-46

Key Verse: 26:39

1. Not my will, but yours be done (36-42)

Jesus was young and full of life. He did not want to die. Yet the Scripture said that he had been sent to die for the sins of the world (Isa 53; 1Pe 2:24). He struggled alone in prayer to defeat the temptations of the flesh--the temptation to find an easier way. He called God "Father", for he never doubted God's love. Notice the progression in his prayer (37-38,39,42,44) as he struggled to submit to the will of God. (Compare Heb 5:7-9.)

2. Sleeping disciples (43-46)

Jesus took his three closest disciples to the place of prayer. He shared with them his burden of sorrow and asked them to watch and pray. He needed their prayer support, and they needed to pray, for “the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” They could not overcome their bodies, so they slept. Later, they would give in to fear and run.

Prayer: Lord, help me to pray instead of sleep. Help me to know your will, and give me strength to do it.

One Word: Not as I will, but as you will

JESUS ARRESTED

Matthew 26:47-56

Key Verse: 26:53,54

1. The kiss of Judas (47-50a)

Judas, one of the Twelve, led the mob to Jesus. Then, according to a prearranged signal, he kissed Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi." Jesus did not run, fight, or hate--he called him "Friend." Jesus died for his friends (Jn 15:13). When Judas rejected Jesus' love, Satan came into his heart.

2. Put away your sword (50b-52)

One disciple (Peter) thought he was ready. He had a sword--and he used it. But Jesus stopped him. Jesus' way is not the way of human zeal nor the way of the sword. His disciples had slept instead of praying; they were not ready.

3. Scripture fulfilled (53-56)

Jesus could have asked for an army of angels to come and save him, but he didn't. He had come to do God's will. His arrest and death fulfilled Scripture.

Prayer: Lord, help me to find direction for all my decisions not in personal benefit or human calculations, but in your word.

One Word: To fulfill Scripture

JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Matthew 26:57-68

Key Verse: 26:64

1. Jesus remained silent (57-63)

The religious leaders assembled in the middle of the night to try Jesus. They had already decided the verdict and the sentence. They were just looking for a charge to bring against him, and some witnesses to prove it. False witnesses accused him of threatening to destroy the temple. They twisted his words (Jn 2:19-22). Jesus remained silent (Isa 53:7).

2. The Son of Man at the right hand of God (64-68)

The high priest asked Jesus to say under oath if he were the Christ, the Son of God. He said, "Yes." Then he testified to the glorious hope that was in his heart. Although now he stood condemned by evil men, one day they would stand before him, for he would soon sit at God's right hand; he would come again in glory to reign. Jesus was who he claimed to be, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to hold on to your promise and to your glorious hope, so that fear and doubt may be driven from my heart, and I may boldly testify to Jesus.

One Word: Jesus reigns; he will come again

PETER'S BETRAYAL

Matthew 26:69-75

Key Verse: 26:75a

1. Peter was sitting in the courtyard (69-73)

He wanted to be loyal to Jesus, so when Jesus was arrested, he followed at a distance. However, because there was no decision to live and die for Jesus' sake, fear ruled his heart. He went into the courtyard and sat down with the guards, but he was not clear about his identity as Jesus' disciple. Jesus had predicted Peter's betrayal, but Peter had not accepted Jesus' words. He had not prayed. He was on the frontline of the battle, but there was no decision of faith in his heart.

2. Then Peter remembered (74-75)

A servant girl recognized Peter, but he denied being with Jesus. Then another girl recognized him. This time he denied it with an oath. Finally, someone recognized his Galilean accent. Peter's fear took over. He cursed and swore, saying, "I don't know the man." Then the rooster crowed. Peter remembered Jesus' words (34), went out, and wept.

Prayer: Lord, give me a decision to live and die for Jesus' sake and help me to keep your word in my heart.

One Word: Remember Jesus' words

JUDAS' REGRET

Matthew 27:1-10

Key Verse: 27:3

1. That's your responsibility! (1-5)

There's a difference between repentance and regret. Peter wept bitter tears when he disowned Jesus. He despaired, but he did not run away from God. Later, the Risen Jesus came and forgave him. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he was seized with remorse. He said, "I have betrayed innocent blood," and returned the 30 silver coins. But sins once committed cannot be undone by regrets. When Judas came to the chief priests with his regrets, they said, "That's your responsibility." Judas could not solve his sin problem. But if he had repented, God would forgive, for God forgives repentant sinners.

2. Blood money (6-10)

The religious leaders unwittingly fulfilled Scripture when they used the money to buy a potter's field (Zech 11:13). The Sovereign God was still in control of all events.

Prayer: Lord, help me to have a humble and repentant heart before you, for I am a sinner who needs your forgiveness.

One Word: Not regrets but repentance

ARE YOU KING OF THE JEWS?

Matthew 27:11-26

Key Verse: 27:11

1. "Yes, it is as you say" (11-14)

Pilate had the power to set Jesus free or to order his execution. If Jesus claimed to be a king, he would be accused of a capital crime. But when Pilate asked him if he were king of the Jews, he said, "Yes." To Pilate's amazement, he said nothing in his own defense. Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. His rule is in the hearts of men. His rule brings peace.

2. Pilate washed his hands (15-26)

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent of any crime, and that the religious leaders had handed him over out of envy. He tried to find a way both to release Jesus and satisfy the crowd, but the chief priests had done their work well, and the crowd shouted, "Crucify him!" Pilate finally gave up. He thought he could wash innocent blood off his hands and put the responsibility on others. Jesus' blood is indeed on all sinners because he died for us. His blood is on me; by his blood I am saved.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are my King because you bought me with your blood.

One Word: Jesus shed his blood for me

THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

Matthew 27:27-31

Key Verse: 27:29

1. The crown of thorns (27-30)

Before Jesus was crucified, the Roman soldiers in their ignorance subjected him to a mockery of the deepest truths of his person and work. They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe; they twisted together a crown of thorns and forced it on his brow. They put a mock scepter in his hand. Then they knelt in mockery and said, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Jesus was indeed King. He

fulfilled God's promise to David (2Sa 7:16; Isa 9:6,7). He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Php 2:9-11). The soldiers didn't know that their mockery was God's truth. It was for me and for you that he endured such shame at the hands of sinners.

2. They led him away to be crucified (31)

They put his own clothes on him and led him away to be crucified. The One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth is given was totally helpless in the hands of sinful men.

Prayer: Lord, you endured such shame for me. What have I suffered for you?

One Word: He suffered and died for me

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

Matthew 27:32-44

Key Verse: 27:42

1. Jesus, the King of the Jews (32-37)

Jesus was too weak from the beatings to carry his cross, so Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service. This must have been the worst and best experience of Simon's life. Jesus refused a bitter narcotic given to ease suffering. The soldiers divided his clothes and unwittingly fulfilled Scripture (Ps 22:18). The sign above his head proclaimed, and sought to mock, the truth: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

2. He saved others–not himself (38-44)

He was crucified between two robbers. It was an effort to add to his shame and guilt, but, in reality, it fulfilled Scripture (Isa 53:12b). As he hung helplessly between heaven and earth, his lifeblood slowly trickling from his wounds, passers by insulted and mocked him. The theme of their mockery was, "Come down from the cross.” “Save yourself." But Jesus did not save himself. He gave up his life for the sins of the world. He died to save me, and you, and all who put their trust in him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for saving me. You suffered more than my tongue can describe, and you did it for me. How can I repay the debt I owe?

One Word: Jesus suffered for me

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Matthew 27:45-56

Key Verse: 27:50

1. “My God, why have you forsaken me? (45-50)

For three hours darkness covered the land. Jesus suffered most because he bore in his body the sins of the world. Because of our sins, he felt deep separation from God, so he cried out in the words of Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This Psalm ends with a cry of triumph (22:27,28). But on the cross, our Lord Jesus suffered incredible physical and spiritual agony. Then, he cried again and gave up his spirit.

2. “Surely he was the Son of God” (51-56)

When Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, and the way into the throne room of God was opened (Heb10:19-22). The dead were raised to life, for his death broke the power of Satan (Heb 2:14). The centurion confessed, "Surely he is the Son of God.” The faithful women watched in quiet despair, but they did not run away. They became the first witnesses of his resurrection.

Prayer: Lord, you bore my sins in your own body on the cross. By your wounds I am healed. Through your blood I come before the throne of my Father.

One Word: Jesus died for me

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

Matthew 27:57-66

Key Verse: 27:63

1. Joseph of Arimathea (57-61)

Joseph was a wealthy, highly respected man. He was a disciple of Jesus. He had kept his discipleship a secret for a long time, but now he came out in the open. He claimed the body of Jesus and buried him in his own new tomb. Joseph and the two Marys were faithful to the end.

2. Secure the tomb (62-66)

The chief priests and Pharisees had better memories than the disciples. They remembered Jesus' promise to rise after three days. They requested and received special assistance from Pilate to secure the tomb and make sure that the disciples did not steal the body of Jesus. They tried to prevent the resurrection; they only succeeded in proving it. Friends could not help him; enemies could not stop him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to do what I can and to be faithful to you. Thank you for showing me that the enemies of Jesus cannot keep him in the tomb.

One Word: My sins were buried with him

HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

Matthew 28:1-15

Key Verse: 28:5,6

1. The first witnesses (1-10)

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb early on the first Easter Day. They went in sorrow, but their sorrow turned to amazement and fear, for an earthquake and an angel had opened the sealed tomb. The guards were terrified. The angel gave them the resurrection message and a mission: "He is not here; he is risen, just as he said. Come and see--then, go and tell his disciples." The women obeyed with fear and joy, and on the way they met Jesus himself.

2. The first attempt to hide the truth (11-15)

The guards reported facts that proved the truth of the resurrection. But the chief priests were not interested in truth. They bribed the guards to tell lies. People still try to pretend that Jesus did not come and die and rise again.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for turning my sorrow and fear into joy through the resurrection of Jesus.

One Word: Jesus is alive; go and tell

THEREFORE GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

Matthew 28:16-20

Key Verse: 28:19a

1. All authority in heaven and on earth (16-18)

Jesus' disciples met him in Galilee. They worshiped him, but some doubted. Jesus is the Creator and Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. He came and died to purchase our forgiveness and eternal salvation, and God raised him from death. He chose to commit this precious gospel to the hands of these weak and doubtful disciples. The power and glory belong to him.

2. Go and make disciples (19-20)

Jesus commanded his disciples to be disciple-makers. Baptism represents commitment to Jesus and to his Body. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit seal his covenant with the believer. Disciples must study the Bible and obey it. Disciple-makers must teach the Bible and help others to obey it. We must be trained by Jesus and his word until we can obey his commands. And Jesus promised, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Prayer: Lord, help me to be Jesus' disciple; help me to obey your command to be a disciple-maker. Let me be with you forever.

One Word: Make disciples of all nations