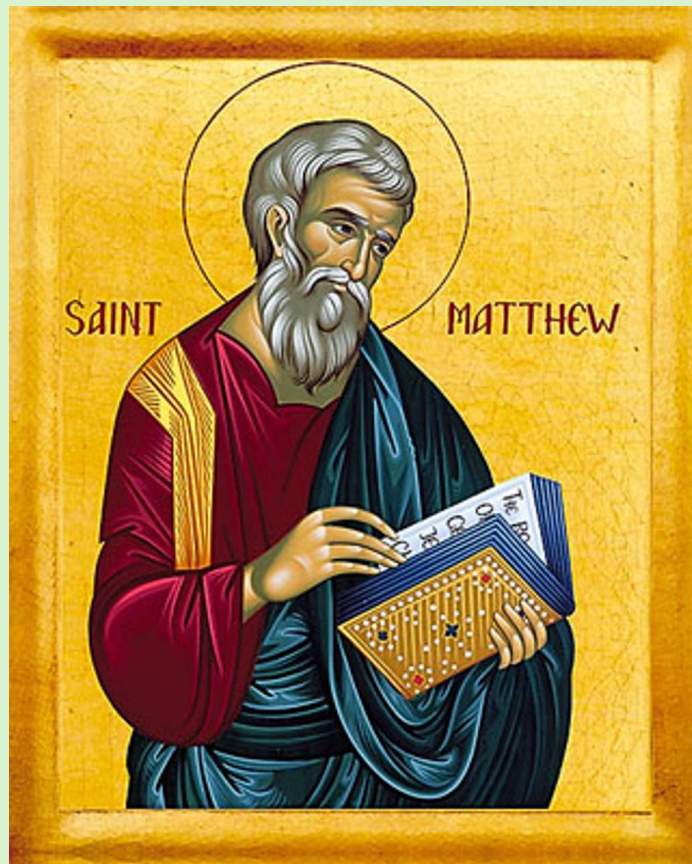




The Gospel According to St. Matthew

Middle & High school Ministries

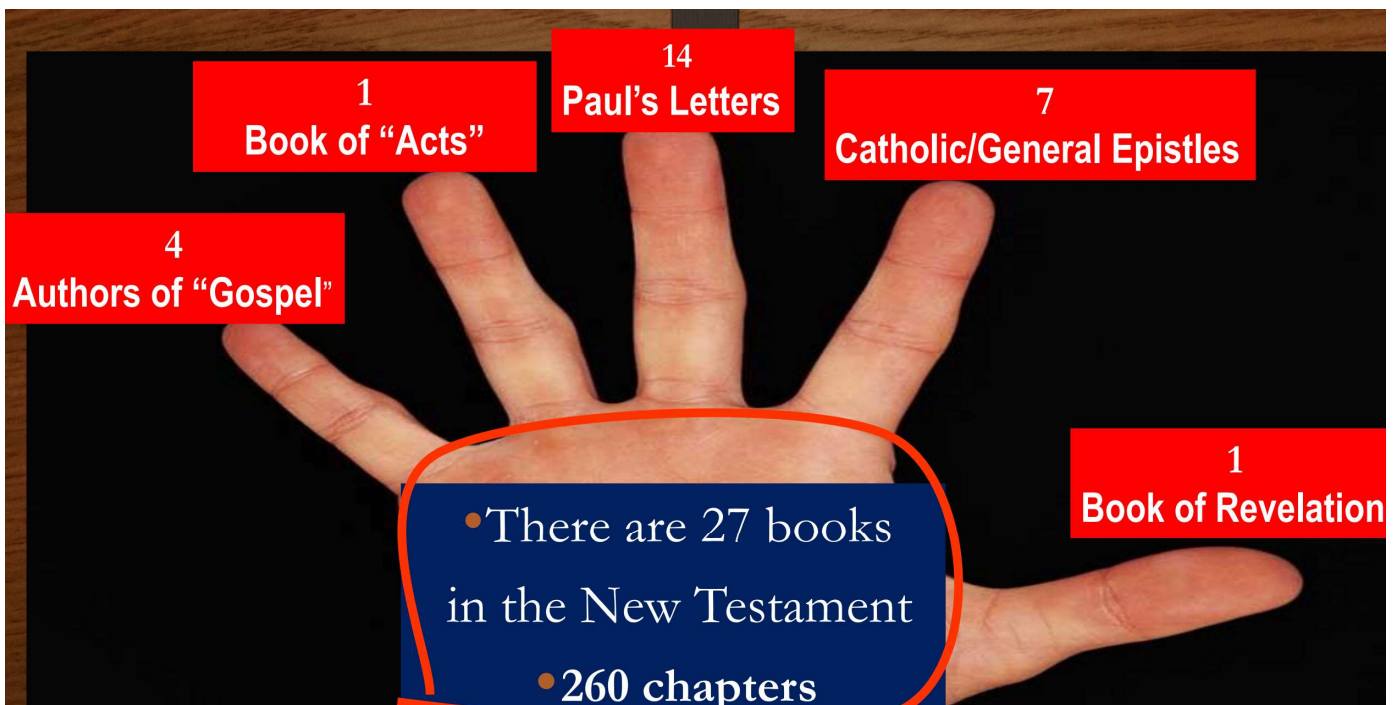


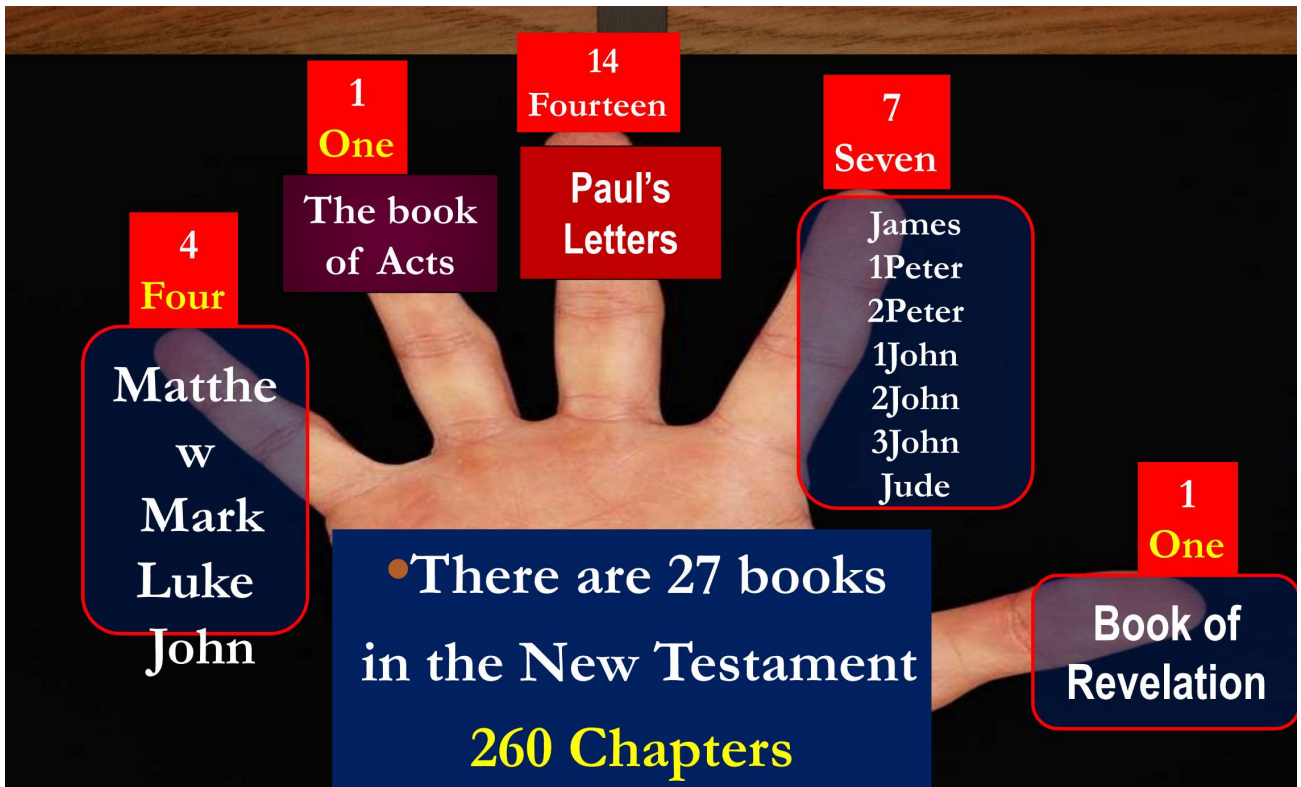
The Holy Bible

It consists Of the
73 Books.

There are 46 Books
in the Old Testament

- There are 27 books
in the New Testament








Comparing the four Gospels

The Gospel

Matthew 28 Ch	Mark 16 Ch	Luke 24 Ch	John 21 Ch
Jesus as the King of the Jews	Jesus as the Son who came to Serve	Jesus as the Perfect Teacher and the friend of the human	Jesus as the Son of God
			

The 4 Gospels comparison				
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
To whom it was written	Jews	Romans	Greeks	Christians
Subject	The Messiah the king	The Messiah the conqueror of Satan	Christ the lover of mankind	Christ the Incarnate Word
Main message of Jesus	Fulfills the Law	Performs wonders	Saves mankind	Dwells among us
Gospel content	Focuses on prophecies	Focuses on deeds	Focused on history	Focused on theology
Symbol	The human face	The lion	The Ox	The Eagle

Symbols of the Four Gospels			
			
Matthew Winged Man	Mark Winged Lion	Luke Winged Ox	John Eagle

Servant's preparation:

1) Explanation of the gospel of St Matthew for Bishop Yousef

<http://www.suscopts.org/diocese/bishop/bible-study/holy-gospel-according-to-st-matthew/>

2) A link for Fr. Doud Lamei 's bible study in Arabic

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPznHSZlgT0&list=PLZpPxKLjw8k_uNEfpq7JFCoRodxsScby

3) The reference book for Fr. Tadros Malaty →

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GeUhzc7ufLqIfARzoLnkbLUgYiw6lF/view>

4) Upper room app → Sermons → Categories → Bible study → Matthew

5) Please do not use the two illustrative videos from the Bible project because even though they have a nice overview, they include some mistakes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Dv4-n6OYGI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGCF3OPWN14>

Book outline

The Gospel of Matthew may be divided into five parts:

Unit I. Announcement and arrival of the King, 1:1 – 4:11

- ❖ Lesson 1: Christ is the Son of David [chapter 1]
- ❖ Lesson 2: The wisemen’s visit-The flee of the Holy family to Egypt [Chapter 2]
- ❖ Lesson 3: John the Baptist- Jesus’ Baptism and temptation [3:1- 4:11]

Unit II. Proclamation and reception of the King, 4:12 – ch 15

- ❖ Lesson 4: Chapter 4:12-25 and Chapter 5 “The Beatitudes”
- ❖ Lesson 5: Chapter 6 “The Lord’s prayer and Do not worry”
- ❖ Lesson 6: Chapter 7: “Do not judge”
- ❖ Lesson 7: Chapter 8: “Have faith”
- ❖ Lesson 8: Chapter 9: “Your faith has made you well”
- ❖ Lesson 9: Chapter 10 “Do not fear, follow Me”
- ❖ Lesson 10: Chapter 11 “Judgements and Rewards”
- ❖ Lesson 11: Chapter 12 ”Lord of the Sabbath”
- ❖ Lesson 12: Chapter 13 “The 7 parables of the kingdom of heaven”
- ❖ Lesson 13: Chapter 14 ”Jesus makes the impossible possible”
- ❖ Lesson 14: Chapter 15 “What really defiles!”

III. Opposition and Rejection of the King, chapters 16-27

- ❖ Lesson 15; Chapters 16 &17 “Take up your cross and follow me”
- ❖ Lesson 16: Chapter 18 “Forgiveness”
- ❖ Lesson 17: Chapter 19 & 20 “Where is your treasure?”
- ❖ Lesson 18: Chapter 21 ”Fruit, not just leaves”
- ❖ Lesson 19: Chapter 22 ”The great commandment”
- ❖ Lesson 20: Chapter 23 “Religious Hypocrisy”
- ❖ Lesson 21: Chapter 24 “When is the 2nd coming?”
- ❖ Lesson 22: Chapter 25 ““Well done, faithful servant”
- ❖ Lesson 23: Chapter 26 “Betrayal and Trial”
- ❖ Lesson 24: Chapter 27 “The Passion of Christ”

IV., Resurrection and Triumph of the King, chapter 28

- ❖ Lesson 25: Chapter 28 “The Resurrection”

MATTHEW

	Announcement and Arrival of the King Main Emphasis: His Credentials <u>Birth</u> <u>Baptism</u> <u>Temptation</u> CHAPTERS 1–4	Proclamation and Reception of the King Main Emphasis: His Message <u>Sermon on the Mount</u> <u>Miracles</u> <u>Discourses</u> <u>Parables</u> CHAPTERS 5–15	Opposition and Rejection of the King Main Emphasis: His Suffering and Death <u>Spread of opposition</u> <u>Preparation of disciples</u> <u>Final predictions</u> <u>Crucifixion</u> CHAPTERS 16–27	Resurrection and Triumph of the King Main Emphasis: His Conquest <u>God's power</u> <u>Great Commission</u> CHAPTER 28
The King	His identity: Israel's promised King		His destiny: "Crucify Him!"	
Scope	Teaching the vast multitudes		Teaching the Twelve	
Location	Bethlehem and Nazareth	Ministry in Galilee	Ministry in Judea	
People's Reaction	Increased popularity		Increased hostility	
Theme	Jesus is the King, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.			
Key Verses	16:16–19; 28:18–20			
Christ in Matthew	Jesus, the Messiah, fulfills the prophecies, promises, types, and expectations of the Old Testament Scriptures (16:16–19; 28:18–20).			

The book of St. Matthew

Introduction

- Birth 1&2
- Baptism 3

- Temptation 4

Chapter 1-4.

- Five Sermons, each introduced by a historical narrative

- 1st Sermon chapter 5-7.
- 2nd sermon chapter 10.
- 3rd sermon chapter 13.
- 4th sermon chapter 18.
- 5th sermon chapter 24-25.

Death, Burial, and Resurrection

Chapter 26-28

Prophecies that Matthew referenced and were fulfilled by Jesus Christ

Matthew	Old Testament	Description
Matthew 1:22-23	Isaiah 7:14	The virgin will conceive and bear a child, named Immanuel.
Matthew 2:5-6	Micah 5:2	In response to the visit of the Magi, the religious leaders identify Bethlehem as the birth place of the coming 'King of the Jews'.
Matthew 2:15	Hosea 11:1	"Out of Egypt I called my Son." This passage that originally referred to the exodus of Israel from Egypt is applied to Jesus when his family goes to Egypt to escape Herod.
Matthew 2:16-18	Jeremiah 31:15	Weeping over the dead children after Herod's slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem.
Matthew 2:23		Jesus would be called a Nazarene because he grew up in Nazareth.
Matthew 3:1-3	Isaiah 40:3	John the Baptist, the voice of one calling in the wilderness, announced the coming of the Messiah.
Matthew 4:5-6	Psalms 91:11-12	Satan tells Jesus that the angels will not allow Jesus to strike his foot against a stone.
Matthew 4:13-16	Isaiah 9:1-2	Jesus based his ministry out of Capernaum.
Matthew 5:17		Jesus came to fulfill the Law and Prophets.
Matthew 8:17	Isaiah 53:4	He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.
Matthew 12:17-21	Isaiah 42:1-4	Jesus was the chosen servant of God in whom the nations will put their hope.
Matthew 13:34-35	Psalms 78:2	Jesus would speak to the people in parables.
Matthew 21:4-5	Zechariah 9:9	Jesus' entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey.
Matthew 21:42	Psalms 118:22-23	The stone the builders rejected, Jesus, has become the cornerstone.
Matthew 26:31	Zechariah 13:7	Jesus, in predicting his disciple's response to his betrayal, tells them that the shepherd would be struck down and the sheep scattered.
Matthew 26:52-54		Jesus betrayal and capture happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures.
Matthew 26:55-56		Method of capture in accordance with the writings of the prophets.
Matthew 26:64	Psalms 110:1; Daniel 7:13	When Jesus is on trial before the religious leaders he tells them that you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God and coming in the clouds.
Matthew 27:9-10	Zechariah 11:12-13	The priests used the 30 pieces of silver, originally given to Judas to betray Jesus, to buy the potter's field.

**Chapter 1&2
The Birth of the King**



**Chapter 3
The Baptism of Jesus**



**Chapter 4
Temptations**



**Chapter 5 to 7
The Sermon on the Mount**



**Chapter 8- 11
The Ministry of the king**



**Chapter 12
The rejection of the king**



**Chapter 13-20
Establishing His
kingdom**



**Chapter 21-25
Entering Jerusalem**



**Chapter 26-28
The death and
resurrection**



Unit 1: Announcement and arrival of the king [3 lessons]

Lesson 1: Intro and Chapter 1 “Christ is the Son of David”

Book introduction

A- The Author:



- ❖ The early church fathers agreed that Matthew was its author
- ❖ Matthew, whose name means "gift of the Lord" and surnamed Levi had been a tax-collector, one of Jesus' earliest disciples (Mt 9:9; Mk 2:14). He was one of the twelve.
- ❖ A close associate of Jesus during His ministry, Matthew's gospel is a firsthand account, unlike Luke who depended upon other eyewitnesses (Lk 1:1-4)

B- The Time for his writing:

- ❖ Irenaeus says it was written when the apostles Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome.
- ❖ Eusebius states that this was done when St. Matthew left Palestine and went to preach to others.
- ❖ Clement of Alexandria said that the presbyters who succeeded each other from the beginning declared that "the gospels containing the genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were written first"
- ❖ Originally written in Hebrew and Greek, around the year 60-62 AD.

C- The Theme:

- ❖ The gospel is written to Jews, designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ❖ This is evidenced by St. Matthew's frequent reference to OT Messianic prophecies.
- ❖ He quotes from almost every book in the OT, and twelve times he identifies OT prophecies as fulfilled in the life of Jesus (Mt 1:22; 2:15,23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 27:9)
- ❖ The theme is: Jesus is the King of kings- His kingdom is the kingdom of Heaven.

D- Its Recipients:

It was written for the Jews and in particular to the victorious Jews who believed in Christ Jews who believed in Christ.

Evidence for that:

1. The Church early fathers mentioned it was written to the Jews
2. Beginning the Gospel with the generation of Christ to prove that He is the son of David and Abraham and that He is from Jewish race.
3. St. Matthew gives details of Jewish religious observances and often uses Jewish style and techniques of argument.
4. He did not explain or give interpretation of the Jewish customs because it was written for the Jews who know these customs, Mt 15:1-13 and 26:17 13 and 26:17
5. The New Testament is a continuation of the Old Testament Matthew 5:17
6. St. Matthew declares that Jesus was sent to the Jews.
7. He is the only one who mentioned “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”, (Matthew 15:24)

E- Why do we symbolize this gospel as a man?



Matthew's Gospel opens with the family tree of Jesus, tracing his lineage from Abraham, which emphasizes his human nature and connection to the lineage of Israel.

This symbolism is often linked to the vision of the four living creatures in the Book of Ezekiel, where the first creature is described as having the face of a man.

Chapter 1

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_01.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Memory verse:

1:21 *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”*

Lesson opener:

Ask: What does it take to get you to change your mind when you've already resolved to do something? Today, we will see how God tells Joseph to do something that pretty much goes against all the rules/expectation of the Israelites.

In today's scripture story, one of the rules/expectations of the society that St. Joseph and St. Mary live in is that a pregnant, single woman is to be publicly shamed, no man is to marry her, and even death by stoning of the woman was allowable. We will see that Joseph is going to follow along with the mildest of those expectations, but God completely changes those rules for Joseph.

Let's see if Joseph listens to God's rule changes or not.

Watch this 2 min clip if the time allows, it is from a movie: <https://rfour.org/pagems340.html>

ASK— answers are in parenthesis

What was the father in the video going to do? (He was going to kill the piglet because it was the littlest of litter and couldn't fight for a place to eat)

Why was the piglet not killed? (Because the young girl, Fern, wouldn't let her dad do it. She said she would feed the piglet)

Did the dad listen to his daughter? (yes)

TELL

Today's scripture story and the video clip have a lot in common. Just like the girl intervened to prevent the dad from killing the piglet and he listened, God intervened and changed the plan St Joseph had in his mind for St. Mary and directed him to take care of her and Jesus for the rest of his life.

Lesson body:

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ (1:1-17)

- ❖ St Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Joseph.
- ❖ The genealogy in chapter 1 consists of three groups of generations of fourteen which gives a total of 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus of Nazareth.
- ❖ He writes the list this way to bring attention to the link between the names and the covenant promises made by God to both Abraham and David.
- ❖ St. Matthew is announcing to the Jewish readers that the long-awaited Messiah, who was promised by the prophets to restore the kingdom of David, is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.
- ❖ He introduced Jesus as “son of David” before calling Him “son of Abraham” because St. Matthew is not focusing on the blood line through Abraham but on King David and God's covenant promises that identify Jesus as the Messianic King foretold by the prophets as David's heir.
- ❖ Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth were three women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy, Tamar wore the clothes of a harlot [gen 38] while, the other two were Gentile women who were mentioned for their remarkable history. This is to say that Jesus has come for the sake of sinners and has been born of sinners to wipe out the sins of all. And for the inclusion of all humans no difference

between gentiles and Jews, setting the stage for an inclusion of all humanity; St. John Chrysostom thinks Ruth is a symbol of the gentile church.

- ❖ Some names are different between the two genealogies in both gospels [St. Matthew and St. Luke]. This is because St. Matthew when declaring the Lord Jesus as the one to carry our sins, he mentions the natural lineage, according to flesh and blood. But as for St. Luke, he mentions our being children to God in Christ Jesus, in the lawful lineage sense, where a man can be attributed to the father of whom he is not physically born. As an example of this, St. Joseph was, biologically speaking, a son to Jacob. But he was Hale's son according to the law, because Hale died having no son of his own, and therefore Jacob married his wife to get an offspring to him, so his name would not be wiped out of Israel (Deut 25:5, Matt 42:4). It is as if St. Joseph who was engaged to St. Mary was son to king David according to both lists; whether it be the natural or lawful lineage, although there exists the difference.
- ❖ Another view for the difference could be that St. Matthew lists out Joseph's genealogy, proving Jesus' legal right to the throne of David. St. Luke lists Mary's genealogy, proving Jesus' bloodline was directly descended from David. These are important since Old Testament prophecies tell us that the Messiah will come from David's line. Also, St. Matthew's is an abbreviated genealogy. His list is much shorter (41 compared to 77) than St. Luke's. St. Matthew evidently cuts out many generations. It is acceptable since the words for "father" or "son" in Hebrew could mean ancestor or descendant.
- ❖ The lineage came concerning St. Joseph, and not St. Mary, although the Lord Jesus was not of his offsprings. This is because the Law of Moses attributes a person's lineage to the father and not to the mother as the rest of the parental societies. If St. Joseph is not the biological father, yet he was blessed with the fatherhood of adoption.

MATTHEW	LUKE
Abraham	Abraham
Isaac	Isaac
Jacob	Jacob
Judah	Judah
Perez	Perez
Hezron	Hezron
Ram	Ram
Ammiadab	Ammiadab
Nahshon	Nahshon
Salmon	Salmon
Boaz	Boaz
Obed	Obed
Jesse	Jesse
David	David

Luke's Genealogy	Matthew's Genealogy
David	David
Nathan	Solomon
Mattatha	Rehoboam
Menna	Abijah
Melea	Asa
Eliakim	Jehoshaphat
Jonam	Joram
Joseph	Uzziah
Judah	Jotham
Simeon	Ahaz
Levi	Hezekiah
Matthat	Manasseh
Jorim	Amon
Eliezer	Josiah
Joshua	Jeconiah
Er	Shealtiel
Elmadam	Zerubbabel
Cosam	Abiud
Addi	Eliakim
Melchi	Azor
Neri	Zadok
Shealtiel	Achim
Zerubbabel	Eliud
Resa	Eleazar
Johanan	Matthan
Joda	Jacob
Josech	Joseph
Semien	Jesus
Mattathias	
Maath	
Naggai	
Hesli	
Nahum	
Amos	
Mattathias	
Joseph	
Jannai	
Melchi	
Levi	
Matthat	
Eli	
Joseph	
Jesus	

MATTHEW 1, ABRAHAM & JESUS

①	Abraham	Era of the Patriarchs	1,000 YEARS	
②	Isaac			
③	Jacob			
④	Judah			
⑤	Perez	Eras Including Move to Egypt Exodus Conquests of Joshua Judges of Israel		
⑥	Hezron			
⑦	Ram			
⑧	Amminadab			
⑨	Nahshon			
⑩	Salmon			
⑪	Boaz			
⑫	Obed			
⑬	Jesse			
⑭	David			Eras Including The United Kingdom The Kings of Judah & Israel Until Great Exile to Babylon
⑮	Solomon			
⑯	Rehoboam			
⑰	Abijah			
⑱	Asa			
⑲	Jehoshaphat			
⑳	Jehoram			
㉑	Uzziah			
㉒	Jotham			
㉓	Ahaz			
㉔	Hezekiah			
㉕	Manasseh			
㉖	Amon			
㉗	Josiah			
㉘	Jeconiah			
㉙	Shealtiel	Era between the return from the Great Exile and The time of Christ		500 BC – 0 Approx. 500 Years
㉚	Zerubbabel			
㉛	Abihud			
㉜	Eliakim			
㉝	Azor			
㉞	Zadok			
㉟	Akim			
㊱	Elihud			
㊲	Eleazar			
㊳	Matthan			
㊴	Jacob			
㊵	Joseph			
Jesus				

Christ Born of St. Mary (Read 1:18-25)

- ❖ Background story: According to the Orthodox Ecclesiastic tradition: when St. Mary, who was dedicated to the temple, completed twelve years in the sanctuary and could not stay there any longer, the priests announced through Judea that they wished to find in the tribe of Judah a respectable man, to espouse her. St. Joseph was among the candidates. A miracle revealed the choice of St. Joseph [God's choice]. When the priests gathered twelve righteous men from the tribe of Judah and took their staffs inside the sanctuary, a dove flew up and stood on the staff belonging to St. Joseph. They immediately knew that this was God's will. The righteous St. Joseph took St. Mary to his house. Both spouses intended for this betrothal to be virginal marriage. [ref: <https://www.suscopts.org/resources/literature/182/st-joseph-the-carpenter/>]
- ❖ St. Mary was engaged to St. Joseph. Betrothal was, from the times of the patriarchs, a formal ceremony, and was regarded a binding obligation, generally lasting a year before marriage.
- ❖ After betrothal unfaithfulness was regarded adultery. When St. Mary became pregnant, she would have been stoned according to the old law of Moses for being an adulteress if she wasn't betrothed.
- ❖ St Joseph did not know that St Mary's pregnancy was by the Holy Spirit, so he made his decision to divorce [dismiss her quietly] her privately and in secret, But the Lord had other plans.
- ❖ Cultural Context: according to the Jewish custom, the engagement period gives the same rights and commitments concerning marriage, except for the physical matrimonial relationship. This why the angel called her "Your woman," (Matt 1:20).
- ❖ The angel of the Lord mentioned here was probably the angel Gabriel, who, six months before, had been sent to Zacharias. The Angel asked him not to be afraid either that he would offend the Lord or bring any reproach or scandal upon himself. He told him that the conception of St. Mary is of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The name Jesus is the same as [means] Savior.
- ❖ The prophecy is taken from Isaiah 7:14, St. Matthew is using every chance to show the Jews that their prophets described Christ.
- ❖ Emmanuel means God with us, an appropriate title for Jesus among men.
- ❖ Joseph took Mary as a wife. *"24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus."*
- ❖ The word "till" does not imply that they lived differently afterwards (as will be evident from the use of the same word in 1 Sam 15:35; 2 Sam 6:23; Mt 12:20);) nor does the word "first-born " decide the much-disputed question, whether St. Mary had any children to St. Joseph after the birth of Christ of Christ. An example of using "till' with regards to the ark, it was said the raven has not returned till the land dried up (Gen 8:7) even though it never returned.
- ❖ The first-born does not refer to whether children were born after or not but meant to confirm that none were born before. The firstborn is counted so for everyone who opens the womb even if there were no other brothers to follow. Our Orthodox church believes, and it is an essential dogma of ours that St. Mary was virgin and forever remained a virgin. [Ezekiel 44:2]

Takeaway:

Refer to verses 24 & 25. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JOSEPH'S RESPONSE?

There are three things that we can learn from Joseph's response to the angel of the Lord:

1. **Understanding scripture is incredibly important!** God may not send an angel of the Lord to speak to us in a dream, but He does speak to us through His inspired word. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand what the Bible says and how to apply it. St. Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)."
2. **Obeying God's word allows great things to happen!** When Joseph recognized that it was the Lord speaking to him, he immediately did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. Sometimes God asks us to do things that put us outside of our comfort zone. When we listen, God's plan for us unfolds, just as it did for Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. With God's help, there are no limits to what can be accomplished! "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11.
3. **When a message is, "Of the Holy Spirit," it is coming directly from God, and we need to obey it.** The angel of the Lord said to Joseph in Mathew 1:20, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." The Bible tells us that we receive the Holy Spirit when we are baptized. Those of us that have been baptized have the Holy Spirit to help us. There is a special relationship between the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Since both are from God, they will never contradict one another. The Bible tells us what God wants us to do, and the Holy Spirit lets us feel it. If the Holy Spirit is telling us to do something, we should listen to it, just as St. Joseph did. If God has sent the Holy Spirit to work in us, it is for a reason.

Optional Review Questions:

<https://biblehub.com/questions/matthew/1.htm>



Lesson 2: Chapter 2 “The wisemen’s visit-The flee of the Holy family to Egypt”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_02.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview and please refer to the introduction part; located under lesson 1.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson was an introduction for the book of Matthew and the genealogy of Jesus, listed in chapter one.

We also studied about how St Joseph reacted when he knew about St. Mary’s pregnancy then God intervened and changed his plan to dismiss her, he was told to take her as a wife because her newborn is the son of God.

Memory verse:

2:6 “*But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah.*

For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people, Israel.’ ”

Lesson opener:

Ask: Imagine a friend asking the magi before their departure. Where are you going? We don’t know. How far is it? Not sure about that either. How long will you be gone? Emm. That is yet to be determined. “Wow, for wise men you guys don’t know very much, do you?”

The wise men didn’t have a lot of facts in front of them. They didn’t have a lot of proof. But they believed. They saw the star and they knew it was a sign from God announcing the birth of Christ. They probably knew the Scriptures. They probably knew what the prophet Daniel had said about Him as he lived in Persia which was where they were from. They could have considered this to be the star mentioned by Balaam, in Numbers 24:17. They believed the Christ was born. They were willing to sacrifice comfort and security to see and worship Him. Why? Because of faith.

Traveling at that time was far different than it is today. They couldn’t just jump into a car or hop on a plane and set out and arrive later that day. Traveling was a lengthy, weary, and dangerous activity because the mode of transportation was probably camels, not the fastest way to get around. They would need to often stop and resupply. It was also uncomfortable. Sometimes when we travel on a plane we complain because the seats

are a bit too close together and there is not enough room for our legs. Yet there is air conditioning, padded seats, reclining seats, attendants to bring water, food, and adjustable lights.

Did you ever ride a camel? Can you imagine how uncomfortable it is? hard seat with no padding, and bumpy rides. The weather would at times have been very hot and at times quite cold (desert weather varies greatly). There would be storms. Maps were incomplete. Roads were not well developed. And there were a lot of thieves and bandits around. It was also a journey of unknowns. All they had were some promises and a star. But they believed. And so, they set off following their faith.

Lesson Goal:

God is our deliverer. He will rescue us and help us when we are in trouble. All we need to do is to put our trust in Him. He delivered Joseph and Mary from King Herod, and He will deliver you and me from our enemy, Satan. It is wonderful that the Lord is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer.

Lesson body:

The magi visit Jesus (Read 2:1-12)

- ❖ Bethlehem means: " House of bread. " Jesus Christ would go on to be called: "The Bread of life", John 6:35
- ❖ After a long journey (they probably arrived when Jesus was about 2 years old), they finally arrived. Their action was very simple. They fell to the ground and worshiped. These great men who were full of wisdom and knowledge of every kind prostrated themselves on the ground before a young child. Their actions showed humility and great faith.
- ❖ Although it is commonly taught that the Wise men were three in number, there is no Biblical documentation for that assumption.
- ❖ They offered Him **incense** as their God and represents His priesthood; **gold** as their king; and **myrrh** represents suffering.
- ❖ The trouble of Herod is easily accounted for viewing this baby as a danger to his own throne, around whom the Jewish nation would rally. He asked the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin answered without hesitation. They made it very clear that they knew all about the prophecy of where the Messiah would be born. This prophecy is found in Micah 5:2 in which both the place of His birth and the character of the Messiah are so clearly set forth that there was no room to doubt. **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."** Micah 5:2.
- ❖ He doesn't threaten the magi or torture them for more information, hiding his real intentions. Instead, he feigns genuine interest to make himself appear as their friend so that he can learn as much from them as he can.

Jesus' family flees to Egypt to escape Herod (Read 2:13-23)

- ❖ An angel warns Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus because Herod seeks to kill the child. They stay there until Herod's death, fulfilling the prophecy, **"Out of Egypt I called My Son."** And again, Matthew does not spare a chance to mention prophecies throughout his gospel to prove his point that Jesus is the Messiah.

- ❖ Herod directed the wise men to report to him after their visit to Bethlehem, but they had a dream to go a different route. Their return to their own country without complying with his wishes seemed to Herod a mockery of his authority, and excited his rage because his plan was to find Him and privately dispatch Him: and now he might fear, which increased his wrath, that the child would escape his hands, and in time be set up for king, to the prejudice of him and his family; wherefore, to prevent this, if possible, he placed an order to slew all the young children in Bethlehem two years and under.
- ❖ This fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah, *a voice heard in Ramah, Rachel weeping for her children*. The prophet describes Rachel, the mother of two great tribes, as weeping and refusing to be comforted. Within half a mile of that city was the tomb of Rachel, and the prophet applied her weeping to the inconsolable mothers of Bethlehem, as though Rachel that slept in the tomb, were a mourner over her slain offsprings. PS: our Coptic Church celebrates the commemorations of the children of Bethlehem on the 3rd day of Tobeh which is January 11th : According to Ft. Tadros Malaty; They represent the church of the New Testament, which carried the simplicity of the Spirit first like children do.
- ❖ After Herod's death, an angel tells Joseph it's safe to return to Israel. However, because Archelaus (Herod's son) reigns in Judea, they settle in Nazareth in Galilee. Notice that St. Joseph is not required to return to Bethlehem or to Judea, but simply to the land of Israel.
- ❖ This fulfills the prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. **“23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”** This passage has puzzled Biblical scholars since there is no clear text in the Old Testament which states the Messiah would be called a Nazarene → However unlike the other quotes, which refer to what is by "the prophet," this passage does not refer to a single prophet but to "what had been spoken through the prophets," plural; and therefore, Matthew may not be referring to a single text but to a larger theme in the prophetic texts.
- ❖ The word “Nazareth”, or “Nazarene” is a Christian title in Hebrew it is Natzar which means a branch.
- ❖ Zech 6:12) “Here is a man whose name is branch, for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord”. This is why the Jews expected the Messiah to be called the ‘Branch’ or ‘Nazarene’.
- ❖ Who is Herod? He was a born Adomite in whose blood was enmity towards the Jews. He had no right for kingship but had become one over Judea with the help of the Romans with whom his father made an alliance. He was violent and unusually strange, and in his last days he was exposed to hallucination. He was a blood thirsty man and killed a big number of the Jewish members of the Syndicate. At his last breath he ordered the death of all the great ones on Jerusalem so that grief overcomes the city, and the new king would find no way for happiness. But he died before that last wish took effect. Herod died three months later after putting Bethlehem’s children to death. The Jewish historian Yousifous described how his ferocity in his last days was so awful that he ate meat in incredible amounts and was sick with gout and other diseases.
- ❖ Why has the Lord Jesus fled to Egypt? [Ref: Fr. Tadros Malaty pg.22]
 1. The flight to Egypt is only one part of the chain of suffering St. Joseph joyfully passed through.
 2. The flight of the Lord Jesus from evil confirmed the truth of his incarnation.

3. His flight as a representative for humanity offers us a spiritual program that has the basis of not resisting evil by evil.
4. Egypt was the head of gentile world. In the Old Testament, it pointed with its Pharaoh to slavery, and with its fertile soil it pointed to a life of luxury and love of the world. The Lord could have resorted to a city in Judea or in Galilee, but He wished to sanctify the land of Egypt to establish in the midst of this Gentile land an altar for Him.

Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

1. Joseph obeyed without delay:

When commanded by the angel, Joseph was to get up and go to Egypt. But there were great challenges to obeying this. Jesus was a baby or a toddler. The trip to Egypt was well over 100 miles. And they likely had to make the walk on foot and with a young child. For those of you who travel with little children know it is difficult. Normally a family wouldn't even consider making a trip like that. If they did, they would probably want adequate time to prepare. They would want to say "goodbye" to their friends and family and pack up for the road.

But notice that Joseph left in the middle of the night. He did not roll over in bed and decided to get just a couple of more hours of sleep. Instead, he got his family together and threw some stuff in a bag and then started walking while it was still dark.

We too are given many commands by the Lord. We are commanded to seek His kingdom first. We are commanded to build up treasure in heaven. We are commanded to use the gifts He has given us for building up the church and glorify Him. Sometimes these things may not seem as urgent as the command to Joseph, but they are urgent, and they are also very important.

2. Mary and Jesus had to obey too:

Not only Joseph obeyed, Mary and Jesus did too. Jesus was a baby or a toddler at the time, so he didn't have much choice. But some 2-year-olds would surely throw a fit at being woken up in the middle of the night and starting on a journey. Mary too had to obey. She did not have the same dream Joseph had. She hadn't been given command directly from the Lord. Her husband woke her up in the middle of the night and said, "We need to go to Egypt. I had a dream." A lot of wives would not believe that. A lot of wives would argue. A lot of wives would want more time. They would need time to prepare. But Mary is a great example of Godly submission.

3. God did not miraculously deliver them from difficulties:

Joseph and Mary faced a lot of difficulties on their path even as they sought to obey God. Their baby was born in a stable. They were forced to flee their home in the middle of the night because the king wanted their child dead. After that, they would then have to take a long and dangerous journey to a foreign country and live for years in a culture they were not familiar with. And yet some people teach that if you obey God your life will be smooth and easy. They teach that God will make His follower's life prosperous. They teach that if you believe something enough then God will give it to you.

Those who teach such things ignore the very clear teaching in the Bible that even those who faithfully obey Him face trials/difficulties/persecutions. God never promises to give an easy life to His followers. In fact, He promises just the opposite. Mary and Joseph were the parents of God's own son. If God had ever desired to protect any family from facing any difficulties, one would think that He would want His own son's family to have an easy life. But He didn't choose an easy life for Jesus. So, what does this mean for us?

Application: Some people will lose faith when they face trials. These people may think that the trials are evidence that God is not with them or does not care about them. But God cared about Mary, Joseph and Jesus. And they still faced trials. Do not get discouraged when you face trials. Do not lose faith. Do not think that life is unfair. And do not compare yourself to others who may face fewer trials than you. Instead, let the life of Jesus strengthen your faith. Remember that even though Jesus and His family faced trials, God protected them during those trials. And God will also preserve His plans for you and your future even in the midst of the trials you face.



Review questions if needed:

<https://biblehub.com/questions/matthew/2.htm>

Lesson 3: John the Baptist- Jesus' Baptism and temptation

[3:1 → 4:11]

Servant's preparation:

https://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_03.pdf

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_04.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson we told the story of the magi traveling a long trip to worship the newborn king and give Him gifts. Herod got angry when the magi did not report back to him, so he killed the newborn boys, Joseph took the Holy Family and hid in Egypt for about three years till he was told to return to Israel.

Memory verse:

3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

Lesson opener:

"Guess the Gift" Game

Prepare a beautifully wrapped package or gift bag and display it for your class. Inside the gift bag or box, place something completely worthless like a brick, a rock, a piece of wood, or nothing at all.

Tell your class that the contents of the package are really special, valuable, interesting, expensive, etc., and have the class try to guess the contents.

After a little while, open the package and reveal the worthless contents. Explain to the class that today they are going to learn that this is what Satan does. He offers us something that looks really beautiful. He even lies about the contents, but once the paper is taken off, what he has offered is revealed to be completely worthless. He is a liar through and through.

Lesson Goal:

God's word in our heart keeps us from sinning.

Lesson body:

St. Matthew skips ahead about thirty years to describe events that prepared Jesus for His public ministry. Before the Lord Jesus began His work among His people as the spiritual King, a coronation

of the enthronement of the real king at the River Jordan had to take place. That has been prepared by the King's forerunner, St. John the Baptist, who was like the Lord's angel paving the way for Him.

John the Baptist prepares the way (Read 3:1-12)

- ❖ John did not go to the biggest cities or the capital city Jerusalem to take his message. Instead, he preached in the wilderness. The message he preached was from God and this drew many people out from the city to listen to him. The people who went to listen to John were willing to travel to do so. They didn't sit in air-conditioned rooms with padded seats. They were willing to sacrifice because they believed the message John was teaching was important. God's Word is powerful. It changes people's hearts. It transforms. It convicts. It inspires. It draws.
- ❖ John wore camel hair, and a leather belt, and ate locusts and honey. His food was just a means to sustain him, nothing more. What can we learn from this? **John was goal driven.** He wasn't easily distracted. He put the top priority on the most important things, namely his service to God.
- ❖ No permanent home, no luxurious foods, no fancy meals, no expensive clothes, no iPhones, no TVs. Do you think he was satisfied? He was satisfied because God satisfied Him. We don't need things to make us happy. We need a strong relationship with the Lord.
- ❖ John the Baptist's message → John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Basically, he told people to repent of their sins. If they were willing to do so, they could be baptized as a public symbol of their faith in God and the new direction in their life. Baptism itself is a burial in water, a baptism into death, a symbol of the burial of one who dies to the old life, is a confession of sins. There was also a verbal confession. The acknowledgment of sin, repentance and baptism are prescribed as conditions of pardon.
- ❖ He was bold to call the Pharisees what they were. He was also bold to warn Herod about living with his brother's wife. Basically, John was a truth speaker. He didn't sugarcoat things and had no desire to tickle people's ears or make them feel comfortable. He said what needed to be said.
- ❖ John the Baptist's mission → His mission was simple, verse 3. It was to point people to Christ. It was to prepare their hearts for the coming Messiah. He didn't care about being popular. He didn't care about hanging on to his own followers. His mission was all about Jesus. **What is our mission? Our mission is the same. Our job is to point people to Christ. Our job is to reflect the light of Christ to a dark world.**
- ❖ John the Baptist's character – What can we learn about his character from these verses? humility. He rightly recognized that Jesus was far superior to him. He realized that he didn't deserve to even be associated with Jesus as a slave (slaves were normally the ones who untied people's sandals upon entering a home). He did not claim to be Jesus' peer or equal or even a lowly servant. John the Baptist willingly endorsed Jesus' ministry even when it meant that he was shrinking. He uttered the famous line, "He must increase. I must decrease."
- ❖ John went against the grain of the prideful Jews who looked down on all others and considered that they would be saved because of their heritage. Know that being in a Christian family doesn't save you. God doesn't have any grandchildren. We will all be held personally responsible for our own actions and choices in God's sight.

- ❖ Verse 12: The wheat is the righteous, the chaff is the wicked, and Christ is the winnower; the barn is heaven, the unquenchable fire is hell.

Take-home message:

John reminds the people that their lives should be fruitful – We see this in verse 10. A good tree is a person who has repented. If that is true, there will be evidence of that in the way of a changed life.

Application – Examine our own lives to see if we have fruit or not. John said that the ax is at the bottom of the tree ready to chop it down and throw it into the fire if that tree doesn't bear good fruit. I'm assuming none of you want to be chopped down and thrown into hell. If that is the case, we should evaluate our own lives, not based on a past decision of faith, but based on our life right now, based on our actions right now. Are we living a life for God? Are we living in sin? If we are living in sin, we need to repent, which means real change.

Jesus' Baptism (Read 3:13-17)

The Savior is now introduced as about to enter His work, or as about to be set apart to His great office of Messiah and Redeemer. Baptism was not in His case a symbol of personal reformation and repentance, for He was sinless; but it was a way by which He was set apart to His great office.

It is true that baptism was for sinners; Jesus was sinless; but He humbled Himself, accepted the burden of human duties, and must set a perfect example to men. He obeyed the Jewish law, and it was needful also that He obey the Divine rite that John had inaugurate. In order to fulfill all righteousness, show forth a perfect obedience, set a perfect example, it became Him to submit to the institution of baptism, and it became St. John to administer it to Him.

As per Fr Tadros: The church celebrate the baptism of Jesus Christ since it is God's appearing, in which the Holy Trinity is declared is Him. Here we have the Trinity as if separated: the father in the voice, the Son in man, and the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove. Here we can see the Holy Trinity distinguished One from the Other. They are the one God, and yet, the Son is other than the Father, and the Father other than the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not with the Father or the Son. This Trinity as we know is unutterable and inseparable.

Lord had accepted to go into the baptism waters instead of us. He had opened the way to heaven, granting us the right of being the Father's children in Him.



The Temptation of Jesus (Read 4:1-11)

When the king is enthroned, it is essential for Him to present for His people something appropriate for His kingly role. This is why there starts a conflict against Satan for the account of His people. The Lord gets into this battle for their sake, and every triumph is only given for their account.

The Lord has fasted for forty days, and the church likewise sanctifies this forty-day fasting, since it has been sanctified by the Lord Himself. The church presents the issue of temptation' at the beginning of the fasting reading to announce to its children that where there is struggle there comes war. And where war is, there must be spiritual struggle, through fasting and prayer.

The three great temptations mentioned by St. Matthew are the three great classes of temptations to which men are now exposed.

In each of Jesus' three tests, Satan tempted Jesus to rebel against God. The tempter (Satan) came at Jesus in the wilderness, just as the serpent (Satan) came at Adam in the Garden of Eden.

First temptation: [Turn stones to bread]

Satan says, "If you are the Son of God." Satan did not know that Jesus was the Son of God. He was confused about Him, when He saw His miraculous birth, Satan thought it must be Him. He couldn't understand how God can live like a poor man and get hungry like other people because Satan is arrogant, he would imagine that the son of God would show His power and glory all the time. He came to Jesus at a seemingly weak moment for Him, being hungry, so to challenge Him at the point of His need. Satan challenged Jesus to prove His divinity and, in so doing, meet his own need for food by turning stones to bread.

Jesus did not respond by performing a miracle. Rather, He replies by citing Deut. 8:3. The Word of God is always a powerful antidote to temptation.

The point is not that we should ignore food. Jesus is not teaching a spirituality which overlooks physical need. Jesus declared that man does not live by bread "alone." It is good that He includes, as does Deuteronomy, the word "alone." Certainly, man does require food. So did Jesus. We must eat or we will die. We can broaden the scope of temptation to all material things. Satan tempts us with money, education, prestige, and many other things. All these things, like food, are fine in themselves. It is our attitude toward them that counts.

Jesus sets the right priority. Doing the Will of God and being obedient to His every word is more important than food or any other material thing. Even though our want may lead to our death, the will of God is still more important. Most of the time, however, we are simply called upon to trust God to provide our needs in His time, in His way, and with His result.

Second temptation [Throw yourself down]

The Devil dared Jesus to cast Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple. Satan seldom gives up with one try! One more time, he tries to get Jesus to prove He is the Son of God by throwing Himself down.

Satan, who knows Scripture, quotes from the Psalms. He tests Jesus with the promises of Ps. 91:11-12. The temptation was to misapply a wonderful promise of God. Satan wanted Jesus to precipitate a crisis and demand the fulfillment of the promise. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, God demonstrated His watch care over His Son. However, there were times when Jesus went through difficulties undelivered by the Father. Satan used this to push the Lord Jesus to tempt His Father. Also, Satan wished to ruin His mission away from that of carrying the cross, to exposing His ability to ask the angels to protect Him instead of passing through the life of suffering.

In response, Jesus once again quotes scripture. Again, He selects a verse from Deuteronomy (6:16), not to test God. He teaches us how to overcome Satan not by miracles, but by being tolerant and long suffering, and not to do anything with the aim of pride and vain glory.

Third temptation: [Worship me]

At this point, Satan drops his taunting about Jesus being the Son of God. However, he does not give up his efforts to cause Jesus to sin. Satan says, just one small act of worship and the ownership of the kingdoms of this world will be yours!

Once again, the temptation is to claim immediate results. Both Satan and Jesus knew that the kingdoms of the world ultimately belong to God and that Christ, His Son, would be King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The temptation was to bring this about now. The plan of God was different. Jesus would fulfill God's plan. The price of immediate gratification would have been idolatry.

He quotes Deut 6:13, Jesus, who was both God and man, would not compromise. No illicit gain, whether short-term or long-term, could tempt Him. He would fully trust the Father who would give Him, in His time and in His way, the kingdoms of the world. Throughout His ministry, Jesus performed incredible miracles. But never once did He do so to "show off." His miracles were always to help someone.

Satan will do his best to tempt us to gain power through idolatry. He will offer us much if we put him before God. If we put anything before God, it is idolatry. When we worship other things, or other people, we have misplaced our allegiance, our minds, our affections, and our will. Even though this may empower us in the short run, the result will be spiritual disaster.

Let us follow the example of Christ in worshipping God alone. When we follow Christ closely, we are following God. When we are in Him, we are doing God's will. This will not allow us to worship anything else.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Satan tempted Christ to seek immediate gain through unprincipled action. He wanted Christ to turn bread into stones, to cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, and to fall and worship him. In every case Jesus turned Satan back by quoting Scripture. Let us follow His example.

Jesus knew He would be tempted when He went to the wilderness but went anyway in order to teach us a valuable lesson. Do temptations that we face take God by surprise? No! He knows everything

that we are facing. We need to be careful not to think that temptations in our lives are more powerful than the Holy Spirit who lives in us. God is never surprised by the temptations that come our way. We can be confident that God will be with us to strength and guide us through those times as we look to Jesus to help us resist the devil.



MAP 8: TRAVELS OF JESUS

• DATE: 23-26 AD



Unit II. Proclamation and Reception of the King, 4:12 – ch 15

Lesson 4: Chapter 4:12-25 and Chapter 5 “The Beatitudes”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_05.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, we studied how Jesus was tempted by Satan and in every case, Jesus turned Satan back by quoting Scripture. Let us follow His example.

Memory verse:

5:13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?”

Lesson opener:

Clashing Values

Do a demonstration with water and vegetable oil to demonstrate how the two do not mix, just like the world’s values can never mix with the Lord’s values. You will need a clear glass, some water, food coloring and some vegetable oil. Put the water and food coloring (any color) into the glass and stir. Next pour some vegetable oil into the glass. Stir it up. At first, it will appear that the two can mix, just like the world may try to convince us that we can live by its standards as well as God’s standards. But after a few minutes, the oil and water will separate. They can never mix.

After the demonstration, explain how this shows that we can never be a Christian and do what the world tells us to do. Jesus said that we are to be “in” the world but never “of” the world. No man can have two masters; you will either serve Jesus or the world. Today we will see how the things that Jesus taught us in His Sermon on the Mount clash with what the world tries to tell us.

Lesson Goal:

God is calling us to be different like the salt and the light through spiritually growing in our daily behavior among people.

Lesson body:

The lesson includes many verses; it is better to explain the events and only read 5:1-16 along with the meditations provided.

Jesus starts His ministry in Galilea (4:13-25)

The Lord Jesus departed to Galilee. He left Nazareth and came to live in Capernaum, by the sea, in the suburbs of Zebulon and Nephtali to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah.

The Jews in the Galilee region were rather few, and most of the inhabitants were Phoenicians, Greeks and Arabs. This is why it was called the 'Galilee' of Nations, or Gentiles. The condition of this region reached its very worst level. Then the Lord Jesus came, to shine on those sitting in darkness, (Isaiah 9:1,2).

The Calling of the Disciples: At the sea of Galilee, the Lord called the two brothers Simon Peter and Andrew and also the other two brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were fishermen, and as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 1:27) "He chose the ignorant of the world to put to shame the wise ones".

St. Jerome says, "The first ones to be called to follow the Savior were illiterate fishermen. He sent them to preach so that no one relates the change of the believers to eloquence and knowledge, but rather to the work of God".

When the Lord Jesus called His disciples to work in His kingdom, He wished to make clear that His message was not for an earthly kingdom, and neither was it to get rid of the Roman political burden as the Jews thought, but rather to liberate the heart of the power of sin so that He reigns over it.

Chapter 5 (Read 5:1-12) THE BEATITUDES:



The Sermon or the Mount composes the three chapters 5,6,7 of the gospel of our teacher St Matthew. It presents a live constitution for a perfect complete life. St Augustine says, "In it there are all the excellent principles necessary for a perfect Christian life."

Enormous crowds were following Jesus, some to hear Him teach and others to be healed by Him. Seeing the opportunity to teach His disciples while the multitude could listen, Jesus made His way up on a hillside where everyone could hear. This is such an awesome picture of the relationship that Jesus offers.

Each of the nine beatitudes pronounces a blessing upon those who have certain characteristics. The word blessed means more than happy. Happiness comes from earthly things; blessedness comes from God. It is not bestowed randomly; a reason follows each beatitude.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit:

What is this 'poor in spirit other than the life of humility, through which man realizes that without God he is nothing, at all'. Pride is the source of all downfalls, whereas humility or the poverty of the spirit is the entrance to the heavenly kingdom. The world tells us this lie that pleasing ourselves is the most important thing. This kind of a prideful attitude goes completely against what Jesus teaches. Pride will destroy our relationship with God because it makes us the center of everything, instead of God.

2. Blessed are they who mourn:

Here, He does not mean those who generally grieve, but those who grieve over sin, since the other kind of grief is absolutely forbidden. "No one can contradict that the tears poured out for God, are useful and rewarding, we shall know its use when we depart from this world. A person, who is on the road of continuous grief and mooning for the sake of God's love, is never in the loss of joy everyday". St. John El Dergy.

3. Blessed are the Meek: the humble soul is aware of God's abilities working in it, it comprehends the power of the spirit, and therefore it lives in inward humility, reflected by outer action.

We see from the life and character of Jesus that He was a man who was totally submissive to His heavenly Father. The meek and gentle are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to His word and His will (Psalm 37:5-11). Some might think that a meek person is a weak person. But the opposite is true. You would never think of Jesus as a "weak" person.

The world tries to tell us that we should take everything into our own hands, because we are in control. We need to have power over others to make them do what we want. This will make us feel proud and important, but Jesus says that it is a blessing to be meek. Jesus said the meek shall inherit the earth. If we want to get ahead in life, we need to be humble and meek. This will elevate us more in life than trying to make ourselves out to be important.

4. Blessed are those who thirst and hunger for righteousness: What is righteousness? It is having right actions, right attitudes, and right relationships, all based on our right standing with God. We cannot be righteous in our own strength, but when we come to Jesus, He makes us righteous through His perfect blood shed on the cross. When we thirst and hunger for more of Jesus in our lives, we will be truly blessed and thoroughly filled. The world tells us to do whatever we want to do. It tells us that there really are not any rules except for the ones we "feel" like following and that right and wrong are based on what we think, not on God's standard--the Bible.

5. Blessed are those who are merciful: Jesus wants us to be merciful to others. We can show mercy to others by loving and encouraging them instead of judging them.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart: He who copies the Lord, and has mercy filled with love, then God will work in his heart.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers: Peacemaking is God's way. We should carefully and prayerfully attempt to be peacemakers. Then we will be called "sons of God."
8. Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake:
9. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you: We notice in the previous blessings, the lord addressed everyone in general. But at this point, He addresses those present. This is because the believer accepts the tribulations whether he is shepherded or is a shepherd as personal gifts presented to us from God. In the same way the Lord concluded His blessings, by the possibility of scorn and persecution He likewise promised the heavenly reward for those who bear this 'for righteousness' sake, or as He says,' for My sake.

You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world [Read 5:13-16]

Sodium chloride is composed of two elements: chlorine and sodium, both of which are poisonous and deadly. But put together they form salt that is indispensable in our daily food. Moreover, the Christian is also formed of two elements: the spirit and the body. If divided apart by sin, they lose their peace and become dead.

Salt melts easy but God therefore does not leave us to melt in the earth, but He rather uplifts us and considers us light to shine to the world. He reflects His light on us, and thus the believer becomes shinier than the visual sun. No one could hide it.

Christ Fulfills the Law: [5:17-24]

The Pharisees thought they kept the law by being zealous in teaching it. They did not realize they were breaking it by their wicked life. Education without work is considered breaking the law, and teaching will be of no avail.

After the Lord had confirmed that He did not break the old law, but that He rather fulfilled it, He changed this general speech to the application of the old law commandments. He clarified how to attain perfection, beginning with the commandment of not to kill.

“He who teaches us not to be angry does not break the special commandment of not to commit murder .He rather completes it, because when we are not angry, we are purified inwardly in our heart, and outwardly also by not killing”. St. Augustine.

Agree with your adversary quickly [5:25-26]

The Lord commands a bad-tempered person to be quick in reconciling his adversary, as long as he is on the road. Otherwise, the adversary will hand him over to the judge. The judge will hand him over to the officer, who will put him in jail. He will not leave there till he pays the last penny .Who is this adversary other than” **the divine commandment of God.**” This is included as part of the animosity with the bad-tempered man. The “commandment of love “stands as a true adversary to him. It condemns him in the Lord’s Day before the Great Judge [the lord Jesus]. Jesus hands him over to the

angels, [like officers] to be thrown into “the outer darkness “. He does not leave there because he is unable to fulfill the divine justice.

Go the Second Mile and Love your enemy: [5:38-48]

The Lord has given us examples for facing evil with goodness. The first of which is that if someone slaps us on the right cheek, we turn to him the other one as well.

The fathers made it clear that the Lord, when speaking of the commandment, has not meant it to be understood literally. This is because man is not slapped on the right cheek, but rather on the left one, unless he who slaps is left-handed. The right cheek signifies spiritual honor or spiritual glory. If someone ill-treats us to break down our spiritual honor, then in love we offer the left cheek also, that is to say, and the materialistic temporary glories as well.

If someone has taken your tunic and has become your enemy and wishes to take you to court, causing you a lot of trouble. To buy your peace of mind, leave your cloak as well. In this way you save your time, your heart, your thoughts .You will moreover win your enemy to your side by means of love and kindness. St. Augustine says” I wish we could scorn all those things we consider ours, and because of which our brothers reject us. I wish we could give them these things”.

The Second Mile: (Matt 5:41,42) *’And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.’*

This commandment is so important that Christianity is called the religion of the second miles, in which the believer offers others more than what they ask for, in love. This is done to win himself and others by his love. To go the other miles is a sign of spiritual strength and openness of heart in love, Man does not do what is asked of him grungily but rather offers more than what is required of him.

The lord Jesus asked the believers to rise with His Holy Spirit on the ladder of love, and to love even the enemies, and to be kind to those who hate them, and to pray for those who persecute them. In this way they will carry that heavenly Father’s model and His image.

Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

From “you are the salt and light” section:

Salt is pointless if it doesn’t prevent decay. Christ says this useless salt is tossed out. The question is put to us. Are we really preventing decay around us? Are our words and actions influencing people? Salt prevents the natural course of things. Is our presence a complete game changer in the world like salty salt is?

There are many ways we can do this. Where there is strife, teach others how to cause peace. Where there is gossip, teach compassion. Point them to where true satisfaction and joy is found. But do not stop there. We are not simply bringing morality where there is immorality. This will not permanently prevent decay. Christ prevents decay. Seek opportunities to engage in spiritual conversations. Seek opportunities to tell others about how much serving Christ has affected your life.

This second illustration tells us we are light and are exposed to the world. Christ says people don't light lamps only to cover them up. People light lamps and put them on a stand so everyone can see. How?

1. Interact with real people not online: sometimes we don't realize how false our connections with people are. We spend time figuring out what 500 people did today through social media, but we may not have a real connection with them at all.
2. Do not hide your faith: We may have plenty of connections with people in the world. Yet our faith is kept quiet because of timidness. We may be the only lights people in our everyday lives ever meet. We are their only hope. We must all be exposed lights.



Lesson 5: Chapter 6 “The Lord’s prayer and Do not worry”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_06.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, we focused on Matthew 5 which is the first part of the sermon on the Mount. It calls us not only to adhere to external commandments but to seek an internal transformation that reflects the love, mercy, and perfection of God. Jesus, through this sermon, encourages His followers to be influential presences in the world, spreading God's love, and working towards righteousness in their daily lives. Today, we will continue the sermon in chapter 6.

Memory verse:

6:6 *“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”.*

Lesson opener:

“The story is told of a king who was in his throne room, holding a council with his advisers, noblemen, and high ministers of state. Suddenly there was a bang and a clatter at the door of the throne room. All eyes turned as the door burst open and a young boy ran into the room.

One of the king’s royal guardsmen tried to stop the boy. “Hold there, lad!” he shouted. “Don’t you know you’re disturbing the council of the king?”

“He’s your king,” laughed the boy, “but he’s, my Daddy!” And the boy bounced into the open arms of his father, the king.”

Remember that when we pray, we pray to our daddy who is in heaven.

Lesson Goal:

IF WE TRUST GOD MORE, WE WILL WORRY LESS.

Lesson body:

In chapter 6, Jesus warns His disciples against external actions that are not generated from a sincere heart but offered in order to be seen and admired.

He gives three examples of acts that should be offered in secret in the private lives of Christians in order not to divert glory to God into glory to self:

1. Almsgiving (Mt 6:1-4)
2. Prayer (Mt 6:5-15)
3. Fasting (Mt 6:16-18)



Almsgiving (Read 6:1-4)

Our motivation when we are almsgiving should not be to get the attention of people. Jesus calls this “your righteousness.”

Without God, if people even do good deeds, generally the motivation for those good deeds is a selfish motivation. Man’s own righteousness (which is not real righteousness) seeks to get something in return and seeks to attract attention to itself and say “Look how good I am.”

Here are some of the things that we may do in front of others to get recognition.

- Employees may work harder while the boss is in the office.
- We may act differently or more spiritually around our Christian friends than around unbelievers.
- We may brag about various spiritual accomplishments we have done.

Do not mislead yourself about your own motivations. Pray and ask God to reveal your motivations to you and give you sincere motivations. Do not live for popularity or recognition. Do not delight in the praises of people. Instead, live to please God. Ask yourself, would you still do this good deed if you knew that no one else would ever know you did it?

Many times, parks will put the names of donors for monuments on plaques. As Jesus said, they already have their reward. Focus on God’s rewards. God knows your heart. If you do good deeds for Him with the right motivation, He will reward you. If you do it to get attention from others, He won’t.

Prayer (Read 6:5-15)

It is not wrong to pray together with believers. But if you only pray in front of other believers and don’t pray on your own then that is a sign you don’t have a personal relationship with God. The core of one’s prayer time should be alone. This is where the most intimate and deep prayers should take place.

What is the inner room? our inner-most hearts and minds, when we shut out distractions of the world and focus entirely on speaking with God.

Jesus instructs us to have meaningful prayers, not a pointless, heartless, religious speech.



But when you pray,
go into your room,
close the door and pray
to your Father, who is unseen.
Then your Father,
who sees what is done
in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:6

Application:

1. There is no need to make formal and elegant-sounding prayers. Pray from your heart. God knows what you are really thinking anyway. God will not listen to us because of the eloquence of our words. It doesn't matter how nice or spiritual our prayers sound. God already knows what we need. The quantity of words is not important.
2. There is no need to have a special tone of voice. Prayer is like talking to a friend. It is surprising when we read the prayers of Moses, Abraham, David, etc. They were incredibly bold and direct when talking to God. They weren't vague in their prayers. If they were annoyed, they expressed it. If they were surprised by something God was doing, they said so. After all, God knows everything they were thinking anyway, so why not say it?
3. It is rude to lose focus and become distracted when communicating with other people. How much ruder if we lose focus talking with God!

“The Lord’s Prayer” :

<https://tasbeha.org/community/discussion/525/the-lord-s-prayer>

If class time allows, consider doing the skit above illustrating the meanings of the Lord’s prayer.

Of the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer the first three are on behalf of the cause of God:

1. The glory of His name
2. The extension of His kingdom,
3. and the prevalence of His will

The other four pertain to our individual needs.

- ❖ Our Father, who is in heaven: We are His children, and He is our loving Father. This concept of God as ‘Father’ was completely new to the disciples listening to Jesus’ words at the time.
- ❖ Hallowed : Holy, sacred, revered.
- ❖ Your kingdom come: The purpose of prayer is to establish God’s will, not our own will, on earth.

- ❖ Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven: We pray that God’s perfect purpose will be accomplished on earth just as it is in Heaven.
- ❖ Give us this day our daily bread: We are bidden to ask for our bread, not for future years, but for this day. Be content with a simple life where your needs are met. The daily bread could refer to communion too.
- ❖ And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: God is asked to forgive us as we forgive others. Our Lord makes it a condition of our obtaining forgiveness, that we shall have a merciful, forgiving spirit. Being unwilling to forgive others shows how little we really appreciate the forgiveness God has granted us.
- ❖ If we really recognize our own sin before God and understand the degree to which God went to forgive us, we should respond by granting others that same grace and mercy.
- ❖ And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one: God may preserve us from temptations that might lead us astray.
- ❖ For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

St. Augustine says that the Lord's Prayer is so perfect that it sums up in only a few words everything man needs to petition God.

Fasting (Read 6:16-18)

The Pharisees fasted as a spiritual ritual because it was a rule. They approached it legalistically as a way to make themselves good to curry favor with God and man. So, they wanted to make sure others knew they did it in order to get credit and let others know how spiritual they were.

Fasting was a time when they were supposed to focus on God. But by intentionally drawing attention to their fasting time, they were focusing on the opinions of people. Therefore, it was hypocritical. It is also the same problem discussed at the beginning of this chapter about praying or giving to get the attention of people. Therefore, in chapter 5, Jesus said that a person’s righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter heaven.

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven (Read 6:19-21)

Treasures on earth are temporary – They are insecure and provide a very weak and faulty foundation. Fortunes are lost. People are fired. Homes burn down. Cars break. Electronics grow outdated. Banks fail. But beyond that, even if you make it through life with your money intact and not eaten away by inflation, you can’t take it with you. It is temporary. Store up treasures in heaven – This should be our single-minded focus.

The Lamp of the Body (Read 6:22-23)

The eye is a person’s perspective, which is defined by their values. If one's eye is diseased, all he sees is wrong. The mind, or conscience, is the light of the soul. If these are darkened, everything you see is darkness; if these see aright, all is light.

What kind of “sight” do you have? Where are your eyes directed? Are you seeing clearly into the eternal? Or are you focused on the worries of this world?

If the light of your life is the darkness of this world, how dark your life will be! Take off the blinders!
Focus on Jesus!

You Cannot Serve God and Riches (Read 6:24)

The word Mammon means money or riches.

It is impossible to serve two Masters. Jesus Himself said so. We have to make a choice to serve God or the world. Only one can be in first place. We can use our money to serve God, but we should not excuse worldly materialistic behavior.

According to macrotrends.net, the average lifespan in the world is approximately 73 years. What we do during our short time on earth will determine where we spend eternity.

It comes down to a choice! Do we want to follow the sinful ways of the world or the righteous ways of God? If we follow the crowd, we will perish. If we follow Jesus and the commands of His Father, we will live forever!

Do Not Worry (Read 6:25-34)

For this reason – We should not be worried about money because it is not our focus. It is not our treasure. Our heart is not set on getting more of it.

Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? We eat to live not live to eat. God created us for a purpose. And that is to serve Him.

Do not be worried – This is a command. It is wrong to worry. It displays a lack of faith in God and a lack of trust in His promises.

God takes care of sparrows (and other animals) and we are more valuable, so of course He will take care of us. Sparrows also do “work” for their food. They don't just sit in their nests and wait for it to fall from the sky. At the same time, they do not worry about the future.

Who of you, by being worried, can add a single hour to his life? – The answer is no one. Worry is not productive. It zaps joy. It ruins our sleep. It causes us to be cranky. It takes away our focus from the Lord. It is a lack of faith. It can cause physical sickness.

Example of the flowers' clothing – Flowers do not worry about the future. They are not even conscious of it. But yet they are beautiful. They are not forgotten by God. People are more valuable than flowers. Have you ever gone to bed hungry? Instead of worrying, let's spend more time thanking God. God will take care of our needs not necessarily our wants.

God knows our needs. So, we can rest assured that He will not forget or abandon us. Do your duty, with a full trust in God that He will see that you do not lack for these needs.

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness – There is some condition to God's promise to take care of our needs. And it is that we are serving God first. If we are seeking first God's kingdom, then

we will also not be worrying about earthly things. Our mind and heart will be set on the things of God. On our bed at night, we will be meditating on the Lord rather than stressing about our difficulties.

What makes us, as Christians, distinct from the world is the very fact that we KNOW that we can rely on our Father in heaven to care for us.

Do not worry about tomorrow – Take things one step at a time. Do what you can and should do each day. But don't worry or stress about what is outside of your control. Do not add future potential problems to your list of problems to deal with. Those things may never materialize so don't worry about them.



Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

Reality versus Appearance:

From “Do not worry” section: It is a command: let us think about the seriousness of what Jesus is saying. Three times Jesus says, “Do not worry.” Notice that Jesus does not say to not worry about your job, your retirement, or your house. He says to not worry about something that we would think would be the worthiest worry. Do not worry about what you eat and drink. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser. If you are told not to worry about the most critical things we need to live (food and drink), then we clearly are not to worry about things that are not pertinent to maintaining our lives today.

Then Jesus goes into the logical reasoning as to why we should not worry:

1. You Are Valuable to God (6:26): For however long the earth has been here, God has cared for his creation. God is not done caring for his creation. You do not need to worry about your life because you are valuable to God.
2. Worry Is Ineffective (6:27): Worry does not accomplish anything. Worry does not solve problems. Worry does not provide solutions. Worry does not rescue us from our problems. Worry accomplishes nothing. Worry does not add time to your life. Worry is a waste of time.

3. God Provides (6:28-30): Worry shows a lack of faith. Worry says that we need to take care of ourselves. Worry believes that the reason we are alive is because we are doing what is necessary to keep ourselves alive. But we can easily disregard this idea from our minds. We have no power to wake up. Have you ever thought about this? It is kind of creepy. You go to sleep so that you are no longer aware of what is happening to your body or in your body. Yet you still breath without knowing it. You roll over to prevent body pain without knowing it. You wake up without knowing it. It is not like you can forget to wake up. You just do. How can we possibly think that what keeps us alive is our own power? We cannot control what is happening to us. This is why your body does not do what you think it should do even though you try to have power over it. So, we must be determined to believe that God will provide for us. Worry does not believe that God is providing.
4. God Knows Your Needs (6:31-32): How many times have you not known what you needed, and God gave you what you needed? God knows your needs.
5. Live Today and Let God Take Care of Tomorrow (6:34): Today has enough troubles. Why bring tomorrow's concerns and place them on top of today's concerns? The problems of tomorrow cannot be accurately anticipated. How many times has tomorrow been what you did not think it would be? Sometimes it is better than we thought and sometimes it is worse than we thought. Either way, worry did not help it and often our worry was wrong. Let tomorrow worry about tomorrow. You have God's grace today.

Lesson 6: Chapter 7 [Do not judge]

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_07.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

The last lesson, Matthew chapter 6, was part of the Sermon on the Mount. It focuses on Jesus' teachings about performing righteous acts with a pure heart, not for the praise of others; he instructs believers to give to charity, pray, and fast in secret, emphasizing the importance of genuine devotion to God over outward displays of piety; He also warns against worrying about material possessions and instead prioritize seeking God's kingdom and righteousness, as God will provide for all necessary needs

Memory verse:

7:12 *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”.*

Lesson opener:



What is favorable judgment? It means you would judge another person in their favor. No matter what their actions or words are, you would look past the offense (even if it's intended) and judge favorably.

My favorite example of this is when someone cuts you off in traffic. Instead of getting road-raged and upset, you would think about what could go on in their life. Maybe they feel sick and need to get home or to the hospital. Maybe they didn't see you and didn't mean to do that. Maybe they're distraught and upset about themselves for being late to work. Anything like this proves to be a favorable judgment because it brings you to a place of understanding the other person from a human standpoint, not making you superior. Because any of these things could be your situation and you would want others to be understanding with you.

Lesson Goal:

Jesus teaches the Golden Rule, stating that people should treat others as they would want to be treated.

Lesson body:

Do Not Judge (Read 7:1-6)

If you judge someone and tell him/her what they should be doing, then the odds are very good that someday you will fall in that area. When you do, you will be guilty because you did not reach the standard you set for others. God is the one doing the judging here. And He will judge those who cast judgment on others. He will judge them because they fell short of their own principles. And He will judge them because they took His role. It is also true that you will reap what you sow. If you habitually judge others, then they may respond to you in like manner.

We are to judge the sin and not the sinners. Unkind judgment of others will be wisely turned upon ourselves, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

Just imagine a person with a log or plank in their eye trying to help a friend remove a speck from the friend's eye. It's quite funny.

We should not focus on other people's sins while neglecting our own. We should always look to ourselves first. We should always examine ourselves and our own hearts and motivations first.

You should not blame others and refuse to admit your own wrongdoing. Sometimes we are blind to our own sins, the log in our own eyes. How can we better evaluate ourselves so that we will notice those logs and remove them? It's not about pointing fingers but pursuing relationships and understanding before boldly judging and making wrongful assumptions of others.

Verse 6: Some people will not value your words when they hear you talk about your religion, your church mysteries or rituals but will instead mock and ridicule. So, what should you do if you share this with someone and he mocks and ridicules? The answer is that you should move on, and never do it if you have expected this response. Who would you give a beautiful gift of pearls to? Someone who appreciates it, you won't give it to your dog to trample on it. We are to use discernment when we share with others.

Keep Asking, Seeking, knocking (Read 7:7-12)

Ask, seek and knock: The three represent earnest prayer.

We ask for what we wish; we seek what we miss; we knock for that from which we feel ourselves shut out .

Ask as a beggar— Seek as the merchant who seeks valuable pearls — if sin has shut the door to God’s house against us, then knock, as he who desires to enter into the house.

Verse 8 – God will answer those who ask. Notice though that there is not a promise about exactly what God will give you. It says “it” will be given you. What is it? He will give you the thing which you really need even if you maybe didn’t know you needed it. Sometimes what you need is what you ask for and sometimes it is something else. You may ask for healing, but God sends patience because the sickness plus the patience will take the person to heaven but not the health.

There’s an angle of trust we need to get with asking, seeking, and knocking. Though we can make assessments and determine how things could look, we need to approach the Lord with trust that He will protect us even from the serpents and stones we could ask of Him. Sometimes we ask for things we’re not ready for, we seek for things we shouldn’t find yet, and we knock on the wrong doors because we think it’s what’s best for us. But thankfully, we have a Father in heaven who graciously protects us from our own requests and helps us get the discernment we need for ourselves and for others.

Verse 12: Jesus summarizes the main social ethic of His kingdom platform. This command is called “the Golden rule”. Jesus teaches you to treat people the same way you want them to treat you. Christ assumes a built-in mechanism of acting according to one's self-interest within every human being. Christ assumes everyone wants to be treated with fairness, kindness, and mercy. And a big part of why this principle is so powerful is because His assumption is true. Everyone always seeks what they perceive to be in their self-interest. Christ's command is a call to action.

Sometimes we omit a word from the verse and say :”treat people the way they treat you” but God did not say that. He wants us to treat them the way we want to be treated so we do not mistreat them if they do so to us.

“The Golden Rule” is a positive flipflop of the Jewish Golden Rule that says, “Whatever you would not wish done to you, do not yourself to another.” This same negative admonition is also found in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. “Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them.”

The Narrow Way (7:13-14)

It is the application of the whole preceding discourse. When the Lord says “Enter”, He meant enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Think for example about a hiking trip. When hiking a mountain, have you ever had a choice between walking up the paved road and walking up an almost wild path with stones, and mud, and plants? The narrow way is the more difficult way. It requires more discipline.

Broad roads accommodate a lot of traffic, and are easier to navigate, so they have greater appeal to travelers. The small gate and narrow way appear not only to be less appealing and more difficult to navigate, but they also seem hard to find.

The narrow way is saying “no” to self and saying “yes” to Jesus no matter what the cost.

The way of the world is wide –It is easy – You will not have to say “no” to yourself. You can do whatever you like and go down that road. It requires less effort and less discipline. Like to sleep in and be a couch potato? No problem! Like to work like a dog to receive that promotion? Sure, go ahead!

It is easy to find – People are born walking on it. You won’t have to do anything different to follow it.

It is popular – Follow the crowds. Your worldly friends and peers can help you. They will give you advice to help you go down this road. And it is crowded. Most people are going down this road. So simply follow the people. The result is destruction!!!

The gates do not represent a once-and-for-all decision. Jesus will later tell His disciples to daily take up their cross to follow Him (Luke 9:23). Following Jesus is a choice we must make hour by hour. And every decision we make is an entrance leading to destruction or leading to life. Christ's commands to seek His kingdom and His righteousness, and to enter through the narrow gate are perpetual

Do you follow your own desires and live for your own pleasure, or do you set your eyes on and follow Jesus?



You Will Know Them by Their Fruits (7:15-20)

The false prophets have to disguise themselves – When people see a wolf coming, they run. But when people see a sheep coming, they say, “Ah, it’s so cute!”

Even though false prophets appear like you, talk like you, pretend to be like you, they are not like you. How can you detect them? Pay attention to their work. You will know them by their fruits (v. 16). If their works are bad, they do not represent God.

Jesus has just said "Do not judge," and now He is saying you can recognize a person's character by his actions. Jesus is drawing a distinction between judgment and discernment. We are not to get the idea that Jesus is saying never make distinctions between right and wrong in others. Good and evil are clearly opposites, and we should not be afraid to distinguish between them. This is discernment. But judgment involves making assumptions, acting on half-truths, finding fault in areas outside morality, or treating the person who behaves with evil actions--recognized by discernment--with condemnation instead of forgiveness.

I Never Knew You (7:21 -23)

The Lord has shown that the entrance into the kingdom is through the narrow gate, here He shows what is needed to enter and who would not be allowed to enter.

Jesus asserts He will refuse many people entrance into His kingdom on the Day of Judgment because they did not know Him or follow His Father's will. Despite their claims of performing mighty works in His name, their deeds and hearts violated God's law.

St. Augustine says that for Christ to say, I never knew you, is only another way of saying, you never knew Me.

It is evident from this passage that many are self-deceived. St. Paul says that, though he spoke with the tongue of angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and could remove mountains, and had no charity or love, all would be of no avail, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Build on the Rock (7:24 -29)

Jesus closes the sermon on the mount by a beautiful comparison, illustrating the benefit of attending to His words.

The man who hears and does Christ's words is building upon the rock (Mt 16:16). Christ has laid the strong foundation, and everything besides Him is sand.

"Whoever hears and does": Hearing is certainly easier than acting, but it is still important for us to remember to be good listeners. It is possible to sit and listen to a sermon/lesson and not really hear what is being said because you are thinking about other things. People also don't really hear when they are thinking of arguments against what they are hearing from their opponent. For example, sometimes when two people argue they don't actually listen to each other but instead spend time while the other is talking to prepare their next argument. How can you be a better listener?

A true disciple is not only a good listener but also obedient. A true disciple will heed Jesus' words and do His best to respond to them. Throughout the Bible emphasis is placed on obedience, not on knowledge.

A wise person, who is obedient to the Lord, and builds his house on the rocks is ready for challenges like rain and flood. He is ready for any disaster in his life because he is safe in his relationship with the Lord. His confidence and security are placed in Christ not in himself.

Jesus astonished the people with His heavenly wisdom and truth. He was like no other teacher there had ever been. He still is the greatest teacher ever. Rather than being a law reader and interpreter like the scribes, Jesus spoke as a lawgiver and had the power to prove His authority.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

A. From the wise and foolish builder section: We must read the Sermon on the Mount with its final application in mind. These words of Jesus set before us two choices described in Matthew 7:24-27.

The “wise and foolish builders” share two traits in common: Each were builders, and each had “heard” Jesus’ instructions. What matters, Jesus declared, is not familiarity with His teaching but **putting it into practice**. One builder set his house on rocks while the other set it on sand. Which is your greater reason for studying what Jesus taught: 1- to increase your knowledge or 2- to improve your obedience?

B. From “Do Not Judge” section 7:1-6:

Jesus is not telling others not to judge us; He’s telling us not to judge others. What others do is not our primary concern; what we do is our primary concern. Let us focus on a few points:

1. Be Quick to Believe Innocence: be slow to pronounce guilt when evidence is scant or hearsay or ambiguous.
2. Aim for Restoration- Our goal is not punitive, but redemptive. We must vigilantly remain “kind to one another, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave [us]”
3. Keep Quiet If Possible- **Try not to know more about others so you do not judge them**. We must remember how faulty our perceptions are and how biases distort our judgment. We often think we understand what’s going on, when we do not. From a distance, love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

Lesson 7: Chapter 8 [Have faith]

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_08.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, Matthew chapter 7, Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount. It primarily focuses on Jesus' teachings about judging others, emphasizing that people should not condemn others while overlooking their own faults; it warns against false prophets who can be identified by their actions, not just words; additionally, Jesus emphasizes the importance of living a life based on His teachings, comparing it to building a house on a solid foundation to withstand storms, and encourages seeking God's kingdom first and foremost.

Memory verse:

8:2 *“And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.””*

Lesson opener:

In today's lesson, we will see Jesus, with all kindness, touching a leper who has been rejected and outcast from society and looked down upon. Jesus did not just respond to his request to be healed but He touched him with great love.

Let us role-play or discuss how we could show love for others in these situations. Make up some of your own situations!

- A new family has moved into your neighborhood.
- Some kids are being “mean” to another kid at school.
- A visitor who doesn't know anyone at church comes to class.
- A colleague at your work is sick and can't leave the house.

What acts of love can you show in these cases? [How to act like Jesus?]

Lesson Goal:

Our lesson goal is to demonstrate Jesus' power and authority through a series of miracles, primarily focusing on his ability to heal various diseases and even control nature, thereby showcasing His divine nature.

Lesson body:

Matthew chapters 8 and 9 contain the second narrative section of the Gospel. This section relates 10 miracles that take place at or near either the town of Capernaum or by the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Six of them are in this chapter [ch 8]:

1. The cleansing of a leper (8:1-4)
2. The healing of the centurion's servant (8: 5-13)
3. The healing of Simon-Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15)
4. The healing of people possessed by demons (8:16-17)
5. The calming of the storm at sea (8:23-27)
6. The healing of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28-34)

In those two chapters, we see a succession of "miracles" not less remarkable than His teachings in the sermon on the mount; those miracles confirmed beyond any doubt the impression made by His sermon that He was sent from God.

1st miracle: Jesus Cleanses a Leper (8:1-4)

Jesus didn't have time to rest – He had just finished delivering the most famous sermon in the history of the world then people followed Him as He came down the mountain. A leper approached Him asking for healing. Jesus didn't apologize that He was tired but gave the guy all the time and attention he needed.

Leprosy was a dreadful, contagious, and hopeless disease, it changes the skin to white color and causes parts of the body to fall off. The leper, by the law of Moses, was regarded unclean, and was separated from the people.

Even though He was always busy, somehow Jesus always made time for everything. He made time to pray, even with all the needy crowds often following Him around. He made time to talk with His disciples and answer their questions. He made time to go with Jairus to help his daughter. And even on the way when his daughter was in critical condition, He made time to stop and talk with the sick lady who had the bleeding problem. Jesus is never too busy to help people. As a human, He had limited time each day like we do and many more pressing needs. And He still made time for others. He did so because He valued each individual person, young and old, male and female, poor and rich, healthy or sick.

We see three important things in the leper's request:

1. Humility: He knelt down and called Him "Lord".
2. Submission: "if You are willing"
3. Faith: "You can me clean"



This is the way we should approach God when we pray. We should treat Him with the respect He deserves. We should appeal to Him. We should ask kindly and politely for His help. And we should be willing to take “no” for an answer if it is not God’s will to say, “yes.”

Jesus was willing – He does what is best for us. No obstacle is too big. If we do not get what we pray for it is not because He is unable, but it is because He is unwilling. And if He is unwilling it is because it is not good for us.

No one was allowed to touch a leper. The act of Jesus putting forth His hand and touching him, therefore, expressed the intention of Jesus to cure him, and was a pledge that he was, in fact, already cured. What Jesus did was a profound example of His love for the alien, the ostracized, the discarded of society.

He told him to show himself to the priest to obey the laws of God and make proper acknowledgments by an offering. Just as we repent our sins in front of God in prayer then go the priest for confession to get the forgiveness and permission to take communion.

2nd Miracle: Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant (8:5-13)

Jesus asks him, “shall I come and heal him?” – It is not an accident that Jesus asked that. It is not something He normally asked. But Jesus knew this man’s heart and He wanted to use him as an example to all the people watching so He gave him an opportunity to proclaim his faith publicly. The centurion was humble – He realized that he was unworthy. He was a good person too. It was not common for Romans to care for the servants in the first place. He said : “only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.”

Not even Martha (Jn 11:21) thought that Jesus could have saved her brother Lazarus without going to him. The centurion’s faith was great. He had full confidence in the ability of Jesus to heal his servant and requested Him simply to give the command.

There was something different and very important about this man. Even though the world thought highly of him, he knew that Jesus was different from the world. He saw something in Jesus that set Him apart. What was it he saw in Jesus? Something he saw in Jesus made him trust completely in the power of Jesus to heal. It was something that he understood because he was a soldier. He

understood authority. What is authority? "Authority" is having not only the power but the right to rule and make decisions, to have control over how things are done. This centurion recognized that Jesus has absolute authority. The centurion relied on Jesus to help him in a hopeless situation. He knew Jesus was worthy of his faith.

It is through faith in Jesus that we invite Him into our circumstances and say, "not my way, Jesus, but Your way!" We need to recognize that we are helpless and hopeless without Him.

Jesus also alludes to the fact that many Gentiles will believe while many Jews will not accept.

3rd Miracle: St. Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed:(8:14-15)- 4th Miracle: healing the demon possessed.

We can learn a good example from this lady as she immediately begins to serve others. She was not focused on herself even after her sickness, but she was focused on serving her guests. She was being a good host and was exercising hospitality. We too should show hospitality to others.

Many were healed in the evening: The sick were diseased in body; the demoniacs were spiritually diseased.

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)

First a "certain scribe" (religious scholar) asks if he can tag along as Jesus sails across the lake to the east side. Jesus tells him that they're not going to take an easy route to a Marriott Hotel; discipleship has its hardships.

Jesus told the man about the cost of following Jesus. He wanted him to understand the cost at the beginning. One potential cost is no place to call home. No house. No security (in this world). No stability (in this world.)

Another follower-to-be tries to beg off for a while, until his father's funeral. Jesus in effect tells him that the boat is leaving climb aboard now or get left behind. These seem to be rather terse words, but some scholars believe the man spoke in a figure of speech. His father may not have really been dead at the time. The would-be disciple meant that he would follow Jesus when he had completed all his duties to his family, which could be many years in the future. Jesus knew a lame excuse when He saw one and challenged the man to put following Him ahead of his family ties.

What do you think of this request? Reasonable? Satan always tempts us to want to delay serving God in the future. What are some reasons why people delay? We should not wait for a more convenient time. It will never be convenient to serve God. How can you serve God more now?

This guy was putting his parents first in front of God, when God must be put first.

5th miracle: Wind and Wave Obey Jesus (8:23-27)

During the group's sojourn to the east side of the lake, to the region around the city of Gadara, a raging storm struck, threatening the lives of everyone on board. Jesus, tired from the pressing

crowds, had fallen asleep. Even after awakening to the screams and shouts of the men, however, He remained calm. What bothered Jesus was the spiritual immaturity of His followers. Granted, this was still fairly early in their ministry together, but after seeing what they had seen that day, were they not certain that here was a “man” who could control nature? “Oh, ye of little faith,”

At this point the disciples had already seen a number of miracles. They should have had faith and not worried when they saw the storm because Jesus was with them. And yet they still feared. Why? It is human nature. Fear and worry seems to be in our blood. Yet that is our old nature. We don’t have to live as slaves of that fear anymore. This worry and fear is the opposite of faith. Do not accept it as a normal part of human nature. Human nature is fallen and corrupted. There are many things that are natural for us to do that we should not do.

The miracle of calming the stormy seas should draw our attention because we, too, will face out-of-control situations that place us in grave peril. We need to know that Jesus has been there before, protecting and defending.



6th miracle: Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (8:28-34)

Gergesa was a village in the district of the Gadarenes, the people who lived there were probably Jews who worked with pigs in violation of the law of God.

If this were a movie, then the opening scene would be gripping! It is the middle of the night. Jesus and the disciples have just been through a terrible storm. The disciples are reeling from the realization that Jesus could just speak to a storm and make it stop. Then, they land the boat near a cemetery, and a naked demon-possessed man (covered in blood and wearing broken chains) runs out, yelling at Jesus.

He was an unclean man living in an unclean place [tombs] surrounded by unclean animals [pigs]. His reputation was so bad that even the Gentiles in the nearby town had cast him out. This man lived a pathetic life. Being possessed by demons had ruined his life. The demons that lived in the man

used the man's voice to address Jesus. He commanded the demons to transfer into the herd of nearby pigs. The pigs ran into the sea and drowned.

The ones who had been tending the pigs would have been very confused in the least. They rushed to tell everyone in town. The people from town had seen the demon-possessed man many times, but that had not frightened them like the sight of the man, fully clothed and obviously in his right mind.

The town's people had tried to keep this man away by chaining him up and hiding him away. It is easier to dismiss people or cast them out than it is to actually deal with them and live beside them. This and the fact that Jesus was interrupting their economic stability (pigs) made the people ask Jesus to leave.

Christ permits the demons to do that in the swine which He did not permit them to do in the possessed, to show us what rage they would exercise on people if left to their freedom and evil. Perhaps the loss of the swine was a punishment to those who kept them against the law.

Jesus knew that the healed man would be a living example to all the people. Although the man wanted to go with Jesus, Jesus told the man to go back to his family and tell them all about what the Lord had done for him.

There are a great many who prefer their swine before Savior and so they come short of Christ and His salvation. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts and will not allow His word to have a place in them, because He and His word would destroy their lusts.



Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

From the 1st miracle {The leper}

These miracles that we saw in this lesson point ahead to the heavenly world that's to come. To the new creation. One day, Jesus will return, and He'll renew us, along with all the creation. Everything will be as it was intended - except even better, with Him at the center. So often, when we talk about miracles, we think of them as God suspending the natural order. But what if we thought of them more of God beginning to set things right? We are so used to a fallen world that sickness, disease, pain, and death seem natural.

When Jesus expels demons and heals the sick, He is driving out of Satan's power and restoring human beings who are hurt and sick. Jesus' healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly "natural" thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded.

What about your life - about this world - tempting you to lose heart? Can you see the glory in what Jesus does here - and what it means for your future? How have you lost hope, walking around in this fallen world? Has the unnatural become normal to you? Marvel as you see Jesus. See His crown. And be renewed in hope.

From the 6th miracle:

The whole city of Gergesene begged Jesus to depart from their region. They didn't praise God for His goodness when they saw the miracle. They didn't seek to understand more. They just wanted Jesus to leave. They wanted to continue living their comfortable lives with things they were familiar with (even if those familiar things were evil.) They refused to learn more about Jesus as this would require them to repent and abandon their pig trade.

This is very sad and completely different than the disciples who often questioned about things they couldn't understand.

In today's world, many people are like this as well. Perhaps they immediately reject the word of God because it is new to them and beyond their understanding. Most people would prefer to watch a movie than use their mind. Perhaps they even want to watch a show that they "don't need to use their mind" to understand. This generation is mentally lazy.

There are far more couch potatoes who go through life with dull expressions and ignore things they don't understand than there are sincere learners who try to understand the world and are willing to study, dig and question to find the answer.

We should be more like Mary, who was always meditating on the amazing things happening around her instead of the scribes whom Herod asked about the birth of Messiah. These scribes didn't even ask any questions or go to Bethlehem to investigate whether the Messiah was really being born there. Let us not miss a chance to change our old habits when God allows us the counsel.

Lesson 8: Chapter 9 “Your faith has made you well”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_09.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, we started a series of 10 miracles performed by Jesus, they demonstrated His power and authority over sickness, demons, and the weather. We studied 6 of them, today we would study the other four.

Memory verse:

9:22 “Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.”

Lesson opener:

A great job offer:

- ✓ Long hours! Lots of overtime! Must be willing to work on weekends!
- ✓ Must be able to travel often! Must be willing to accept the cheapest modes of travel, generally by foot, for long distances!
- ✓ Dangerous! potential threats from thieves and soldiers! will not pay for hotels! sleep where and how you can, sometimes outside in the elements!
- ✓ Political climate in the country is dangerous! Performing job will put your life in danger! you will be exposed to public ridicule and persecution!
- ✓ **Compensation:** no pay! no insurance! no pension! no housing fund! no paid vacation!
- ✓ **Qualifications needed:** complete obedience. deny yourselves and obey the boss completely in every area!

How does this job sound to you? You are all in a hurry to line up and apply?

You are missing the last part of the job advertisement; it goes like this:

Benefits: Learn face to face from the Creator of the world. Become friends with the King of Kings. Discover real joy. Gain a new purpose in life. Eternal life. The costs of this job are high, but the benefits are worth it.

Will you deny yourself and follow the Lord?

Lesson Goal:

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and has the authority to forgive sins. All those who were healed had great faith.

Lesson body:

You will notice that in this chapter many of the events center on a controversy between Jesus and the spiritual leaders. There is controversy about Jesus' forgiving sins, about Jesus choosing sinners, about fasting, and about Jesus' power in casting out the demons. These were some of the key quarrels that the religious leaders focused on when attacking Jesus.

In this chapter we see a distinct difference from the last chapter. We have seen flocks of people following Jesus. Everywhere He went, He was popular. People crowded to see Him and listen to Him. But not everything was smooth. There was a key and powerful element of opposition to Jesus' ministry. This was partially motivated by the jealousy of the religious leaders who saw these flocks of people listening to Jesus instead of them. Take special note throughout the chapter of the disagreements, the motivation of these disagreements, and how Jesus resolves them. This was the beginning of the opposition that ended with the Cross.

In this chapter, we have the next 4 miracles out of the ten recorded in chapters 8 and 9. Jesus uses His power on people to demonstrate who He is. It also shows the love and compassion Jesus has for us.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic (9:1-8)

Jesus left the people of Gadara upon their request where He healed the demon-possessed man and went to Capernaum which became His new home after leaving Nazareth.

The paralytic had probably brought his sickness upon himself by means of his sins; but was now repentant. Christ goes to the source of the disease, which is sin and then heals the body of the man.

St Mark's gospel gives more details about how his friends brought him to Jesus by opening the ceiling. They didn't let any obstacles keep them from Him. What do we learn about friendship from what these men did for the paralytic? Do you have friends like this in your life? Are you this kind of friend towards others?

Jesus is challenged when He forgives the sins of the paraplegic man. In Jewish thinking, it was blasphemy, pure and simple, for any mortal to presume to forgive sins (reserved for God only) and that was a crime punishable by death. Jesus rebukes the critics by asking which is easier, spiritual cleansing or physical healing. Before they answer, He also heals the man. Actually, spiritual cleansing is easier because no one could see proof that it happened but in order to prove the first, He did the physical healing as it was an obvious sign. Jesus wanted to tell them that if He can do the most difficult, then He can do the easier. External miracles are the proof of internal ones.

Of course, the crowd is impressed but read verse 9:8 carefully. ". . . they praised God, who had given such authority to men." They still didn't get it. They thought God had given such power to men, failing to recognize this one "man" as the Son of God. They forgot that his sins were forgiven, sometimes miracles are not enough to change people.

Jesus demonstrated power over illness by healing him, which also proved that He had power to forgive sins. Imagine that the man didn't get up. Jesus commands him to rise, but nothing happens, and he tries and collapses back to the ground. What would have happened to Jesus' ministry? The crowds would have gradually dispersed. The Pharisees would have smugly pronounced that Jesus

couldn't forgive sins OR heal. But that didn't happen. The man did get up. This is a reminder that Jesus and His miracles were real. If He was fake, His ministry would have collapsed. If He was just a good magician, someone would have finally discovered His "tricks" and exposed them, and His followers would disband. The belief and sacrifice of those closest to Jesus continue to be a strong evidence that Jesus is who He said He was.



Matthew the Tax Collector (9:9-13)

In the time of Jesus, tax collectors had a very bad reputation. Firstly, they were considered to be sellouts to the Romans. The Romans were a foreign occupying force over Judea. They were often times very cruel and mistreated the Jews. In addition to acts of brutality, they taxed them, severely.

Tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Romans for personal gain. Basically, they helped Rome gather taxes from their own countrymen. Tax gatherers are never popular in any country, but especially in this case. They were also hated because they often collected much more than the amount required and pocketed the difference. Only a person of the lowest moral character who valued money above all else would be willing to sell out his own country like this. Matthew was one of them. . Jesus is not afraid of the backlash of choosing Matthew as a disciple.

To follow Jesus, Matthew would have to give up this life, his source of income and security, his sinful life and friends.

How blessed it is to be obedient to the first call of Christ? how much happiness and glory are lost by delays?!!

Being humble, Matthew didn't mention that he planned a feast for Jesus and invited his colleagues, this was mentioned in St. Luke's gospel. The Pharisees by asking why He is eating with tax-collectors accused Christ of seeking the society of such sinners being their friend. They thought that He could not be Himself righteous, since He delighted in the company of abandoned people, they despised Jesus because they thought they are without sins while the tax-collectors felt they needed correction so they were ready to repent.

Jesus Is Questioned About Fasting (9:14-17)

John's disciples question Jesus to learn and understand something which they don't understand. They had been taught that fasting was normal and beneficial, so to see Jesus and His disciples not fasting was confusing. Yet, they were to be blamed for joining the Pharisees in interrogating Him.

Jesus gave them three reasons why they aren't fasting:

1. Fasting is usually a sign of sorrow. Jesus' coming to the earth was a cause for celebration. While the disciples were with Him, they do not need to fast. In other words, there is a time and a place for fasting, there is a time for rejoicing in the Lord and a time for seeking the Lord with humility and fasting and for mourning over sin. At the same time, He shows them that they should not judge others for not doing the same since there can be legitimate reasons for not fasting at a particular time.
2. Cloth parable – Nowadays we live in a time when clothes are bought pre-shrunk. Back then, cloth had to be naturally shrunk, and it would keep shrinking for a long time. New cloth and old cloth would shrink at different rates. So, if you had an old robe that had a hole in it and then sowed a new piece of cloth over the hole that new cloth would shrink at a faster rate and would rip itself off the old cloth. The result would likely be a bigger tear than the original hole.
3. Wine skin parable – New wine is fermenting over time, releasing gases which give pressure. New wine skins are elastic enough to take the pressure, but old wine skins could easily burst if you store new wine in them because they are hard. The meaning of this parable is the same as the cloth parable. If brand new wine is placed in that brittle and stiff old wine skin, it could cause that wine skin to burst and waste the wine. On the other hand, new leather is soft and could change shape or expand as necessary to accommodate the fermenting wine.

So, the "new" doctrines do not match with the old rites of the Pharisees. There is a right place for the old as well as the new. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old (Matthew 13:52)

He doesn't want us to hold rigidly to the past and to be resistant to the new work of His Holy Spirit in our lives. He wants our minds and hearts to be like new wine skins open and ready to receive the new wine of the Holy Spirit. Fasting in the NT is all about loving God, it is different than the way the Jews used to fast.

That whole illustration has to do with the way people misunderstood Jesus' ministry and purpose. Jesus was "starting something new" and His purpose was not understood by the religious Jews of that day.

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed (9:18-26) [1st and 2nd miracle]

The parallel passages to these miracles are in Mark 5:21-43 and Luke 8:40-56, putting them together we get a full scene of how they happened.

A ruler [Jairus] came and bowed down before Jesus (v 18), showing Him respect before telling Him the terrible thing that just happened. My daughter has just died. She was still a child and according to Mark and Luke was twelve years old, Jairus's only daughter (Mark 5:42; Luke 8:42).

This man shares this dreadful news with a hope-filled faith. But come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live (v 18). He had no doubt heard, or perhaps even witnessed, Jesus performing miracles healing lepers, paralytics, people with fever, and casting out demons. Now that his daughter had died, he had nowhere else to turn. Based on what he had heard or seen, he believed that Jesus had the power to bring her back to life. Jesus got up and began to follow this father to his home (v 19). His disciples did the same.

Along the way, Matthew tells us that a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage follows after Jesus. Apart from the physical suffering she would have endured, she would have also been considered ritually unclean according to the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 19:15-30). She had been suffering under these physical and social conditions for twelve years.

As Jesus passed by, the woman came up behind Him and touched the hem of His garment (v 20). Matthew tells us that she did this because she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I will get well" (v 21). She knew Jesus had the power to heal her hemorrhage. But she appeared to be ashamed or afraid to publicly ask Him to make her well. She attempted to seek healing covertly by touching Jesus's garment.

If she had stopped Jesus, or grabbed Him, it would have likely caused a scene and potentially brought more shame upon her. By only touching the hem, she believed that she could be made well without attracting unwanted attention.

After she touched Jesus in faith, He turned around, saw her, and said "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." (v 22). He told this fearful daughter to not be afraid or ashamed but to take courage. Christ's power had healed her, but she received His healing grace through her faith in His power. Matthew concludes this encounter by explaining that at once the woman was made well (v 22).

If Jesus didn't say anything, the woman would have gone home without ever talking to Him. I believe she would have regretted this for the rest of her life. She would likely have felt some shame and guilt at the way she received her healing and blamed herself for not either asking or thanking Jesus. Here Jesus kindly gives her an opportunity to come clean and take the weight off her own conscience. To her credit, the woman admitted it. Jesus recognized the lady's faith. She did have a lot of faith, and this is why Jesus was happy to heal her. He also blessed her.

Mark and Luke added that as this event was occurring, a report came from Jairus's house that his twelve-year old daughter died (see Mark 5:24-36; Luke 8:43-50).

When Jesus came into Jairus's house, He saw the crowd in noisy disorder (v 23). Lamentations and dirges filled the air. When Jesus saw and heard this commotion, He tried to disperse the crowd, telling them to Leave. There was no cause to mourn, for, Jesus claims, the girl has not died but is

asleep (v 24). By saying that, He taught us not to be in dread of death, since it was reduced to the condition of a sleep. If you believe this, why do you vainly weep? Why do you afflict yourself? This is what the Gentiles do, who have no faith.

But when He said this, the crowd began laughing at Him (v 24). Their laughter was a scoffing laugh in offense to what He just said. When the crowd had been sent out, Jesus entered the room where the dead body lay, and took the girl by the hand, and the girl got up (v 25). She was pronounced dead. Now she was alive. Jesus had raised the girl to resume life. Not surprisingly, this news spread throughout all that land (v 26) (Galilee and beyond).

Two Blind Men Healed (9:27-31) [3rd miracle]

These men obviously had a lot of faith in God. They knew that Jesus could heal people. But more than that, they showed that they believed Jesus was the Messiah. The title “Son of David” was used to refer to the Messiah, God’s chosen One. So, these men showed great faith.

Why do you think Jesus asked the men what they wanted? Didn’t He already know their need? Jesus wanted the men to tell Him what they needed. He likes to hear from us about our needs. God knows all our needs. But He still wants us to ask Him for the things we need. He wants us to talk to Him about everything!

A Mute Man Speaks (9:32-38) [4th miracle]

The demon possessed man – The demon caused the man to become mute. Jesus healed the man without the man making a statement of faith – Jesus works in different ways at different times. The man was indeed incapable of verbally expressing faith in Jesus since the demon was controlling Him.

Referring to Jesus: “Moreover He did not only cast out devils, but He cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, calmed the storm, forgave sins by His own power, preached the eternal felicity of heaven, and brought back man to God: all which the devil never could, never would bestow upon mankind”. (St. Chrysostom, hom. xxxiii.)

Jesus felt compassion for them – This is one of Jesus’ key character traits which He exhibits again and again. He didn’t lose patience. He dealt with crowds of needy (and often annoying) people day after day without complaint and without rest.

Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

From the paralytic miracle:

God warns us against looking at the outside of a person not the heart, like the scribes in this story who judged Jesus and condemned His order of forgiving sins. There was a story about a bishop who heard that one of the church girls was tempted to join a house for prostitution. It was during the holy week when he went to the business owner of the house to request taking the girl back to her family. The owner insisted that she wouldn’t give him the girl unless he eats a meal of duck with her. Can

you imagine how people would look at a bishop going into a house like that and eating non-fasting food during Holy Week? Out of love, he did as she requested, broke his fast and restored the girl back to her family.

Let us not judge by the appearance. Matthew looked bad from the outside being a tax collector, but he ended up obeying Jesus's call to follow Him while the scribe from last chapter who appeared religious asking Jesus to be a follower, ended up going home and following Him.

From the parable of the cloth and wineskins:

We have our own ideas, prejudices, and habits like the Jews. Are we willing to change them when confronted with God's Word? Is our heart stiff and unbending, made of stone? Or are they soft? Are you like a brick that cannot be molded by the potter? Or are you like a soft piece of clay, willing to change yourself to fit into how God wants you to be?

Here is an example. You may have heard people say things like "That is just how I am." They may say this about their blunt or rude communication, about their lack of compassion for others, or about their forgetfulness or disorderliness, "That is just how I am." The list can go on and on. Probably it is how we are. But saying "that is how I am" is not a good excuse. And this is the wrong perspective. The better approach is to ask a question, "How does God want me to be?" or "How should I be?" Answer that question and then adjust your personality and character to become like that.



Lesson 9: Chapter 10 “Do not fear, follow Me”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_10.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson we studied chapter 9 which focused on Jesus performing various miracles, including healing a paralytic man by forgiving his sins, calling Matthew the tax collector to follow Him, raising a ruler's daughter from the dead, healing a woman with a blood issue, restoring sight to blind men, and casting out demons, all demonstrating His authority and compassion for the sick and marginalized.

Memory verse:

10:28 “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Or 10:32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Lesson opener:

Reflecting on verses 10:32-33: Is it true that your faith could be a matter of the heart and does not need to show in your actions?

There is a movie called “Silence.” This movie was about missionaries who went to Japan and encountered serious persecution. The missionary “heroes” all ended up denouncing their faith. The main hero even turned to the local Japanese religions and worshiped idols. At the end of the movie, he was depicted as still having a faith in Christ in his heart even though all his actions showed otherwise. The lesson of the movie was that actions don’t matter. You can believe in your heart and then do whatever you want. Do you agree with this? We cannot say, “Just believe in your heart and it is fine. God knows your heart. He understands.” The idea that faith needs no action or even confession is heretical and blatantly against the Bible. Even though the movie had high reviews, we can say that it had a misleading message against our faith.

Lesson Goal:

There is a cost for becoming a disciple [a true Christian]. Jesus wants us to carry our cross and follow Him.

Lesson body:

Sending The Twelve Apostles (10:1 The Twelve Apostles (10:1 -4)

We read at the end of chapter 9 that Jesus said the “harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” In chapter 10, He pairs up His 12 closest followers, the disciples, and sends them out. Notice that His instructions to the Twelve are to minister to the Jews only. It was His purpose to convince them first during His earthly ministry. After His resurrection He would commission the disciples to pursue His ministry into all the world (more specifically, the Gentiles).

The twelve had already been called and had followed the Lord for some time. They were now commissioned and sent forth as apostles. It is time to stop observing and start witnessing, like all Christians should do. They don’t serve unless they were disciples [prepared] first. [Pre-servants ministry at our church]

There are three pairs of brothers among them:

1. Andrew and Peter
2. James and John
3. James the Less and Judas, or Thaddeus

St Matthew mentioned the names of the twelve apostles, after he had declared the power, they were given from the Lord, over the unclean spirits so they expel them. Also, they were granted the healing power over diseases and all weaknesses. We notice two points in this selection of disciples:

- ✓ Firstly: The disciples were not of unusual talents, neither were they prominent figures in society. They were ordinary people. God works with anyone who follows Him.
- ✓ Secondly: The selection was an amazing combination of personalities. A tax-collector, Simon the Zealous [among a group of Jewish radicals], a doubtful person like Thomas, a bold person like Peter and so forth. Remember that God can and does use anyone who is willing to be His disciple.

Sending Out the Twelve (10:5-15)

In the beginning of their preaching, He put limits to their preaching area ‘the Jewish nation’ without going out of bounds to the city of Samaria, or to the way of the Gentiles. But before His ascension He told them to preach to all the nations, baptizing them. He has not allowed them to preach among the Gentiles until the Jews declared their rejection to the Messiah. This was not a bias to the Jews against the Gentiles, but it was for the Jews not to be skeptical of His Messianic message. Once they rejected Him, the door for the Gentiles was opened, even though Jesus Himself did not deprive Samaria and some of the Gentiles of His service. The distinction between Jew and Gentile was destroyed after resurrection.

What is The Topic of their Preaching? He defined the topic of preaching, which is ‘repentance’ since this is the way to the heavenly kingdom. “The Kingdom of Heaven Is At Hand!”

How do they support their preaching? Jesus says to go perform the miracles like the ones He has done in the last two chapters. Jesus has given them the authority to perform these miracles for free to give it to others for free as well.

Before He asked them not to possess gold, silver or copper, He offered them wonderful abilities that support them in the service, such as healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, casting out demons.

When they enter a city or a village asking for a home that has a good name, they then stay in it, and they do not go from one house to the other, not to seem dissatisfied with the hospitality of the people; so, their serving the word would not be transformed to a service of favors. They should concentrate their thoughts and struggle in the preaching service alone.

They had to teach the word as it is, and not to get disturbed if it is refused by anyone! If rejected, they shake off the dust, which was a custom for the Jews when they return from a pagan territory as a symbol of the "uncleanness" of the pagans.

The judgment of covenant brothers and sisters [Jews] who reject their message of the coming of the kingdom will be greater than the judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Persecutions Are Coming (10:16-26)

God wants us to be witnesses to the world, but at the same time not "trust" the world.

The disciples were to be careful and alert, for they would be met with strong and powerful opposition and antagonism everywhere they traveled. According to verse 16, they were to be as innocent as doves but as shrewd as snakes. They were, after all, sheep among wolves.

Doves, of course, are associated with peace and innocence. Snakes have a long tradition of symbolism. The Jewish attributed a sly sort of wisdom to snakes. They are very cautious in avoiding danger. They hide their heads when being attacked. "Being wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" is a wonderful combination. The wisdom of snakes would save them from unnecessary exposure to danger; the harmlessness of the dove, from sinful ways to escape danger.

The other metaphor was less theological and more practical, as the wild and natural wolf was the primary predator of the sheep, a helpless and innocent animal. Sheep are humble. Sheep do not fight "fire with fire". Each animal Jesus mentions has certain qualities that we can imitate. The sheep's good qualities are meekness. But that doesn't mean we should be dumb like a sheep. On the contrary, believers are to be wise as snakes.

How would you like it if your job description included certainty of persecution and arrest? The disciples, though they may have appreciated Jesus' forthright honesty, probably looked at each other and thought, "Wow, I could've just stayed home, tended my nets, and had supper with my family tonight." At the same time, they must have shivered with excitement of doing something that would make an eternal difference in the history of humankind. Even during persecution, they should

witness to their very captors. The guards, soldiers, leaders, judges, jury, etc. are all people who are sinners and need Christ. Remember what Peter and John did in Acts 4-5.

Jesus assures them that even in their persecution, they need not worry or fear (10:19-20), echoing His sermon admonition (6:25-34). The Spirit of their Father would provide them with the right words to say, just like Peter and Paul used to do in front of the governors and officials.

The message they would be carrying was inherently volatile enough to cause division among the ranks, even within the same household. Family members who do not believe in Jesus would turn against their own family members that believed like in the stories of many saints killed by their parents e.g.: St Barbara.

Nevertheless, they were to be comforted that no persecution they would face would be able to ever silence them. Nothing could happen to them without God's permission.

They would persevere by faith. Even should they be martyred for the message they proclaimed, the eternal reward of heaven awaited those who obeyed His teaching and commands. Those who accept the disciples, accept Him; and all those who acknowledge Jesus will be acknowledged to God by Christ at the Judgment.

Jesus Teaches the Fear of God (10:27-31)

Therefore, do not fear them. This phrase is repeated several times in this passage. We are not to fear man. Several reasons are given:

1. V27: Because of what the disciples carry as hidden divine glories, and what they have been granted as spiritual blessings will not be suppressed forever. It will be partially revealed at this age and completely fulfilled in the coming age. The disciples may have worried about their mission. They may have feared that persecution would keep them from spreading the good news effectively. If the disciples were killed before performing their mission, the truth would be suppressed forever. Jesus encourages them here by saying, "Don't fear! The truth will not be suppressed! Your mission will be successful! Only be bold to speak out and let it be known everywhere."
2. V28: They were not to fear man, because man has no power over their soul. Do not fear, or let your heart get weakened, and do not be disturbed when your money, food, drink, pleasures, clothes, house or even your very body is taken. But fear the adversary that pulls away your spirit from the faith, and from relying on God, and the love to God and the close ones. This is when you lose your body and spirit by going Hell for eternity.
One day when you face the judgment, who will be on that throne? If the answer is your boss or human authority, then by all means obey them. Fear them. If the answer is God. Then obey and fear Him and do not worry about what the people around you will think.
3. V29: You Father cares more for you than for a sparrow. He is sovereign over your life as well. Therefore, you should not fear. It does not mean that He will not allow you to be persecuted. It does mean that the persecution which you face He specifically allows for a specific and a

good purpose. He only allows it because He wants to accomplish something important through it. Your hair is numbered does not mean that you will never suffer but it means that everything happening to you is under His control even when one hair falls off.

Confess Christ Before Men (10:32-33)

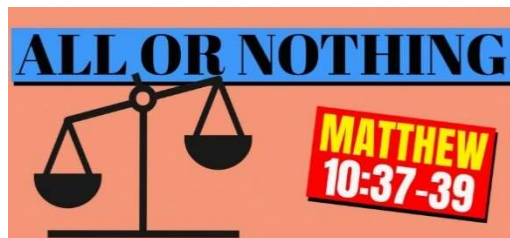
Christ who is sitting on the throne of judgment promises to acknowledge as His own faithful brother everyone who has thus acknowledged Him before men.

Christ Brings Division (10:34-42)

This is taken from Micah 7:6, Jesus did not mean that the purpose of His coming was to cause contention because He came to give us His peace, but He meant that the persecution would be one of the effects of His coming, since part of the family could believe and the other does not.

God presents His priority to all. There is no one to reign over the heart but Him. No one is allowed to enter the heart except it be through Him. The Holy Bible commands us to obey our parents. Yes indeed, but he who loves them more than he loves Christ, loses himself.

What Jesus is saying is that “To follow Me, you have to be prepared even to die.” You have to be prepared to give up everything you have, even your life. We know that all the disciples except for John did indeed give their lives for Jesus, just as we know a countless number of martyrs of our Coptic church. They all loved Jesus more than anyone. Remember St. Demiana when her dad denounced his faith to protect her, she told him, if you love me, go declare your faith in Jesus or else I am not your daughter. They were both martyrs.



God honors His disciples and apostles, and He considers them His agents. All acceptances of them means an acceptance of Him. Every gift given to them is only offered to Him personally. What great honor this is that God grants to His honest servants. This is why our church teaches us to honor the clergy and church servants because they serve in the name of God.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

How to follow Jesus?

“38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it”.

Follow after me : This is a key part of being a disciple. It requires sacrifice. It requires submitting ourselves, our goals, our desires, and our plans to Christ. It requires making Christ the Lord of our life.

While salvation is free because we cannot earn it, there is a very real cost to following Christ. There will be some things that we want to do, which Christ will say “No, you cannot.” A true disciple doesn’t merely follow Christ when he feels like it or when he wants the same thing that Christ does.

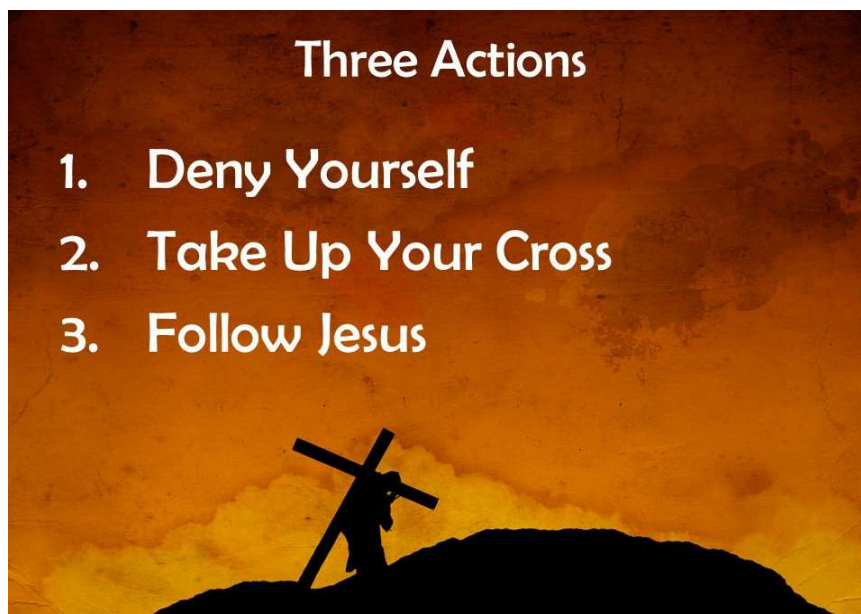
For example, confessing our sins to God is something we should do, but we also want to receive forgiveness. At times it may be more difficult to forgive others. When Jesus tells us to forgive that person who has hurt us so deeply, our flesh might say, “I don’t want to.” And that is when we have a decision to make. Do we want to follow Christ. If the answer is “yes” then there is only one real alternative and that is obedience.

Denying ourselves doesn’t necessarily mean giving up all things that we like and becoming a monk or nun. It doesn’t mean we inflict pain or discomfort on ourselves for no reason. It doesn’t mean I can’t eat the cake because it is too enjoyable, and God doesn’t want me to have anything nice. What it does mean is subjecting my desires to His.

If God asks me to move to serve in a certain place or wants me to love a person who hurts me or cut down on a habit or an app that keeping me away from Him, I have to be willing to say “yes.”

It doesn't mean you have to give up the things that are normal and needful in this life, such as education, career, material possessions, food and healthful activities, rest, and recreation, caring for others. But these things must be secondary and fit Jesus’s framework, not a “me first” framework.

Everyday there are many opportunities to apply this. What choices did you face today where there was a cost to following Christ? Some daily choices include giving up our time to pray and read the Bible, giving up our “rights” by showing patience or compassion to those who don’t deserve it, giving up ourselves to serve others and love the unlovable. Jesus’ disciples were not perfect. They had many weaknesses and flaws. But did they deny themselves in order to follow Christ. **Absolutely.**



Another delivery idea meditating on Jesus sending His disciples:

Many youths, even those raised in the church, do not understand the depth of commitment that Jesus calls for from those who would label themselves as His disciples [=True Christians]

What is a Christian?

This activity helps your youths to begin thinking about just what a Christian really is. Below are 8 definitions of a "Christian." Your students are to rank these definitions from 1-8. All these definitions are true or have an element of truth in them.

Rank the following definitions of a Christian from 1 to 8, with 1 being the best definition and 8 being the worst.

1. __ A Christian is someone who goes to church every Sunday, contributes regularly to the offering, and lives a decent life.
2. __ A Christian is someone who doesn't drink, doesn't smoke and doesn't use bad language.
3. __ A Christian is someone who loves other people and tries to treat them right.
4. __ A Christian is someone who reads the Bible and tries to live according to what it says.
5. __ A Christian is someone who attempts to live his life as close as possible to the teachings and example of Christ.
6. __ A Christian is someone who willingly gives up his own comfort or desires for the sake of others.
7. __ A Christian is someone who is not a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Jew, an agnostic, or an atheist.
8. __ A Christian is someone who always has a happy disposition, believes the best about everyone, and never gets angry, sad, or depressed.

After youth have had time to work individually, take a "vote" by show of hands on the best definition, the second best, the third best, etc. If you have time, ask your youth why they selected the definitions they did.

[I think all statements are true but the best, in my opinion, is #5 because our goal is to be like Christ, accordingly we do all the other points mentioned in the other statements]

Lesson 10: Chapter 11 “Judgements and Rewards”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_11.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Jesus empowers and sends out his twelve disciples to preach, heal, and cast out demons, focusing on the lost sheep of Israel. He provides them with instructions on how to live and work, emphasizing their reliance on God and warning them about potential persecution. Jesus also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging Him before men and the consequences of denying him.

Memory verse:

11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Lesson opener:

Needing Help?

Jesus reveals the pride of men’s hearts who refuse to acknowledge their need and to come to the only one who can help them. This can be well illustrated with a simple skit. Have one teacher pretend to be struggling at home with a plumbing problem. Another teacher can come in saying that he is a plumber. He can show some of his equipment and his qualifications to the class and to 1st teacher. The first teacher must, however, reject his help and continue struggling on his own. The plumber simply shakes his head, “Call me when you realize that you need help.”

Jesus said that we must call upon Him when we realize that we have a problem that we cannot fix on our own—our sin problem.

Lesson Goal:

Come to Jesus, lay down your burdens and instead pick up His yoke and you will find rest.

Lesson body:

Chapter 11 marks a major turning point in Jesus' ministry. The chapter begins by addressing the impact of Jesus' words and deeds on the people and what His actions reveal about His identity

In a section that extends from 11:2 to 16:16, we notice a contrast between how the people either believe that Jesus is the Messiah or how they reject Him and His teaching.

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus (11:1-19)

Verse 1: What did Jesus do after sending His disciples to preach?

In the last chapter 10, we have seen the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples. After He finished, He sent them out. Notice what Jesus did. He also went out to teach and preach. A good teacher doesn't just tell others what they should do. He leads by example. He models. Jesus practiced "with them" discipleship. We should follow Jesus' example. We should disciple others as well and when we do, we should make sure that we are not only teaching truth with our mouth but modeling right behavior with our actions. Actions speak louder than words.

Why did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask Jesus?

John had now been in prison for a year, to which he had been sent by Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, because he had rebuked his adulterous marriage with his brother Philip's wife.

St. Jerome points out that St. John knew he was going to die soon; therefore, he was sending his disciples to Jesus so they could, therefore, have answers to their questions, come to know Him, and become Jesus' disciples.

Jesus had done many miracles a short time before this encounter with St John's disciples, He had raised the widow's son at Nain [Lk 7] and the ruler's daughter [Mt 9]. St. John's disciples have seen His work which is more convincing than words. The Lord presented a live picture to them. They heard the words of His divine and unlimited love towards humanity and saw His deeds. Finally, He warned them of being offended in Him. For, when they see Him crucified, they, who do not understand His deep mysteries, are going to be offended. This warning is for the disciples of St. John the Baptist not addressed to St. John. For, previously, St. John himself declared the mystery of the cross by saying 'Here is the Lamb of God, that carries the sins of the world' (John 11:29).

How did Jesus describe John the Baptist?

1. The Lord praised him saying as St. Augustine says, "Surely, John was not a reed shaken by the wind, because he was not carried away by every teaching wind."
2. John is the Elijah who was to come. As written in Malachi 4:5 that a forerunner will come before the Messiah in the "spirit and power of Elijah." That is John. His lifestyle and character were similar to Elijah. Verse 10 is quoting Malachi 3:1.
3. He is the greatest born of women. Jesus shows what He thinks of John in this passage. John had a very special and important role as the final prophet who prophesized the Messiah's coming.

Why was John better than a prophet?

This is because the prophets have prophesied of the Lord's coming, and desired to see Him but were unable to. But as for him, he obtained what they had asked for. He was more than a prophet, because he was a reformer, forerunner and way-preparer, as well as prophet.

Who is the least in the kingdom of heaven?

He is referring to Jesus being younger than John from the point of view of time, but He is the greatest in honor.

Verse 12: John the Baptist came as the forerunner to the Lord Jesus, and thus the way to the kingdom was opened. Every believer is able to steal it violently by living struggle.

Indeed, the kingdom is God's free gift, but it is not offered to the slothful and careless, but rather to those struggling as if they are stealing it.

Why did Jesus call him "Elijah" in verse 14, when John, himself said he is not Elijah?

We do not believe in copying the spirit, Jesus did not mean that John is Elijah coming back to earth but that he has played the role of a previous personality.

Father Gregory the Great says, "The angel spoke to Zechariah concerning John (Luke 1:17) "He will also go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah." Just as Elijah will come prior to the second coming, so does John come prior to the first coming; Also, just as Elijah is the forerun to the coming Judge, so does John forerun the Savior at that time. Therefore, John is Elijah in the spirit, and not in his person."

Verses 15-19 – Meaning of the parable of the children in the marketplace:

Jesus says that this generation is like children. He uses the children here as a negative example when sometimes they are so stubborn.

One set of children invited another set to play, first in a mock wedding, then in a mock funeral, but the dissatisfied group were pleased with neither and would neither dance nor lament. The religious leaders blamed John for His strict, rigid lifestyle. They accused him of having a demon. John did not dance to their tune, and they got mad. They blamed Jesus for the opposite reason. He joined parties. He eats and drinks. He associates with sinners. They wanted Him to follow more of their own religious traditions.

If they admired fasting and penance, then John the Baptist's words should have led them to the Son of God. If fasting appeared sorrowful, why did they not join themselves to Jesus, who came eating and drinking? Whichever way they chose they might have arrived at salvation.

Application:

When one's vision is corrupted, he could find for himself all the justification to reject God's work. He cannot stand God's love and His tenderness, and neither does he accept His discipline. He is not attracted to sweet divine words and is not warned by the threats either.

Woe to the Impenitent [unrepentant] Cities (11:20-24)

What do you think Jesus' purpose is in denouncing these cities?

Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida are important towns at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Not only did those cities hear about Jesus, but they also saw, talked and touched Him.

Jesus had done many miracles in those areas; they should have changed their lives, but they did not.

Repentance was often shown externally through sackcloth and ashes. But we see zero cases of sackcloth and ashes in the gospels. No one tears their hair out like Ezra did. No one mourns and weeps like the people of Nineveh did. Why is there no repentance? Because the people thought they were OK. The people thought they were righteous in God's sight. Having become comfortable in their religious lives, they followed the ritual of religion, but their hearts were not changed. Whereas if these blessings were granted to strangers like Tyre and Sidon, they may have repented hastily and returned to God. Capernaum is likewise being condemned as being hard hearted and even more stubborn than Sodom which was the so evil. Even though Sodom was burned, it will be judged eternally because earthly punishment does not cancel the heavenly.

These verses confirm that there are levels of eternal hell because God is a fair judge. There will be different degrees of punishment, according to guilt and opportunities; those whose opportunities have been greater will receive greater punishment if they are neglected.

Jesus Gives True Rest (11:25-30)

Who are the wise and prudent and who are the babes?

The opposite of wise is stupid not babes, so He did not mean to refer to earthly meanings and levels of understanding. He hid it from those who are wise, those who are truly haughty and scornful, those who falsely pretend to be great, but in reality, they are only haughty. Who are the babes? They are the simple-hearted people who submit to God. Jesus used the easiest way to give Himself to each of us, by feeding us His body and blood since all humans can eat, even babes can open their mouth and take communion without having to understand theology.

“The invitation” verses 28-30: Come to Me!!

- A. Jesus, The Son is the way to know the Father:
No one is able to realize who the Father is in His essence except the only Begotten Son, this is why the Son came in our own nature, so He enters with us to God's knowledge.
- B. The Son Calls the weary to enter the true knowledge of relief: In Him we come to discover the immeasurable love of the Father, and we come to know His tenderness towards us. In Christ we have seen the Judge and the Intercessor at the same time. Of whom then shall we be afraid? This is the mystery for the relief of all! The weary are the people who are trying hard in life but are not achieving what they hope for. The goal is continually out of reach. Jesus promises rest. Not physical rest. He did not rest physically at all. But a rest from toiling on our own to achieve the unachievable. He gives us what we are longing for. He fills our hearts. And He gives it as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8-9), which we do not and cannot earn.

- C. The Son Calls upon us to be modest and humble of heart: He still expects us to learn from Him and follow His ways. He wants us to drop down our burdens and worries and pick up His yoke [cross].
- D. The Sweet Yoke: Literally, a yoke was a wooden beam normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs. And yet His yoke is not heavy. A command is not burdensome if you love the one who gave it. It is easier to love you enemies than to hate them, it is easier to give to the needy than steel from them, you would live in peace when you follow His laws. We shall not be able to encounter our Christ away from His yoke; neither shall we recognize His Father without His cross.



Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

The Invitation of Jesus (v. 28)

Even though Jesus has absolute authority to run your life, He doesn't force Himself on anyone. Instead, He invites everyone.

Notice, it's a personal invitation to a relationship. Jesus says, "Come to me." He doesn't say, "Come to a set of rules," Discipleship is not about adhering to a set of doctrines or performing a set of rituals. It's about coming to Jesus, knowing Him, loving Him, and following Him. Discipleship is about a relationship in which you're known, seen, and loved.

It is also an inclusive invitation. He says, "Come to Me, ALL." Not, "Come to me, some." We know that not everyone will respond to Jesus' invitation.

Finally, it's an attractive invitation. Jesus says, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavily laden." Jesus doesn't care what you are weary and burdened with. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter how tired or how heavy the burden is, you are invited. You are welcome. You are wanted. This is the radical inclusivity of Jesus' invitation to discipleship.

Maybe the question isn't "Are you tired", but should be, "how tired are you? How beat up and weary are you from all the striving and seeking?" Jesus knows, He sees, and He understands.

Claim The Promise of Jesus (v. 28)

Next, think about the promise of Jesus to give us rest. How nice does a little rest sound? And notice that Jesus gives us rest, not ask us to earn it. This is grace; It's a gift. And it's at the heart of Jesus' invitation to discipleship. We don't come to Jesus to earn anything. We come to receive His grace, His love, His mercy, His rest. We come to HIM.

No one is saying that following Jesus isn't hard work. One time someone asked a singer, if he was a follower of Jesus. He said, "I try to follow Jesus, but I feel like I'm always trying to catch up." Is that you? Is it being God's child wearing you out? Then let's look at the next phrase:

The Yoke of Jesus (v. 29-30)

Jesus invites His disciples to take His yoke on their shoulders. What does that mean? Every rabbi had a "yoke" that they expected their students to live by.

Jesus put it this way when He was asked what the greatest commandment was. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." That's an easy yoke. That's a light burden. That doesn't mean it is easy to do, but it's easy to understand. In every situation, you ask yourself, "what does my love for God require of me in this situation? What does treating someone else the way I want to be treated require of me in this situation?"

Isn't it crazy that Jesus brought the entire law down to two points—love God, and love your neighbor—yet we can't even keep that? How many times have you seen so-called Christians bite, devour, gossip, backbite and slander their fellow brothers and sisters? How rare is it to see a community of believers genuinely bear one another's burdens?

This is why we need grace. This is why we are sometimes weary and heavy laden, because no matter how easy Jesus has made it, no matter how hard we try, we still trip over the law. This is why the next point, the last point, is so important.

The Heart of Jesus (v. 29)

"For I am gentle and lowly in heart". I can trust my heart to a God who is wise in heart, gentle in heart, and lowly in heart. Jesus is with us, sharing our burdens, giving us the strength to overcome.

His yoke is not one of oppression or coercion, but rather one of grace, love, and freedom. It is a yoke that brings us into a relationship with Him, where we learn from Him and grow in our understanding and love for God. It is a yoke that aligns our hearts with His, that guides our steps according to His will, and that empowers us to live a life of purpose and meaning.

Ultimately, as we take on His yoke, we are not left unchanged. We are molded, shaped, and transformed into His likeness. That's what happens when you journey so close to another. That's what happens in close proximity and relationships. You begin to see the world through His eyes, to love as He loves, to serve as He serves. His yoke is not a burden, but a tool of transformation.

His invitation goes out to all of us, every weary and burdened soul here today. Come, He says, and find rest. Come, and learn... He is gentle and lowly, kind and full of grace.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

<p>COME UNTO ME,  all ye that labour</p>	<p> and are heavy laden,</p>	<p>and I will give you rest. </p>
<p>TAKE MY  upon you,</p>	<p>and learn of me; </p>	<p>for I am meek  and lowly in heart:</p>
<p>and ye shall find  unto your souls.</p>	<p>FOR MY YOKE IS </p>	<p>AND MY BURDEN IS  LIGHT.</p>

Lesson 11: Chapter 12 “Lord of the Sabbath”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_12.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Chapter 11 starts with some of John the Baptist’s disciples coming to Jesus to ask Him if He was the promised Messiah, or if they should wait for someone else. Jesus doesn’t give a direct answer, but He tells these disciples to go back to John and report to him all the miracles they have seen Jesus do, compare them to what the prophets said the Messiah would do. Jesus went on to condemn three cities. Jesus thanks God for making His will known to His children.

Memory verse:

12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

Lesson opener: *[For older kids, change the scenario to apply on a little kid not themselves as it is childish]*

What are some rules you have in your house? Are you ever allowed to break those rules?

What if one of the rules in your house is that you’re not allowed to run in the house, but then a fire starts in your house; are you allowed to run away from the fire even if that means you must break the rule? (Yes.)

Your parents don’t want you to run in the house usually because you might bump into something or fall and hurt yourself. But if there’s a fire, then they would want you to break the rule so that you could get away and be safe. It’s the choice between doing the right thing of not running and the best choice of running in that situation. This is similar to the way Jesus explained how God asks His people not to do work on the Sabbath.

Lesson Goal:

Jesus asserts His own authority as "Lord of the Sabbath," demonstrating His power to reinterpret and fulfill the law.

Lesson body:

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath (12:1-8)

Were the Pharisees accurate in saying that the disciples were breaking the Sabbath?

The Pharisees accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath law. The question is, did they?

The OT law prohibits them from working at their occupation for the sake of personal gain. People already spend 6 days a week on themselves. The seventh is to be a holy day for God. That doesn't mean that a person cannot lift any objects, but it does mean that a person must not labor at their job. What the disciples were doing did not break the Old Testament law. In fact, Deuteronomy 23:24-25 makes it clear that a person could pick grain from fields as they passed through as long as it wasn't for personal profit but just to eat. The Pharisees did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn, but for doing it on the Sabbath day.

1. Jesus defended them which is the first reason to prove they didn't break the law or else He would have rebuked them.
2. The Lord answers them by citing the case of David, who, under necessity, took, ate, and gave to his followers the show bread from the table in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary which it was lawful for priests only to eat 1 Samuel 21:2-7.
3. In the second example Jesus points out that the priests at the Temple violate the letter of the Law by working on the Sabbath serving God in the Temple, but the necessity of their ministry outweighs the violation.

The Sabbath was made for man. The purpose of this day was to rest from their work and spend time learning about and worshiping God as a family and country. They could put aside all their worries by working in the field for one day and just enjoy each other and the Lord. God's commands are not burdensome, but ours very well could be.

The Jews esteemed nothing greater than the Temple, except that God who was worshipped in it — Christ, by asserting He was greater than the Temple, asserts that He was God.

The Lord has found the roots of the spiritual concept of worship and rituals in the Old Testament (Hosea 6:6) "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than sacrifices." Sacrifices are of great importance to God's people; and yet God does not want the outward appearances. He wants what is behind the sacrifice such as the mystery of love and mercy. Likewise, if the carrying out of the commandment of keeping the Sabbath as a sacrifice for God's obedience so does God want the core of this obedience, which is the love and the mercy.

Healing on the Sabbath (12:9-14)

From the very moment Jesus entered the temple, people were watching Him, seeking for a chance to accuse Him. "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath?"

Doing good on the Sabbath is allowed because it fulfills the commandments concerning love of God and love of one's neighbor. The Sabbath is a day to do good to others. It is a day to heal. It is a day to share God's love. It could easily be argued that there is no better day to show God's power and love by healing someone than on the Sabbath day. The sick people do not take a break from getting sick on the Sabbath, why not heal them? the Jewish leaders could find nothing to say to refute Jesus. His logic was undeniable. But were their hearts changed? No. They never say, "Oh, we never thought of it from that angle before. You are right."

After Jesus healed this man, they angrily left the synagogue and began conspiring how to destroy Jesus. This is the best day in this man's life. Everyone should be happy and excited and filled with awe. But the Pharisees aren't. There is no compassion.

Behold, My Servant (12:15-21)

When Jesus read the wicked hearts and thoughts of the Pharisees, He left the Synagogue and perhaps the town, but He continued to heal many people. He avoided unnecessary danger until His earthly ministry was accomplished.

St Matthew in verses 18-21 quotes a passage from Isaiah 42:1-4 that has been fulfilled in the person of the Messiah.

He confirms to us that:

- A) Jesus is the Chosen One to fulfill the Salvation.
- B) In Him, the Father is pleased with us.
- C) The desire and hope of the Gentiles.
- D) With Humility, He grants Victory.
- E) He is patient with the Weak.

I will put My Spirit on Him – The third member of the Trinity was also working. He will declare justice to the Gentiles – Salvation of the Gentiles was prophesied from OT.

Verse 19 means He was gentle and not violent. In Verse 20, He cares for the weak and needy. Jesus is patient, kind and long-suffering. He doesn't quickly snuff out or judge the spiritually immature but instead seeks to rekindle the flame again.

A House Divided Cannot Stand (12:22-30)

Jesus uses three arguments to refute the Pharisees' claim that He exorcises demons by the power of Beelzebul/Satan:

1. The first argument: Most kingdoms fall, not by the power of foreign enemies, but by weakness due to divisions. Satan's kingdom has to be ruled in peace, he cannot be in agreement with Jesus who opposes his authority and casts his demons out.
2. The second argument: Christ showed them that it might as well be applied to them as to Him, if their argument be true that a man who casts out devils must be in league with the devil, then

"your disciples" have made a covenant with Satan also because they cast out demons. Thus, they should admit that casting out demons has to be with the assistance of God.

3. *Who is the one entering the strong man's house in Jesus' example?*

The third argument: No one can enter a man's house and take his goods unless he has first conquered him. If I am not the Messiah, stronger than Satan, how could I spoil him? The strong man is Satan ("the prince/ruler of this world"), his house is the earth, and his property consists of those who are not the children of God. By casting out demons, Jesus is tying up the "strong man's (Satan) power and plundering his "house."

The two kingdoms of Satan and of Christ are opposed. Those who are with Jesus belong to God and proclaim His Kingdom by gathering the lost sheep of Israel while the Pharisees who stand in opposition to Him are the wicked shepherds who scatter the sheep.

The Unpardonable Sin and A tree known by its fruit (12:31-37)

God places no limits upon His mercy in the offer of His gift of salvation by the Holy Spirit through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

The Church teaches that every human sin can be repented and forgiven with one exception: anyone who deliberately and repeatedly refuses to accept God's mercy and the gift of eternal life offered by the Holy Spirit up to the moment he takes his last breath in death commits the final sin that is past pardoning, and that person condemns himself to the loss of eternal life.

The effect will be always similar to the cause; a bad tree will produce bad fruit, and a good tree, good fruit. The malicious accusations of the Pharisees reveal the malice and evil in their hearts.

A person may be able to fake his spirituality for a while. But sooner or later his true heart and spiritual condition will be revealed by his actions. The fruit will show whether or not the tree is a good tree.

In the context Jesus is saying that the religious leaders are bad trees. Their words are ugly lies, spoken out of stubborn pride and hate. Rather than welcome the Messiah, they oppose God's own Son at every turn. They are not neutral, but rather actively oppose Jesus.

Verses 34-35 – Jesus calls them a brood of vipers. It is the same thing that John the Baptist once called them. Jesus boldly denounces them and their hateful opposition to God's work. He calls their words evil. He calls their hearts evil. He proclaims that they are wholly and completely evil inside and out. It is a strong statement. And in the end, it made little impact on them. Jesus may have said it not primarily for their own benefit since they may have been beyond repentance anyway, but instead for the benefit of the crowds who followed them. Jesus didn't want the crowds to blindly follow their blind guides anymore.

The Scribes and Pharisees Ask for a Sign (12:38-42)

Jesus refuses to give a sign on demand. He is not a parlor magician. He doesn't do miracles just to appease their appetites or draw attention to Himself. But He does tell them He will give them one

sign. It is the greatest sign of all. It is His death and resurrection. He uses the analogy of Jonah who is in the belly of the fish.

An Unclean Spirit Returns (12:43-50)

If a person is possessed by the demon and the demon is driven out without a new Master (Jesus) being invited in, the demon will just come back again and bring more with him the second time. If a person's heart is not changed, surface changes will not last.

The lesson is simple: the only lasting remedy for peoples' problems is Jesus. Anything short of accepting Jesus will result in only surface changes.

In verse 48, Jesus is not disrespecting His family. Later while hanging on the cross, He told John to take care of His mother and showed respect to her in many other occasions like Cana's wedding. Jesus often used situations He and the people around Him were part of as object lessons. And this is one of those examples. The issue of "family" came up and Jesus taught them that anyone who obeyed God could be part of His spiritual family just like Sr. Mary was obedient.

Also, His brothers are not siblings because St Mary is a virgin. Jesus' point is that He has a large spiritual family that anyone can be part of by obeying His father.

Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

From Verse 30: ³⁰ "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."

Jesus showed that there is no such thing as neutrality. He didn't want anyone to sit on the fence. At times some of the people refused to publicly support or oppose Jesus for various reasons. They did the same when they told Jesus that they did not know whether John the Baptist's preaching was from God or man.

Today there are many agnostics in the world. These are people who say they don't care whether or not God exists. It is not important to them or their lives. They say that they are neutral. Jesus eliminates neutrality as a possibility. You are either with Him or against Him. There is no middle. So, make up your mind. If you cast your lot with Jesus, go all the way and sell out to follow Him with everything you have.



From Verses 36-37:

We will have to give an answer for every careless word. Words are important. Once they are spoken, they cannot be taken back [toothpaste illustration]. We will have to give an account for each one. There is a record with all your words inside.

How would you feel if Jesus opened that book in front of all of us and started reading out all the words that you said? What kind of words will be in that book? Prideful words? Hurtful words? Angry words? Gossip? Deceitful? Flattering? Lies? Disrespectful and rude? Curses? Or perhaps there is not many of the above categories. But perhaps the words recorded in your book are largely empty. Perhaps your “book of words” is filled with meaningless words. Talk of social media, sports and movies, etc.

Let us hope rather that our “book of words” is filled with meaningful words. What kind of words do you think are more meaningful? Words of encouragement. Praise. Worship. Complimenting others. Testimonies. Sharing what we have learned from God. Let’s be intentional to guide conversations in a more meaningful direction.



Lesson 12: Chapter 13 “The 7 Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_13.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 12 focuses on Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees over Sabbath laws and his claims to authority. It highlights Jesus' actions and teachings that challenge the Pharisees' legalistic interpretations and demonstrate his divine authority as the Lord of the Sabbath. The chapter also includes Jesus casting out demons, his rebukes of the Pharisees, and his declaration of his family as those who do his Father's will.

Memory verse:

13:16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.

Lesson opener:

[Science experiment]

You get 3 jars: Fill the 1st with some water and salt, fill the 2nd with water, salt and baking soda, and the 3rd with water and baking soda. [salt represents Satan and baking soda represents our hearts]

- ❖ Add to the 1st cup some vinegar [vinegar represents the word of God], nothing will happen
- ❖ Add to the 2nd cup some vinegar, you will notice a slight chemical reaction
- ❖ Add to the 3rd cup some vinegar, a huge amount of foam is formed.

When we hear the word of God and don’t accept it, we are like the first cup, Satan took it away and no reaction occurred. When we hear the word but get distracted with this world, a slight reaction occurs because we don’t pay full attention to it. But when we hear it and act on it, we are like the 3rd cup where a huge chemical reaction took place since no Satan [salt] was allowed.



Lesson Goal:

This lesson encourages us to reflect on our own hearts, consider how we respond to God's Word, and strive to be fruitful in our lives.

Lesson body:

The Lord Jesus presented to us new concepts of the heavenly kingdom concerning the worshiping, demeanor, struggle, salvation and the unity with God. Jesus teaches seven parables. He gives the reason why He is teaching in parables as well as explanation for two parables that His disciples found difficult to understand.

The word “parable” in Greek is parabole which presents a comparison to inspire deeper thought.

Jesus was an amazing teacher. His parables help us understand spiritual truths in a far more vivid way and to remember what we have learned as an interesting story. Likewise, when teaching bible, we should try to think of simple illustrations that can help people understand and remember spiritual truths.

The Kingdom Parables:

1. Parable of the Sower (verses 3b-9, 18-23)
2. Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat (verses 24-30, 36-43)
3. Parable of the Mustard Seed (verses 31-32)
4. Parable of the Yeast (verse 33)
5. Parable of the Hidden Treasure (verse 44)
6. Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (verses 45-46)
7. Parable of the Sorting of Good and Bad Fish (verses 47-50)

1- The Parable of the Sower (13:1-17), Its explanation [18-23]

This parable seems to be THE key parable in understanding the rest of the kingdom parables. The basic principles in it about seeds and fruits are seen across several other parables so if we understand this parable, it will give us insight into others.

Christ is the great Sower and all whom He sends forth to preach are Sowers under Him.

The seed sown is His Word, the Gospel of the Kingdom. The soil is human hearts that either reject or accept it. The Lord Jesus offered to us four kinds of soil: The way, the rocky ground, the soil full of thorns and the good soil. Indeed, the Sower and the seeds are one and the same; but whether there is fruit or not depends on the ground that receives the seeds.

- (1) The wayside hearer: He is the one that is careless and inattentive, negligent and forgetful. His heart is an open road where evil affections, and foolish and hurtful desires, continually pass and repass, without either notice or restraint. The word of God makes no impression on him.
- (2) The stony hearer: the heart that exhibits a temporary feeling at the appeal of the gospel; but upon whom no permanent impression is made. Those who are caught with it as something new or pleasing, who profess to be greatly delighted with it, and who are full of zeal for it. But they are not true Christians. Their hearts have not changed. They are not really attached to the gospel. Their response was just an emotional one or one on the surface. When trouble comes, these people abandon their newfound faith because it is too difficult to keep.
- (3) The thorny soil: the heart that takes in the Word but is so full of worldly cares that these presently gain the mastery. This describes the world-serving hearer. This person hears the word but does not love God above all else; the secular world pulls him away from faith and he bears no good fruit/works.
- (4) The good soil; the good and honest heart; the heart that receives and retains the truth. In such a heart the seed will grow, and the new life will be manifest. A heart that submits itself to the full influence of truth, unchecked by cares and anxieties.

Since we are Sowers with God, the more seed you sow, the better the chance will be that some will fall on good soil. If you sow one seed, there is a pretty good chance nothing will grow. If you sow 5 seeds, there is still a chance nothing will grow. If you sow one thousand seeds, it is very likely that some of those seeds will hit good soil and grow up into a healthy plant.

Wherever the Sower is active Satan is also active to inactivate them. What can we do about this? The only thing we can do is pray.

An important application for us is to make sure that we don't fall into any of these first three categories. Through prayer and humility ask God to give you a strong root. Place Him as the first priority over everything in the world so that it doesn't choke your relationship with Him.

Where are you in this parable? Are you sowing a lot of seed, just one seed here or there, or just watching other people sow seeds? Are you the good soil? If so, are you bearing fruit? Do you want to bear fruit 30 or 100-fold? What must you do to bear 100-fold?

Why did Jesus conclude His parable saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear?"

Not everyone was spiritually prepared to understand Jesus' message and get the meaning.

Why did He give the interpretation to only this smaller group of people and not the larger group?

Jesus' closest followers sought to better understand this parable – There is an important spiritual truth here. Where were the other people? If they didn't fully understand, why didn't they come and ask Jesus about it? It seemed that these closest followers cared enough to seek out an answer to their questions while the rest of the people were ambivalent about the true meaning. The lesson for us is to keep studying, learning, asking, and meditating to understand more than before. Jesus rewarded their persistence and sincere questions with the explanation.

What does verse 12 mean? Why? "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him".

God has granted knowledge to the disciples because their receptive hearts have made them open to accepting the revealed mystery. Those who have made some spiritual progress will go on and have greater knowledge. But to those who have listened with a closed and critical heart, He will take away even what little they have heard in that they will fail to understand the significance of what Jesus taught. Those who have no desire for spiritual knowledge shall lose even their capacity for spiritual things.

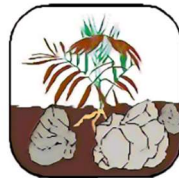
Whoever uses his opportunities will grow; whoever abuses them will lose them.

Verse 15: "It was a voluntary and self-chosen blindness; therefore, He did not say, "They do not see" but "seeing you will see and not perceive;" so that the blindness is of their own wickedness." St. Chrysostom.

A Sower Went Out to Sow



packed soil



stony ground



thorny ground



good soil

2- The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (13:24-30) its explanation (13:36-43)

It shows the patience of the Lord while waiting for sinners to repent and the inevitability of a final judgment.

Satan opposes the work of God. He not only actively takes away the good seed like we saw in the last parable, but he is planting bad seeds. He is raising evil crops to infiltrate the church as pretenders in order to damage the good crops. A weed is a destructive force in a garden. It zaps nutrients and chokes out good plants. Weeds in the church are also destructive.

God is patient, kind and wise. God does not act immediately against these people because it may damage the true believers. It is also not the job of men to weed out those weeds because we don't know people's hearts. Harvest time will come, and that is the time of separation by God. If one is not a child of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, he has chosen to be a child of Satan.

As long as there is still time, we should never despair, but keep struggling, not uprooting the tares, but rather in working to transform the tares into wheat. Father Isidorus Balbalsam says, the angels ask to uproot the tares, which is to punish the evil ones. But they are forbidden to do so, for them to have a chance for repentance, and that the righteous would not be harmed. God did not uproot Levi the tax collector, St Peter, nor Saul of Tarsus.

3- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32)

A mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds in the world, just 1/20th inch diameter. The "tree" that grows from this seed can grow to be up to 20 feet high.

In this parable, He presents to us the possibilities of the live kingdom that works in the hearts, and that extends to the entire world in spite of the devil's resistance. It is like a small mustard seed that has been sowed in a field in the earth, surrounded on every side by darkness. The soil presses on it, but 'life' that is dormant in it shoots up through the earth, to become a tree, attracting birds to nest in it.

He is giving us a contrast between the start of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and its future expansion to encompass the whole earth, sheltering all who come to dwell in the household of Jesus, that is the Church.

4- The Parable of the Leaven (13:35)

"The Mustard Seed" seems to point mainly to the outward growth of God's kingdom in us, but the leaven is the inward growth. "The woman" here represents the Church, as she puts the leaven and works silently, and without being seen. The apostles, by preaching the gospel, hid a handful of leaven in the great mass of mankind.

Verses 34-35: Divine things cannot be taught to man but through the medium of earthly things. The quote is from Psalms 78:2.

5- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44)

Jesus presents to us the parable of the hidden treasure, where we witness the role of the believer, and his continuous struggle to discover Christ, 'The hidden treasure in the field.'

This field is no other than the Holy Book which includes in it the mystery of Christ as a hidden treasure. It is only the persistent ones that are blessed with it, those who constantly dig more and more in the Book. It is therefore appropriate for the believer to sell everything so as to possess this field which contains the treasure. This is to be blessed with the treasure and hide it in his heart, just as the church hides her Christ amidst humanity.

For real, no one can possess the Holy Book in his heart, and react with it, unless he sells everything whole-heartedly, and concentrates on God's word. It would not have been possible for Joseph to oversee the barns and storage of Egypt, if he had not left his cloak in the hands of this Egyptian lady and ran away naked.

6- The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (13:45-46)

Now He presents to us the cost of this kingdom; actually no one could possess the Lord Jesus, the priceless pearl, unless he sells all that he has from the bottom of his heart and keep Jesus alone to rule over it.

Both those who found the treasure in the field and that who discovered the valuable pearl had the wisdom to understand what they had found and the determination to give up everything worldly to keep it.

7- The Parable of the Dragnet (13:47-52)

In this parable, the Lord Jesus offers an essential quality for the kingdom of heaven, which is 'the dynamic life,' that is to say, 'the incessant working.' The kingdom of heaven is similar to a dragnet cast out into the world, just as in a rough sea, and it gathers of every kind and species. It is not brought to the shore except when filled with all the chosen ones. The fishermen cannot stop to sort while they are drawing the nets. Nor can the preachers of the gospel always distinguish between the truthful and who is not.

Here again, as in the parable of the Tares, it is taught that, at the end of the world, the angels shall sort the wicked from the just.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

A lesson from the parable of the tares and the wheat: What would your final report be like?

God wants us to shine like stars now and be like wheat not tares so at the time of judgment we are sorted out with the good ones. Philippians 2:15.

Are you rooting sin out of your life? In Daniel ch 6, we see a powerful statement about Daniel's character in verses 4-5. These people tried every method for finding out Daniel's secrets. Surely, they spied on him and followed him. They investigated him. They would have done things like checking his projects and paperwork. Asking questions of his co-workers, examining his house and possessions. Throughout history political adversaries are very good at bringing out the secret sins of their opponents. We have an idiom in English, "everyone has a skeleton in their closet." It means that everyone is hiding something they don't want others to know about .

But Daniel was not. Although they tried as hard as they could, they could find nothing even remotely shady in Daniel's personal or professional life. In fact, the only thing they could find to accuse him about, is that he was too zealous for serving God! Wow! Isn't that amazing? Daniel had a shining testimony. It wasn't an act. It wasn't fake. He wasn't one person at the office and another person at

home. He wasn't one person at church and another person in front of his friends. He wasn't one person on Sunday and another person on the rest of the week. Daniel was the real deal. This is who he was. He was a righteous person who lived like it no matter where he was or who was watching.

I want you to put yourself in Daniel's place for a moment. Imagine that a team of detectives investigates your life. Their goal is to dig out your secret sins. They want to expose you. They want to prove that you are a different person during the week than on Sundays. So, they dig into every aspect of your life. What will they find? If they were to check your credit card bills and banking account history, what would they find you spend money on? What will they find out about your truthfulness in records? If they were to look in your internet browsing history, what would they see there? If they were to check out what kind of things you watch on your phone when no one else is around, what would they discover?

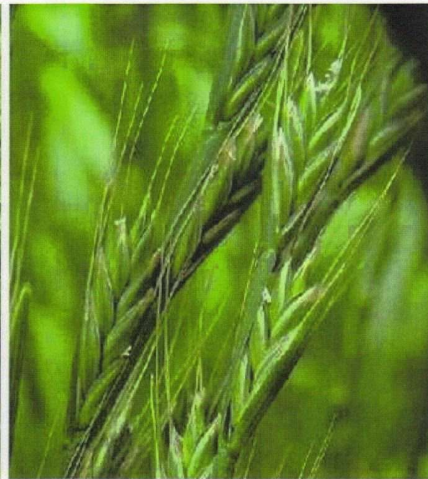
If they were to observe how you treat your family members and record a video of it, would you be okay if it is played at church? If they had the ability to go even deeper, and record the thoughts you think when you are all alone, would you feel comfortable playing those in front of everyone? So, what would the final report be?

Think for a moment about what you would be most afraid of them finding. If you could think of anything, then today take it to God and Repent. God can help you clean it. God can help you have a testimony as pure and blameless as Daniel's. We all want to be like Daniel! We would want to pass an investigation like he did. We would want for people who are looking to accuse us to say, "We can find no corruption in His/her only problem is he/she is too zealous for serving God. A person of integrity and righteousness can live with no fear of being caught.

TARES Look **IDENTICAL** To **WHEAT**



WHEAT: before it is fully ripe.



TARES: *Lolium Temulentum*

Lesson 13: Chapter 14 “Jesus makes the impossible possible”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_14.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 13 focuses on Jesus teaching the kingdom of God through parables, emphasizing hidden secrets and the importance of understanding the word. The chapter explores various parables, including the Sower, Weeds, Hidden Treasure, and Pearl, each illustrating different aspects of the kingdom's nature and growth. A key takeaway is that the kingdom of God is like hidden treasure, a valuable secret revealed to those who are receptive.

Memory verse:

14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”

Lesson opener:

The "Philip and Andrew" Skit

Pick two youth to be Philip and Andrew. Give Andrew two cans of tuna and five crackers. Have them reenact the scene described in today's lesson. Make sure that Philip expresses the impossibility of the situation, and have Andrew offer the meager supply with doubt.

Explain to the class that Philip could see no way to feed so many, and that Andrew offered what was available but doubted that Jesus could accomplish such a miracle. When Andrew spoke out, it must have seemed really silly for him to even suggest that five barley loaves and two fish could ever meet the needs of this crowd. Yet Andrew's perception was much broader than Phillip's. He looked at the resources he had but failed to rely on Jesus to meet the needs of this impossible situation.

Now that Jesus had forced them to realize their inadequacy, He told the disciples to bring their resources to Him. **Jesus makes the impossible possible.**

Lesson Goal:

We must turn to Jesus first and trust in Him to care for us and our needs. It is so important for us to bring what we do have to Jesus.

Lesson body:

John the Baptist Beheaded (14:1-12)

Herod the Great died around 4 B.C, he was the one killing Bethlehem's babies years ago. Before he died, he left his kingdom to his sons, of whom this "Herod Antipas" was one. He had been both fearful and fascinated by John the Baptist. He thought that Jesus was John coming back from the death, probably because he felt guilty over executing him.

A flashback on why John was martyred:

Herod had divorced his first wife and then taken his brother's wife Herodias, which was unlawful because his brother was alive. John publicly condemned Herod for this incestuous and sinful relationship while the Jews were scared to blame Herod, John speaks the truth boldly. Someone could say "Why not just be quiet on this issue so that he could deal with other less dangerous issues and prolong his ministry?". But that would not be John the Baptist.

After his wife's daughter [Salome] danced, Herod made a public oath to give the girl whatever she asked for up to half of the kingdom. He just blurted this promise out in the heat of the moment. It was rash and impulsive.

Application: Do not speak or act impulsively without thinking something through.

Herodias on the other hand thought ahead and yet by choosing the head of John the Baptist, she grossly failed even though she took time to think it through because her motives were corrupted.

Herod didn't want to do it because he had respect for and fascination with John. But he had promised in front of a large group of important people and cannot go back or else he would look weak.

Feeding the Five Thousand (14:13-21)

When the Lord Jesus heard what Herod did to St. John the Baptist, he went to a deserted place, this affirms the principle He offered to humanity, which is to escape evil and not to attack it.

The multitudes followed Jesus and His disciples, they did not care how tired Jesus, or the disciples were, they just wanted their needs met and sicknesses healed. None of them asked first if the time was appropriate for Jesus or if He needs to rest first. Jesus is a prime example of showing compassion to others. When people impose on us, our first reaction is to get angry or bitter. We say, "People should show consideration to us". He loved by putting other people first and by returning good for evil. Jesus' compassion for the people extended beyond their physical needs to their spiritual needs.

The disciples suggested that Jesus sent the people away after spending the whole day listening to Him so that they could eat.

Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples to give them something when He knew they wouldn't have been able to?

- 1- Jesus was giving them an opportunity to show their faith by making a suggestion such as, "Jesus, we can't feed all these people...but You can."
- 2- Also, He wished they offered what they could. He asks us not to be stingy even if we have very little, but to offer it, and hence satisfy the hunger of many. Not only that, but there will be extra food, more than what we have offered. Twelve full baskets were left over!
- 3- Thirdly: The disciples represented the church that God uses to feed His children through.

Why did Jesus command them to seat the people in groups?

As we see in 1 Corinthians 14:40, God is a God of order. Nothing generates chaos like free food.

Also, this way, we have a count that they were 5000 plus their families as they were groups of fifties. A third reason is to have the disciples serve the people which is the basis of the church serving her congregation through the clergy.

Which group would you be part of? Those who sit and be served or those who get up and serve?

The disciples were continually helping Jesus serve the people and that should be our goal as well, not only in church but also in our families and communities. There were twelve baskets leftover, this meant one per disciple. Jesus made sure that the disciples were provided for. He didn't forget them. If you serve Him, He won't forget you either.

Jesus promises later that He will one day give His Body and Blood as food and drink for the salvation of man (Jn 6:22-65). His miracle of feeding the 5000 and the discourse the next day are foreshadowing of the giving of Himself in the Eucharist.

He feeds everyone through His disciples, and no one coming up to Him will return hungry. He is the only one who can grant us satisfaction by means of His church that is His disciples.

Jesus Walks on the Sea(14:22-33)

He commanded His disciples to get into the boat, and sent the multitudes away, but as for Himself, He went up the mountain. He took them to the middle of the sea, so they could test His presence, as the mystery of their peace, when a storm is waged against them. He knows what is for their own good.

He leads them to the rough way, and the narrow door, not to be pleased for their suffering, but rather to meet Him during their suffering and find Him a source of comfort to them.

Jesus was a busy man. He was so busy that many times He didn't even have enough time to eat. And yet, He always found time alone to pray.

Did Jesus go help the disciples immediately? How long did He wait (until the 4th watch, 3-6 AM)? Why do you think He waited so long to help them?

God doesn't always save us out of trials immediately. See Romans 5:3-5. Sometimes God sees fit to let us experience trials for a while in order to develop our character. Jesus saw His disciples struggling against the wind. Actually, they were already very tired at this point, and this would have pushed them almost to the point of exhaustion. But for their own long-term benefit He didn't step in. Parents sometimes notice their kids struggling to do something. Is it always in their best interest to step in and do it for them? No. Some things they need to struggle with to learn. By letting them struggle with it for a while they could learn to be humble and know their own limitations. Maybe they need to learn how to ask for help and not rely on themselves.

For the disciples, they were able to witness once again Jesus' miraculous power. Because they had struggled already for a long time against the wind, Jesus' miracle of stopping the wind became even more amazing and highlighted His divine strength against their human weakness.

Application: Instead of blaming God or growing impatient or angry, when facing trials, we should look at ourselves and ask what lessons we can learn. Maybe we need to be more dependent on God, more patient, more faithful, etc. Sometimes not stepping in and helping one is a sign not of apathy, but of discernment.

The disciples were experienced sailors, and the sight of Jesus walking on the water was enough to scare them to the point where they cried out and were "terrified." It wasn't surprise or excitement, but sheer terror. At the beginning, they couldn't tell what this figure walking on water was (it was night so the light wouldn't have been enough). Jesus, however, didn't leave them in their terror, but revealed Himself to them. "It is I; do not be afraid", He said. The first order of business was to assuage their fears. Next, He decided to do another miracle to help with the trial they were facing, stopping the wind which was set against them.

Peter had less real faith than he supposed and more eagerness than his faith would justify. He was really attached to Jesus, but still easily overcome and prone to fall. At first, St Peter was successful but then when he took his eyes off Jesus to look at the stormy sea, he became frightened and began to sink into the churning water.



St. Peter had two choices: he could try to swim back to the boat, or he could call upon Jesus to save him. What is amazing is that the Lord did not calm down the waves so that Peter would walk on the water, but He said to Peter ‘Come.’

He pacified the inner waves of his heart, so in faith he would walk on the waves, and would not drown.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Where is your faith?

We can ask the disciples while in the storm, “Did you forget His miracles?”

The disciples failed their test that night, but they did learn a valuable lesson. We need to completely trust in Jesus. They should have known that if Jesus could feed 5,000 men with five loaves of bread and two fish, He could certainly take care of them in the middle of a storm. Instead of calling on Jesus for help, they strained against the wind in their own strength. Let’s remember to call on Jesus whenever we need help; He is worthy of our trust.

When Peter saw Jesus, he cried out, “Lord, if that is you bid me to come out with you.” And Jesus said, “Come!” So, Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water towards Jesus. He was doing it! As soon as he took his eyes off Jesus and put them on the storm instead, he began to sink. Then he cried out, “Lord, save me!” And the Lord reached out and saved him.

We learn a valuable lesson from Peter. When we completely trust in Jesus, we will not need to look at the storms of life but can focus on Jesus. We do not need to look at or worry about the problems or the scary things around us. We will only sink. But when we keep our eyes on Jesus, we can do amazing things during scary storms. It is wonderful to know that even when we get ourselves into scary situations (like Peter on the water) the Lord is still there to rescue us.

Let’s put all our trust and faith in Jesus! Only He is worthy of our trust. Do not put your trust in money or things. Remember how much Jesus loves you and wants to help you; you can trust Him for everything. We need to completely trust in Jesus.

Another option: An application from the feeding miracle:

So often we go to the Lord as a last resort, only after we have exhausted our own resources. Jesus wanted His disciples to turn to Him for help, just like you and me. We must turn to Jesus first and trust in Him to care for us and our needs. It is so important for us to bring what we do have to Jesus. He does not ask US to provide the impossible, only to bring what we do have to HIM so that He can meet the need.

Many times, we look at how little we have and how impossible the situation is. But in Jesus we can “do all things.” If He asks us to do something, we need to realize that He will give us the ability and resources that we need to carry out what He has asked of us. Jesus makes possible the impossible.

Lesson 14: Chapter 15 “What really defiles!”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_15.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 14 recounts the miraculous feeding of five thousand people and Jesus walking on water. It also narrates the story of Herod's actions against John the Baptist, including his imprisonment and subsequent murder.

Memory verse:

15:11 “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

Lesson opener:

When to confront? When to step away?

Sometimes we are faced with situations where we disagree with those around us, and we do not know when to try hard to fix the argument and when to dismiss it and leave.

What can we learn from Jesus’ responses to the Jewish leaders concerning the hand washing?

Jesus turns away from the leaders, focusing His efforts on freeing the simple people from the fear designed to dominate them. He redirects them to be concerned about what comes out of them, not what goes into them. The disciples were shocked that He made no attempt to resolve the rift, but He explained that they are blind leaders who cannot be led and must be dismissed to go their way.

Similarly, we need to discern when the confrontation is useless and follow Jesus’ strategy.

He bends over backwards to reconcile and include those who were often excluded, but there is no way to create harmony with those who claim to be in power and are bent on bringing Him down. All He can do is try to open the eyes of their blind followers, so they don’t fall with them.

Lesson Goal:

The true source of defilement is our heart.

Lesson body:

Defilement Comes from Within (15:1-20)

The tradition of the elders refers to the body of laws and customs that were added by the Jews like those Pharisees to the Law of Moses over the centuries. The orthodox Jews insisted on washing the hands before eating, not to remove the filth, but less they might have touched something ceremonially unclean.

There is no command anywhere in the Old Testament that a person should or must wash their hands before eating. It is not that washing hands is bad; we know that it has many health benefits. But they demanded it as a requirement for a religious person or else a person is punished. People were very careful to follow rules. But they did not follow God. These traditions were man-made religious rules that overwhelm people to the extent that they forget the real commandments that God gave them.

Jesus accused them of perverting the command of the Law by their traditions, one example was that they said instead of honoring your parents, you can give donations to the temple [money or gifts were more beneficial for the leaders]. God had made it clear that He wanted His people to respect and take care of their own parents. Neglecting ones parents for the sake of a donation is not acceptable.

Jesus clearly sees this as an excuse to avoid their obligations to their parents and that this interpretation (their “tradition”) violated the commandment of honoring the mother and father.

Verses 7-9 – Isaiah wrote about these type of people. They lived in his time. But he also prophesized about those who lived during the time of Jesus. Many of the same people still live now. These verses describe people who are very religious. They go to church. They follow the rules. They say religious sounding words like “thank God” or “Amen!” But their hearts are far from God.

He calls them hypocrites because they seem as if they defend the truth, whereas they were breaking it. They appear as if they are zealous about the glory of God, whereas they care more about what they possess. They worship God not out of love, but rather to fulfill personal human goals. Therefore, their teachings became ‘commandments for men.

The Lord called the multitudes to explain to them the issue of unwashed hands. He said so, not to defend His disciples but rather to spiritually build them up, and so they would not be kindred because of the doubts aroused by the scribes and the Pharisees.

15:11” Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

He wanted to show them that the great source of pollution was the heart. The defilement they ought to fear was not from what entered their mouths as food, but from what came out their mouths, which showed the wickedness of their hearts.

It is similar to someone decorating his collapsed house instead of treating its foundation. Similarly, the Jewish leaders paid attention to washing the hands before eating so they are not defiled. But they

paid no attention to what comes out of their hearts, such as defiling words filled with hypocrisy and judgment.

Verse 13-14: Pharisees are blind guides and a weed that will be uprooted – Jesus’ statement about them being a plant that the Father did not plant reminds us of the parable of the weeds and tares. The Pharisees are weeds who will be uprooted and judged at the right time. In addition, they are blind guides. “To be left alone” here does not imply the Lord’s wish to give them up. He only wished to deprive them of the multitudes that showed overwhelming respect to them, and hence they lost their humility.

Then Jesus explains the parable – The meaning is simple. A person’s heart is more important than what he eats or than in washing hands. Man looks at the outside, but God looks at the heart. If you want to please God, you must have a clean and transformed heart.



The Canaanite woman’s faith (15:21-28)

Tyre and Sidon were two Gentile cities Jesus was passing nearby them.

Though the Canaanite was a Gentile, she expresses significant faith in Jesus, referring to Him as Lord and by His Messianic title, Son of David. In addition, she asks Jesus to have mercy on her, thus acknowledging that she does not deserve His help.

The fact that she went to seek Jesus out shows that she had heard accounts of Him and had faith in Him to help her daughter.

Jesus does not immediately reply to her. Naturally, we would ask, why wait? We must realize that Jesus is omniscient. He knows what He is going to do. From the beginning, He plans to heal this child.

However, it appears that He wants to test this woman’s faith. It is to her benefit (and perhaps the surrounding peoples’ benefit) to persevere in her request before receiving an answer. It is also beneficial to the crowd and the disciples to see her persistence and faith.

The disciples asked Jesus to send the woman away. To them, she was like a pest [being a Gentile].

The woman appeals to Jesus three times, He delayed answering her in order to bring out a great lesson. He tells her that He has only come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel as stated in Ezekial 34. But why only the Jews?

It would be impossible to evangelize the Gentiles without setting aside the Jewish customs, the law of Moses, and arousing the bitterest prejudice of the Jews. Hence it was the divine plan that the Son should keep the law blameless during His ministry. By the cross, the wall of partition (Eph 2:14) between Jews and Gentiles was broken down and Jesus told the disciples to preach the gospel to all nations.

Why did the Lord tell her that the bread is not for the dogs? Did He scorn the Gentiles and so-called them dogs? For sure the Lord does not scorn His creation. He said to repeat what the Jews said continuously as it was a common saying about the Gentiles. Also to praise those whom the Jews thought were dogs. He thereby declared they have become of greater faith than the children themselves.

Observe that she agrees and accepts heartily in Christ's declaration: it is not fit that the dogs be fed before the children. What argument does she make in response to Jesus second rebuke?

Her clever reply is that even the house dogs eat the scraps under their master's table. "I'm not a Jew, and therefore I don't get to sit at the table. All I ask for is the crumbs that fall off."

Jesus compliments her on her faith and heals her daughter.

This Canaanite woman became an example or a symbol to the church! She has presented before us the gift of humility in an amazing way!



Jesus Heals Great Multitudes (15:29-31)

The Lord goes up the mountain to stay there. The meek multitudes go after Him, carrying to Him the lame, the blind, the dumb.... etc. They put them before Him, and He heals them. Many were probably

from the Gentiles who lived in those areas like the Canaanite woman. Jesus heals everyone without differentiating among them.

Feeding the Four Thousand (15:32-39)

The feeding of the four thousand took place on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee. Because while seeking Him in His solitude, many of them had been for three days without regular food. Even after performing many miracles for them, He still had compassion on them and was concerned about their hunger.

The disciples still didn't seem to get it. You would think they might just immediately say, "Here's some bread. Do another miracle like last time." This idea was so foreign to their normal human logic that none of them said this and perhaps even thought about it. While it is only two chapters apart, we are not sure how much time has elapsed.

The crowds were commanded to sit on the ground. Jesus blessed the food again, reminding us of the principle of giving thanks before eating.

People ate, were satisfied, and there was lots leftovers. His miracle was more than sufficient.

There might have been many Gentiles in this group, so Jesus fed the Jews with the 5 loaves and then here He fed the Gentiles with the seven loaves. Both pointing to the Eucharist.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Application on Verses 16-20:

If you are very careful, can you disguise what is in your heart by being careful what you say? How long do you think a person can keep up the act?

Following a list of rules or showing up at church every week on Sunday is not in and of itself going to please God. Someone with a corrupted heart may do the same thing. Also, we may try to filter the words we speak and be very careful to only say words which are fitting for a Christian. However, no matter how hard you try to filter your words, sooner or later the "real" you will show through.

The only way to ensure gracious and pure words is to make sure the real you is gracious and pure. And the only way to ensure that is to confess your sins and ask God to transform your heart, because you can't do it through following of rules. We need to come before the Lord regularly in prayer and ask Him to work in our hearts. Then we need to renew our hearts with the truth of Scripture.

Takeaways from the Canaanite woman's story:

5 Lessons to learn:

- 1- *She looked beyond her origin:* Her identity and history had disqualified her from being a partaker of the blessings and privileges that belonged to God's children. But through faith, she was able to break away all limitations.

- 2- *She interceded for her child*: It was a condition that was mentally and emotionally draining. “Lord, have mercy on me”. Whatever affected her child affected her too. Her daughter was helpless in her state, but she had a mother who interceded on her behalf for a miracle. Keep interceding in faith for those around you, be compassionate.
- 3- *She was Resilient*: If she had to wait, she would wait and even when she was ignored, she remained unmoved. In their first and only encounter, Jesus immediately lets her know after she makes her request that it was not right to take what belonged to God’s children and give it to the dogs. But that did not make her leave.
- 4- *She was a woman of great faith*: This response was enough to throw anyone off balance and bring out all kinds of negative emotions from within. Yet with full faced confidence, this woman answered Jesus saying, – “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” How often do we give up when the answers we want don’t come through? Never let wrong ideologies, limitations, the past or your history stop you from going after your miracle. Anything is possible to him that believes. God is still in the business of rewriting stories.
- 5- *She was humble*: Anger would have been the fastest response to the words of Jesus. But No. Her humility became a pathway to her miracle. Is your pride limiting you from stepping into the blessings God has prepared for you today? What does your response look like in moments of distress and times of adversity?

Unit III. Opposition and Rejection of the King, ch 16-27

Lesson 15: Chapter 16 & 17 “Take up your cross and follow me”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_16.pdf

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_17.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

In Matthew 15, Jesus confronts the Pharisees and scribes about their traditions, arguing that they prioritize them over God's commandments. He then teaches that true defilement comes from the heart, not from what is eaten, and demonstrates His power through healing and miraculous feeding of a large crowd. Finally, He encounters a Canaanite woman whose powerful faith leads to the healing of her daughter.

Memory verse:

16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Lesson opener:

At a Christian bookstore, I found a huge assortment of jewelry with crosses. They had necklaces, rings, earrings, and bracelets just to name a few. Then I continued over to the clothing department. There I found a lot of cool T-Shirts—many with crosses on them. Look at this cross necklace I am wearing, do you suppose that this was the kind of cross Jesus was talking about in today’s lesson?

If putting a cross on a necklace around your neck was what Jesus meant, then being His disciple would be pretty easy, wouldn't it? How about this T-Shirt? I can put on this shirt and wear it around so that everyone will

know I am a follower of Jesus. Do you think that is what Jesus meant when He said anyone who wanted to be His disciple had to take up their cross and follow Him?

Lesson Goal:

Discipleship is costly and requires a willingness to sacrifice oneself for Christ. Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him, emphasizing the importance of losing one's life for His sake to find eternal life.

Lesson body:

Chapter 16:

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12)

What does Jesus mean by His answer to the Pharisees and Sadducees?

He tells them that they apparently know how to read the signs of the weather but cannot read "signs of the times " meaning they cannot or will not interpret His miracles as signs of His authority and the beginning of the Messianic Age as predicted in the writings of the prophets.

What may have stimulated Jesus to talk about the "leaven" of the Pharisees? What do you think He was referring to? What does leaven generally represent in the Bible?[sin] In this case is it good or bad? How do you know?

Jesus often used situations they were facing to teach them something. In this case it appears that the discussion of bread prompted Jesus to give an illustration about the leaven of the Pharisees.

Originally, the disciples didn't understand this statement. They thought it had something to do with the fact that they forgot to take the bread. But Jesus didn't care they forgot to take the bread. He had just done two miracles feeding more than nine thousand people anyway. The issue seems to be that they were still thinking in the physical plane rather than the spiritual plane. Jesus had already done many miracles and taught them many lessons. Yet many times, they still didn't "get it." When Jesus used examples or parables they were often stuck and couldn't figure out the meaning of what He taught them. Jesus wanted them to move past the basics and their immature thinking and start to grasp what He was teaching them.

Jesus used questions to lead them to understanding. He showed them how to use their minds to find the answer, which they would be able to do every time in the future. This is like the Chinese idiom, "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

Jesus is still focused on His recent confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees and uses leaven as a symbol of their false interpretation of the Law and their evil influence that spreads like an infection in the same way yeast expands a dough.

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ (16:13-20)

He asked His disciples this question in v15, not because He was ignorant what the people thought and spoke of Him; but to give them the opportunity to express their faith, to confirm and strengthen them in it.

Peter speaks up. He is bold and outspoken. There are good sides to his outspoken nature, and there are also weak sides. We see both in this chapter (later we will see him rebuke Jesus.)

There was a wide range of opinions on who Jesus was. But all the opinions had one thing in common. Everyone believed Jesus was somebody special and not just an ordinary man.

With spontaneity, St. Peter replied at once and expressed the faith of all the apostles in v16.

What was unable to be declared by flesh and blood, is declared by the grace of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Simon Peter accepted a new name which means he has accepted a declaration from the Holy Spirit. The name 'Barjonah' in our tongue means 'son of the dove' [Holy Spirit], or "Son of John" which means the grace of God.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

The word 'Peter' is derived from the Greek 'Petra' which is 'the rock.' The Lord has established His church, which is His kingdom, on the rock, the faith in Christ that is declared to St. Peter.

"By saying so, He meant, 'on this faith, and on this confession, I built my church. He showed by this that many others believe in what St. Peter believed in". St. John Chrysostom.

"19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The kingdom key is in the possession of the Son of David Himself. It is He who opens and no one else shuts, He also shuts, and no one opens. If the Lord has granted His church this Godly key, this is because He entrusts the church with it. It is He who works secretly inside it. He knows who is worthy, and He opens to him through it, and he who is left outside, is shut out.

Coptic church faith:

All the apostles, and their successors, partake also of this power of binding and loosing. It has been handed the authority not to work by itself, but by means of the Holy Spirit that dwells in it. This authority will be repeated to the apostles again after Resurrection when He breaths the Holy Spirit on them.

The power of binding is exercised,

- 1st by refusing to absolve.
- 2nd by enjoining penance for sins forgiven.
- 3rd by ,excommunication, suspension or prohibition.
- 4th by making rules and laws for the government of the Church

- 5th by determining what is of faith by the judgments and definitions of the church.

Take Up the Cross and Follow Him (16:21-28)

Jesus treated His disciples like friends. He told them ahead of time what was going to happen even though He knew they wouldn't fully understand it until after the fact. But then after it happened, they would remember what He said, and it would increase their faith. The details He shared were very accurate. It included His suffering, death, and resurrection and the ones who would do it against Him. In sharing this secret with the disciples, Jesus is correcting the common misperception that the Messiah is coming in triumph to re-establish the kingdom of David.

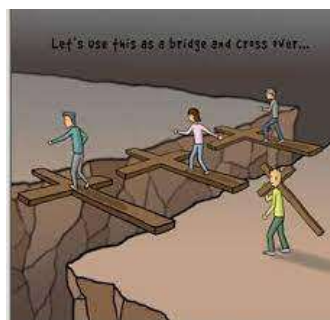
Verse 22 – Here we see again Peter's outspoken personality which sometimes it gets him into trouble. Peter's mistake is related to his success. He answered Jesus well. Jesus gave him a positive response. He was the only one who spoke up and he got the right answer. It is likely that he felt a bit prideful and self-confident after this and started to think of himself more highly than he ought to. This gave him the supreme confidence/pride to rebuke Jesus that he might not have had otherwise.

Jesus responded to Peter very harshly/strongly. Peter is obviously not literally Satan. But in this specific case Peter was being used by Satan to tempt Jesus and try to pull him off track of the Salvation plan.

Verse 24-28: Perhaps the crowd thought that following Jesus meant witnessing lots of miracles and receiving lots of benefits. Jesus is going to show them that there is more to it than just making a wish or thinking it would be good to follow Jesus. It requires real commitment and sacrifice. This is a key part of being a disciple. It requires sacrifice. It requires submitting ourselves, our goals, our desires, and our plans to Christ.

There will be some things that we want to do, which Christ will say "No, you cannot." What Jesus is saying is that "To follow Me, you have to be prepared even to die." We know that all the disciples except for John did indeed give their lives for Jesus. Many martyrs did as well, and more are added to the list every day.

Verse 25 shows that there is a certain irony in following Christ. You must give up something in order to get it. [see the takeaway].



Verse 28: The Lord wished to take His disciples to this kingdom in a tangible way; He allowed three of His disciples to witness and be blessed with His transfiguration, to experience some moments of eternal heavenly life.

Chapter 17:

The Transfiguration on the Mount (17:1-13)

The disciples and Apostles must have been frightened and discouraged after Jesus' prediction of His death. Jesus took these three Apostles to let them witness a manifestation of His glory that confirms He is the Son of God and that He will come in glory when all has been fulfilled.

A divine glory from His deity showed itself in a visible manner through His flesh.

The Old Covenant Church was represented by Moses and Elijah who embodied the law and the prophets of the old Israel, and the New Covenant was represented by Peter, James and John who embodied the new Israel, the Church of the people of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

The cloud that covered them refers to God's presence. St. Peter the apostle asked to build three tabernacles, and he did not realize the need was for one cloud only, because Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets) are hidden in the Holy Bible.

Who is Elijah other John the Baptist; for (Matt 17:13) "Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist." John came in the spirit of Elijah.

A Boy Is Healed (17:4-21)

Why couldn't the disciples cast out the demon?

The 'lack of faith' is the obstacle that has deprived even the disciples from the ability of casting out the devil. This is why the Lord advised them to fast and pray to support them in casting the devil out, through their faith.

Faith can begin small and if nourished by the grace of God can grow to become powerful enough to "move a mountain." Not only demons, but envy, pride, greed, materialism, a revengeful spirit, that must be also cast out by prayer and fasting.

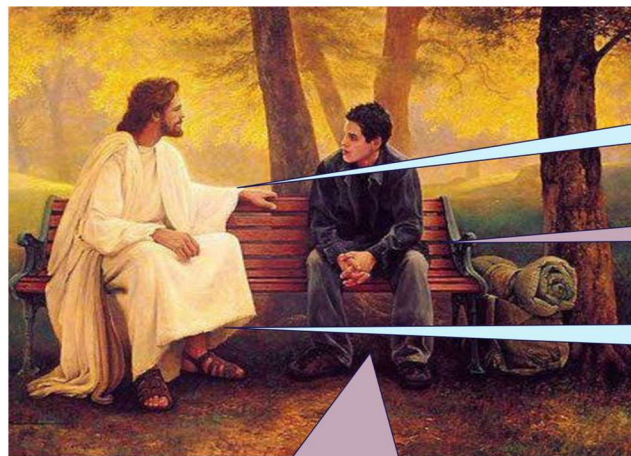
Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Take your cross and follow me:

How do I deny myself and carry my cross?

- 1- Grow in faith [it is a cross we carry to believe in what we do not see and touch]
- 2- Deny your desires that are contrary to God's commandments. [my body is telling me certain things that God says no, so it is a cross that we struggle with our body]
- 3- Deny your pride [how easy is it to be proud of our achievements and get praises]
- 4- Deny your appetite [the church says fast while I want to eat and enjoy all the food, I like. It is a cross]

- 5- Deny your control of your life. [Who is determining your path? If it is God, then you are denying yourself to let Him guide] People are rejecting even their gender because they want to be in control.
- 6- Seek sanctifications [Living in purity while my body desires otherwise, this is a cross].
- 7- Persevering to the end. [not only do I follow God for a day or a week but for the rest of my life, isn't that a cross? No break from holiness.
- 8- Sacrifice relationships [Some friends are feeding our minds with their wrong behavior; you are absorbing from them even if you think you aren't, carry your cross and keep away from them]
- 9- Sacrifice bad habits.
- 10- Do not spoil your body [rest is not sin but failure to carry out responsibilities is laziness] [also, not at the expense of the fatigue of others]



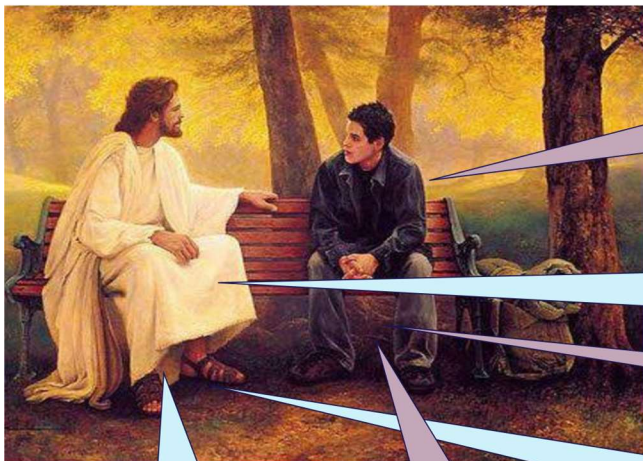
You love me, right? Do you want to be my disciple?

Of course, Jesus, you know I love You with all my heart, but I do not know how to show you my love

I will show you how, I have the perfect formula for you, go pick up your cross and follow me.

But that is the last thing I wanted to hear, why do You want me to live a miserable life carrying a cross every day? That is not what society is telling me. Everyone around me keeps saying:

- ✓ Do whatever makes you happy
- ✓ Live your life
- ✓ It's all about you.
- ✓ You only get to live once and so make sure you enjoy it!
- ✓ It is a God-given right to pursue your own interest because that is what will make you happy.



Jesus, I know what makes me happy all the time, I like to have many friends and feel popular, I like to dress and look the best, I like to watch funny things on my phone resting on the couch all day, I like to be rich, I like a highly-paying job, I ...

Hold on! I know you more than you know yourself, I am telling you, if you get all these, you won't be happy. If you pursue selfish desires, you will never get filled but might be destroyed on earth and then lose eternal life, is that what you want?

No, but living in self-denial sounds awful too, why would I be happy if I put God and people before myself?

No, but when your will does not line up with mine, you would do what pleases you and disobey me.

Is every desire evil?

²⁴ "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it". Luke 9:24. You are running around everyday to fill your needs, and everything is about you but at the end you remain empty and sad.

Lesson 16: Chapter 18 “Forgiveness”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_18.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 16 mentions Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees, who seek a sign, and His revealing of His identity to the disciples. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ leads to Jesus' statement that He will build His church upon Peter's confession [this faith for all Christians] and that Peter [representing the church] will receive the keys of the kingdom. Jesus then foretells His death and resurrection, followed by His rebuke of Peter for attempting to dissuade Him. Jesus concludes the chapter by calling all followers to take up their crosses and deny themselves.

Matthew 17 describes Jesus' transfiguration on a mountain, followed by the healing of a demon-possessed boy.

Memory verse:

18:35 “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Lesson opener:

At times we may not know how to approach someone who has sinned against us. We may feel nervous or even scared as to how they will react. So, we are going to practice a bit of role play. Others can observe and offer feedback as to what was done well and what could be improved.

Person A: You used to have a close relationship with person B. You often talked together and did activities together. But then you made some hurtful jokes about that person. You thought it was funny, but it hurt person B deeply. You felt embarrassed and so you avoided person B. You don’t return his phone calls or messages. You know you’re wrong and are willing to confess when person B talks with you.

Person B: You used to have a close relationship with person A. You often talked together and did activities together. But then person A made some hurtful jokes about you. He thought it was funny, but it hurt you deeply. He doesn’t return your phone calls after that. You decide to meet this person and talk about it face to face.

Lesson Goal:

God wants us to forgive others like He forgives us.

Lesson body:

Who Is the Greatest? (18:1-5)

The disciples thought it was a temporary kingdom of an earthly authority. This is why each of them was eager to obtain a share in it, or to occupy a position greater than the others. Even though it was not a good question, Jesus answered them kindly.

It was amazing for them to see the Lord calling a child and putting him in their midst as a living example of obtaining the admission into the heavenly kingdom. The Jews, the Greeks and Romans disregarded childhood. But the Lord was raising humanity to a mature life.

The Lord assures those asking for the kingdom, to return and become as little children, and thus would be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is a growth towards the humble and simple childhood. Man, through his experiences on earth, is very much puffed up, and is unable to enter the narrow gate. It is therefore appropriate for him to decline all pride, so his self would be belittled, and become absolutely crucified. He would then cross, through the crucified Lord, from the narrow gate. This is the royal gate and the only entrance to the heavenly kingdom.

The point is one does not enter heaven by trying to be great. He enters only by realizing he is not great. A person can enter God's kingdom if he admits that Jesus is great and he is not. Children are far from perfect. But they are generally speaking quite humble, they easily admit their sin, they have strong faith, they are dependent on others and never worry. That is why they are closer to the kingdom of heaven.

Surely, we need to be daily renewed in the spirit of our minds, that we may become simple and humble as little children, and willing to be the least of all.

Jesus Warns of Offenses (18:6-9)

It seems that the Jews in the old times used to punish criminals of major crimes by tying a millstone round their neck and throwing them in the depths of the sea.

Is it possible for the believer to amputate every member in his body that obstructs him or obstructs others? In church history there are unique stories of people who have done so such as Simon the tamer, and the girl so devout that she punched her eye with the awl so as to offer it to someone who tried his best to entice her to sin because of her beautiful eyes.

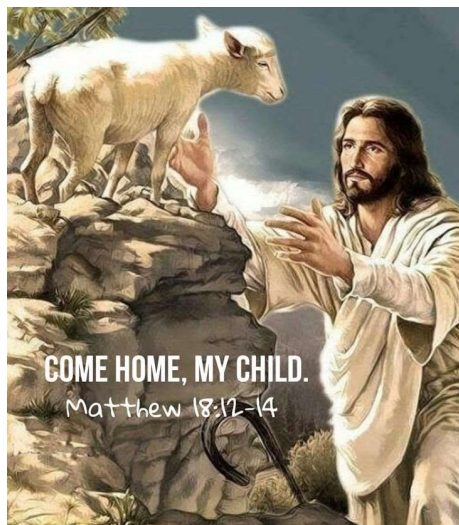
In the fathers' opinion the Lord's words here imply a spiritual symbolical meaning: the hand is nothing other than the person who supports me and works for my account. If this is changed to an offense to me, making me lose my faith or chastity, I amputate it to usurp the kingdom without it, though I am eager to save it.

Joseph in the book of Genesis, stretched out his hands with all his might to amputate them when he left his clothes in the hands of his mistress, and escaped sin. He preferred to cut off the relation with her who provided for his living and be humiliated in jail just like someone with no hands and be deprived of the bodily freedom for the sake of being blessed with the devout paradise life. What is amazing is that God did not leave Joseph having no hands. He Himself became His own hands, for, wherever he went, his work was blessed and multiplied, whether inside the jail or at Pharaoh's place.

We are not without any hands, but the Lord Jesus Himself becomes our working hands, and works through us and in us. Every amputation to the source of the offense, in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, is not a loss but rather gain, for you take and not give away.

What we say about the hands applies to the feet and the eyes.

St. Augustine says, "If someone who has authority wishes to cover up his injustice and wrong doings, and he asks you to do an act of service to him by bearing false witness; do not accept this. Reject the false witness, lest you deny God who is right and true. Your boss will be wrathful and has authority to pressure you. What can this one who has authority do to you or how could he bother you? He can kill you physically in his wrath and authority. Let the body be killed, for the body will die even if it is not killed. But as for the soul, he cannot kill it. If he whom I upset with the truth will bother my body with hardship, then I shall listen to my Lord who says, (Matt 10:28) "Do not fear those who kill the body.""



The Parable of the Lost Sheep (18:10-14)

Even though the process of amputation is sometimes urgent, it is performed on a narrow scale, after all the effort has been made. Maybe the Lord wished to say in verse 10 that 'childhood' is not to be disregarded or thought lightly of. Every person, however small he may be, has his angel who stands in the presence of the father for his sake.

It is as if before the process of amputating one of our members with the cross of the Lord, we cut off our relation to it, but look for their salvation, as one of these little ones whom God is eager to save.

In this parable, the Lord reveals His outlook on man, that he is not just an individual among many others, but God is concerned about him personally and who he is by his name. The Lord gives him all His concern more than all the group kept in his pastures, so as to win him over and makes him become a member in this group. God is concerned about every member, for he is a son to Him.

If God thus loves and preserves the redeemed, then surely man should not despise them.

More time, energy, and attention may be given toward the one who is not doing well and needs salvation and/or restoration than to those who are faithfully serving God with little need for active involvement from us.

Dealing with a Sinning Brother (18:15-20)

We are to follow four steps when someone sins against us:

1. Go to the person who is in error or who has wronged you and privately tell him his fault; this was required under the law Leviticus 19:17 law, Leviticus 19:17.
2. If he listens, be reconciled with him, but if he does not listen, take others along and speak to him a second time so that you have witnesses, it is based on Deuteronomy 19:15. It is done to gain the brother not for revenge.
3. If he refuses to listen, take the problem to the Church
4. If he refuses to listen even to the Church, then the person is to be considered outside the fellowship.

This behavior the Lord commanded us to do, is not only an act of politeness the believer is committed to doing, but in its essence, it is a hiding in the person of the Lord Jesus. The believer does not see his brother as wronging him, but he sees him as wronging his own self, and in his obtaining eternity. Therefore, he goes to him to tell him his fault, not to ascertain his making a mistake or that he expects him to apologize to him. He rather goes to him carrying the thoughts of Jesus to win him over in love to Jesus, as a live member in His body. He tries to save him from the error and gain him as a member with him in the same body.

On step 4, by rejecting the church, this person deprives himself of being a member in Christ's body. It is the right of the church to bind him just as Jesus says in verse 18, not for serving him right, but rather to preserve the other members from his corruption lest he infiltrates to them. It is terribly hard for the church to see someone throwing himself out and forcing the church to bind him. The church keeps waiting for his return from day to day to loosen him, and he finds the church's door open.

The power of binding and loosing is promised to the apostles and their successors, bishops and priests.

The group prayers are answered quickly, and bring forth a lot of fruit, when those prayers are in unity and agreement of thoughts.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:21-35)

How many times is the personal sin to be forgiven?

St. John Chrysostom says, “The Lord here does not speak of a certain number (70 X 7 = 490), it is rather immeasurable and constant forever. There is no number for forgiveness, but he asks it to be continuous and forever”

St. Jerome says, “If my brother asks for forgiveness only with his lips and not with his heart, what should I do?” He says, “If he sins seventy times seven times every day, and he asked you for forgiveness, then forgive him, and do not say he is not asking for forgiveness from his heart. Leave the judgment for God! Since he asked me for forgiveness, if he is not saying the truth, it is God who knows best”.

If a Greek silver talent is meant in this parable, the ten thousand talents would be about \$7,500,000, which is beyond human’s ability to pay back.

This poor man asked for some more time, thinking he would be able to pay the debt. The king had compassion on him; He not only had patience and was slow to react as the man wanted (verse 26) but He also gave him more than what he asked for, He set him free through the cross and forgave his debt by His grace.

Later, the servant was unwilling to forgive a far smaller debt and he put his friend in jail. That poor servant, who was put in jail, did not open his mouth to complain; but it was the voice of the others that cried out in great grief. God hears the secret human sighing, because of people’s cruelty to each other, and their unforgiveness to each other. Therefore, God measures to them in the same way they measure to their brothers.

The Lord has confirmed, we must forgive, to be forgiven (Matt 18:35).

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Lost a sheep? Search!! Find !! Rejoice!!!

1. Search:

This word shows the type of attitude we are to have toward the lost sheep. Before you can search for the sheep you must know that it is lost. How would a shepherd know a sheep is missing? A shepherd has the responsibility to know his sheep. He knows how many he has. He knows their habits. He knows where they like to graze and sleep. If one is absent out of habit, then he knows there is a problem.

Church servants, like you would be in the near future, must know their sheep as well. They should be aware when a sheep is missing. A long time ago Cain asked the question “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Are we? Actually yes.

So first we must be observant to know when there is a problem. Once you know that there is a problem, what next? What can you do to help? First, we must search. Searching means we must make an effort to reach out to this person. It may not be easy. The parable describes them as lost. A sheep who cannot find his way back again. When we relate this parable to people, we know that they may intentionally leave the church or avoid fellowship.

A straying believer may hide from us. You won't be able to help this person unless you make a very strong effort to get in touch with this person.

Application: What do you do when a friend you know starts to stray away from church? Are you apathetic? Do you ignore it and hope they will come back one day on their own? Do you think "that is his problem!"

God wants us to take responsibility. He wants us to care for others. He wants us to get off our seats and search! He wants us to care enough to spend time and effort to reach out to those who are straying.

2. *Finds it:*

You are not going to find the straying person, unless you search. When you do find him/her, the goal is to restore them, to bring them back again. You need to have a plan for what you will talk about with this person. Sometimes it might require a listening ear, a light touch, a caring heart. Other times a firm word or stern rebuke might be necessary. Every situation is different, so you need to pray for wisdom and be discerning.

3. *He rejoices:*

Here we see the heart of a shepherd. A good shepherd really loves his sheep. He cares deeply for them. They are not just a number or statistics. How should you feel when a brother or sister goes astray? God calls us to love and care for those around us. We should care enough for them that we are emotionally moved when they struggle or go astray.

Verse 14 – Here we get a glimpse into God's heart. He does not want any of His believers (the little ones) to perish. And indeed, they do not. His ultimate will is for the final salvation and glorification of every true believer. And part of the means for this to happen is our search for and restoration of the lost.

Discussion questions:

- Who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
- Why does Jesus use a little child to illustrate His teaching point?
- What parable illustrates the Father's concern for the lost person?
- What four steps are we to follow when a "brother" or "sister" has sinned against us?
- Who asked Jesus how many times do we have to forgive someone?
- What increases the likelihood that God will answer prayer? [group prayers]
- What authority from heaven does the hierarchy of the Church exercise then and now?
- What grave warning is in the parable of the unforgiving servant?
- What should be your efforts in solving interpersonal problems?
- Why is forgiveness so important to the Christian community?
- What are the consequences of failing to forgive our brothers or sisters? Why?
- What are the limits of your own willingness to forgive others?
- Do you forgive readily, do you wait for the offenders to ask for forgiveness, or do you look at forgiving others as a sign of weakness? What should the limit of your willingness be?
- If a church today excommunicate a member, does this mean that this person is excommunicated in heaven? [No, they can always repent and be forgiven]

Lesson 17: Chapter 19 & 20 “Where is your treasure?”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_19.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 18 focuses on humility, forgiveness, and unity in the Christian community. It emphasizes that true greatness in God's kingdom is found in humility, like a child, and the importance of seeking out lost sheep (those who have strayed from the church). It also underscores the need for unreserved forgiveness, even for repeated offenses, and outlines a process for addressing sin and restoring those who have erred within the community.

Memory verse:

19:26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Lesson opener:

Where is your treasure?

The streets of Cairo were hot and dusty. The tour guide took us down an alley, past Arabic signs to a gate that opened to a plot of overgrown grass. It was a graveyard for American missionaries. He pointed to a sun-scorched tombstone that read: "William Borden, 1887-1913."

Borden, a Yale graduate and heir to great wealth, rejected a life of ease to bring the gospel to Muslims in Egypt. Refusing even to buy himself a car, Borden gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars to missions. After only four months of zealous ministry in Egypt, he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25.

After describing his love and sacrifices for God, the inscription on the grave ended with a phrase I’ve never forgotten: "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life."

The guide took us straight from Borden’s grave to the Egyptian National Museum. The King Tut exhibit was mind-boggling. Tutankhamen, the boy king, was only 17 when he died. He was buried with solid gold chariots and thousands of golden artifacts. His gold coffin was found within gold tombs in a burial site filled with tons of gold. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife--one where they could take earthly treasures. But all the treasures intended for King Tut’s eternal enjoyment stayed right where they were for 3000 years until Howard Carter discovered the burial chamber in 1922.

I was struck by the contrast between these two graves. Borden's grave was obscure, dusty, and hidden off the back alley of a street littered with garbage. Tutankhamen's tomb glittered with unimaginable wealth. Yet where are these two young men now? One, who lived in opulence and called himself king, is in the misery of a Christless eternity. The other, who lived a modest life on earth in service of the one true King, is enjoying his everlasting reward in the presence of his Lord.

Tut's life was tragic because of an awful truth discovered too late → he couldn't take his treasures with him. William Borden's life was triumphant. Why? Because instead of leaving behind his treasures, he sent them on ahead."



Lesson Goal:

God can make the impossible possible.

Lesson body:

Chapter 19:

Marriage and Divorce (19:1-12)

Ch 19 marks a turning point in this gospel, Jesus finished His ministry in Galilee and began His journey to Jerusalem. The Pharisees approached Jesus again to "test" Him, not to learn His true identity but to discredit Him with the people.

Some Jewish Rabbis allowed divorce only in case of adultery, while others allowed it for any trivial excuse, like the wife burning the bread one time. The Pharisees wished to test which school Jesus was following for the divorce.

Jesus explicitly affirms the sacred nature of marriage and that the marriage covenant between a man and a woman is unbreakable. Polygamy, homosexual unions and free unions are not defined as marriages and are offenses against the dignity of marriage.

They argued that Moses allowed divorce. So, Jesus said, Moses indeed permitted you to put away your wives on account of the hardness of your hearts, and to prevent a greater evil, lest through your cruelty you should kill them; but in the natural law signified by "the beginning", it was not so.

People cannot be lifted from moral corruption to a high standard at once, God let humans grow in morality gradually.

Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Ruler (19:16-22)

The rich ruler seems to have come with sincerity, but without a strong intention to leave his worldly goods and possessions and he doesn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

Our Savior, correcting his misconception, tells him that God alone is good, insinuating thereby, that he should believe Him to be God, or not address by the title of “good teacher”.

When Jesus reminds him of the commandments, the young man responds that he has lived in accordance with those commandments and asks what is lacking in his life; he is asking what he can do above and beyond obedience to the Law to please God. There was, no doubt, great ignorance in this reply.

Jesus intended to bring out the fact that the young man had made an idol of his riches. He loves God but not enough to be willing to give up all his material possessions to follow Jesus from place to place. He would like to be a disciple of Christ but was not ready to pay such a price.

Jesus wished to show him that he had not kept the law as he pretended, thus, to show him that he needed a better righteousness than his own.

With God All Things Are Possible (19:23-30)

"How hard is it to get a camel through a needle?" It's very hard. In fact, it's impossible. But Abraham and David were very wealthy. The disciples, like many of the Jews of their day, believed that those who were rich were those who were righteous.

And so, when this rich young ruler came to Jesus, asking how to obtain eternal life, these disciples saw this man as a godly man, whom God had blessed greatly with wealth. When Jesus turned this man away, the disciples didn't know what to think. And then Jesus begins to discuss how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were thinking, "If the rich, the most blessed of God, can't enter, then nobody can enter." And so, the question comes, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus responds to this question in verse 26 "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."



Jesus is simply saying that salvation is impossible for those who trust in themselves and in their wealth. The Lord does not say that a rich man shall not enter, but that he shall enter with great difficulty.

Peter literally "left everything" to follow Christ. The apostles denied themselves even the desire and tendency of possessing anything. Jesus assures them that they will share in a rich spiritual inheritance. Jesus tells us that everything we give up will be rewarded many times.

He will make it up to you in abundance! No one will ever get to heaven and say, "Boy, I gave up my house on earth, and all I get is this tiny apartment?"

Chapter 20:

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-laborers-vineyard.html>

Peter, in verse 19:27, wanted to know what reward would be given to those who give up everything to follow Jesus. In response, Jesus explains this truth about the kingdom of heaven in this parable.

The design of this parable was to show that the Gentiles, though called later than the Jews, should be made partakers of the promises made to the Jews.

The landowner, whose decision to pay all the workers the same was an act of mercy—not injustice—represents God, whose grace and mercy are shed abundantly upon those of His choosing.

We are all sinful and “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but His grace is sufficient to redeem all who believe. Whether God calls someone early or late in life to partake of His grace, the glory and praise for our salvation is His and His alone and in no way amounts to unfairness. Just as the landowner has a right to do what he wishes with his own money, so does God have the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

In the same way, as Christians, we should rejoice when others come to the Savior, as we should rejoice in the service others render to Him. He is faithful to reward us for our service as He has promised, and how He rewards others should be of no consequence to us, nor should it affect our devotion to Him.

The message in verse 16, “the last will be first, and the first last,” is that no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same given to all—an eternity of bliss in heaven. The thief on the cross, whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as St. Paul. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different levels of rewards in heaven for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be achieved by all equally.



Greatness Is Serving (20:17-28)

The two disciples didn't yet get what Jesus was talking about in verses 17-19. The warnings about Jesus' sufferings went in one ear and out the other. It seems James and John thought Jesus was going to Jerusalem to set up a kingdom, take His throne and not to die. They made quite a big request of Jesus. Grant that we may sit, one on your right and one on Your left.

He first replies by asking them a question, verse 38. In other words, "Are you willing to follow me to the end? No matter what the cost is?" This was what Jesus required of His disciples. He didn't promise material benefits, prosperity or power. What He offered was the living water, the bread of life, the way to the Father. And He wanted faithful, committed followers who would follow Him to the end. In fact, this is what it would cost. Jesus knew the persecutions these disciples would face and wanted them to be ready.

They answered they were able to suffer like Jesus and He told them that they would. St James was the first apostle that suffered martyrdom in Jerusalem, (Acts 2) and St. John at Rome was put into a cauldron of boiling oil and later exiled to Patmos.

Our Lord does not say that it does not belong to Him to give what the disciples asked [sit on the right and left], but that He could only give it according to His Father's will and the laws which He had fixed.

Christ answers them, it is not mine to bestow, because you are not yet deserving, on account of your pride in seeking to have yourselves preferred over my other apostles, be humble and heaven will be prepared for you as well as others.

The other ten wanted the recognition and status that John and James were asking for. It seems that all of Jesus' teaching on humility and letting others go first hadn't taken hold yet. They still desired to be the greatest, to be the top disciple.

World leadership is about commanding others what to do. God wants His people who are leaders to lead by example, to lead by serving, to put others first, and to do it with no desire for personal credit. Greatness is not making others feel small to build ourselves up. Greatness is building up and helping others.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

<https://sermons.rvbc.cc/sermons/2004-037>

Why is it hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom?

1. Riches can make you proud: The rich think that they are the ones who worked the hardest, have talents, and are better than others.
2. Riches can distract you: When you are wealthy, there are many opportunities for you. The more you have, the more you need to manage the things you have.
3. Riches can satisfy you: The rich in this world can so enjoy this life that they have little to look forward to in the life to come. Not only a sense of satisfaction and self-reliance on wealth that keeps people away from God but also the sense of attachment to things that makes them comfortable whether they are rich or poor. Following Christ requires letting go of these things and sacrificing our comfort which the rich young man refused to make.
4. Riches can deceive you: Like the seeds that fell on the land with thorns, they choked them. Riches can deceive you and cause you to think "Is God really important?"

When you compare each of us to each other, we don't seem to be too rich. But when you compare Americans to those in the 3rd world countries, you will find that all of us are very rich. There are billions of people in this world who only make a few hundred dollars a year. There are many who live in poverty. They eat simple meals, sleep on simple beds and wear simple clothes because they can't afford anything else. There are many who have no opportunity to escape the poverty into which they were born. They have little in this world. As a result, they have little to be proud of, and little to be distracted by. They have little that will give them satisfaction. Of course, it doesn't mean that all poor people are close to God, but it might be easier for them than the rich.

Do you know one of the reasons why there are so few coming to Christ today in America? It's because they are probably wealthy and don't need God. They have their job. They have children. They watch their favorite shows. They have their fun-filled vacations. Everything seems to be going pretty well for them, and they are quite satisfied with life. Now, why do they need Christ? They have everything that they need right here on the earth.

Many churches now are like the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm church. They think that they have it all. They are self-sufficient. Is there is chance for us to go to heaven?

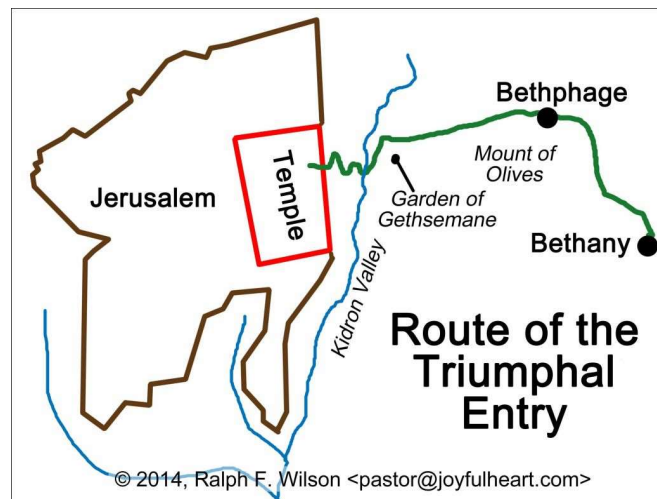
Yes, because God initiates salvation. God brings salvation to pass. If it is impossible with men, it is possible with God, then why could we go to heaven? Is it because of what we do only? No, because God made it possible. Salvation is a gift of God; it is not something one can just work for or purchase. Human efforts alone cannot save a man but are needed along with God's grace.

Lesson body:

The Triumphal Entry (21:1-11)

Jerusalem was overcrowded by millions at that time. They had come to buy sheep to offer as a Passover. But the Lord Jesus ___ the Lamb of God ___ came forward Himself towards Jerusalem to offer Himself willingly a Passover for mankind.

He sent His two disciples to get the donkey and the colt that were tied, and He asked them to loosen them and bring them to Him, so He would use them in entering Jerusalem. Jesus demonstrates His omniscience – Jesus wasn't just good at guessing. This is a very specific and very clear prophecy with many details. All of them came true just like He said.



Christ rode upon both the donkey and the colt. The very common opinion is that He first sat upon the donkey for a short time and then rode on the colt or was alternating between them.

While Jesus entered as a king, He was not entering as a normal king. What do you think a typical king would ride? a powerful war horse. Jesus instead chose to ride on a donkey. A donkey portrays meekness and humility. Jesus wasn't coming to conquer but to offer peace.

The donkey and the colt symbolize the Jews and the Gentiles. The Lord is in need of all humanity.

What was happening was previously prophesied by Zechariah the prophet 9:9 *"All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion 'behold, your king is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey!'"* in (Matt 21:4)

St. John Chrysostom says, "The prophet Zechariah was known to the Jews, the Jews' envy and their rejection of Christ was clear when He went into the temple; He therefore warned them ahead and gave them this sign so they may know Him."

The multitudes declared the joy of the church, in its triumph of the Lord. The palm branches were mixed with the olive ones; it was as if the spirit of triumph was blended with the Spirit of peace.

Their praise was concentrated on proclaiming the salvation, saying 'Hosanna' or 'Hoshanna'. Which is a Hebrew word that means 'Save us'.

'Hosanna to the Son of David....Hosanna in the highest'. St. Jerome says, "This means that salvation is in the highest, pointing clearly that the coming of Christ means the salvation that does not touch mankind alone, but the entire universe as well.

It seems clear that the people believe Jesus is the Messiah and expect that He is coming to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom. This is what they had been waiting centuries for! Now the moment had finally arrived! You can almost feel the excitement ripples in the air!

How could these crowds who were so wildly supportive turn against Jesus and join in the refrains to "Crucify Him!" This question is not so easy to answer, but it does demonstrate how fickle people's hearts are. Following Christ is so much more than been carried away with emotion during an exciting moment.

It requires deep roots. It takes commitment. Today all of us are here studying the bible. How about tomorrow? How about next year? How do we ensure that we don't wilt in our enthusiasm for serving Christ? How can we keep this passion fresh?

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (21:12-17)

According to St. Mark, on this day, Sunday, after the triumphal entry, Jesus entered the temple, looked around, perhaps to note the abuses, and then in the evening went out to Bethany (Mk 11:11). The next day, He returned to enter temple to clean it as it is recorded here.

St. Jerome thinks the Jewish priests used to make the most from the Passover feast, in which the Jews from all over the world used to come to offer sacrifices. They therefore changed the temple to a commercial center. They set the tables of the money changes, to offer loans to the people to buy the sacrifices. They offered the loans not by the interest from the money, for this was forbidden by the law, but by actual gifts, which in reality were another form of interest.

This is a painful picture in which the Lord's temple has diverted from its goal. The priests have lost their spiritual work and have changed their mission to collecting money.

My house shall be called the house of prayer - This is taken from Isaiah 56:7 and speaks of Gentiles coming to the House of God.

We are God's temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in us. Let our hearts be free of any trading, or a market for buyers and sellers, and free of any desire to receive gifts. Otherwise, the Lord will enter in fury and will cleanse His temple without any lenience.

It certainly appears that Jesus was angry in this passage. But this was not an out-of-control raging anger. Anger is not always a sin. See Ephesians 4:26. Sometimes righteous anger is called for. If we never have righteous anger, it is probably because we lack empathy, and we just don't care about people around us. Jesus did care. He wept for Jerusalem. He cared that many sheep were being misled by

these money centered practices. So, He took calculated, intentional, and dramatic action to deal with the sin.

Jesus heals the blind and lame in v14. Here we can see quite a contrast. Jesus goes from a forceful disciplinarian driving out hordes of merchants and animals one moment to a kind and compassionate healer the next moment.

The children have declared the joyful kingdom of God, whereas the chief priests revealed their wrath about the evil kingdom that has no peace whatsoever.

The Fig Tree Withered (21:18-22)

Why did Jesus curse the tree when it was “out of season” for fruit? In Palestine, the fruit usually appears before the leaves. When they saw the tree from a distance, the natural assumption would be that since it had leaves it also had fruit.

The fig tree had attractive leaves, to which the hungry person comes thinking he would find some fruit to eat, but he returns still hungry.

In this same way the Jews had their green leaves, such as their knowledge of God, the law and keeping record of the prophecies. But despite this, they had no inner life that produced any fruits. They were tied to appearances that seemed outwardly bright, but with no depths. They paid attention to literal things, but not to the spirit. Therefore, what the Lord did was to destroy literal observance to establish the spirit.

It is noteworthy that at a specific moment, Jesus passed by the tree and judged it to wither. This concept can be applied to our lives as well; our lives culminates at a certain time when God evaluates us for fruitfulness. If no fruit is found, no further opportunities are provided.

Jesus is teaching the disciples to have faith in God’s power. Notice that in the text Jesus gives a qualifier. He says “If you believe, you will receive...” This belief denotes a complete confidence that what we are asking is God’s will. With faith we are blessed by everything in Christ Jesus, so long as we obtain Him in us.

Jesus’ Authority Questioned (21:23-27)

The religious leaders wanted to know on what authority Jesus kicked the sellers out of the temple. Jesus hit them where it hurt, their pocketbooks. The religious leaders clearly did not try to ascertain God’s will on doing business in the temple.

Jesus did not engage with them. He knew that if He said His authority came from God it would create a bigger argument. If He said He was the Son of God and the Messiah, they would not listen and would perhaps arrest Him immediately before His time had come. Answering their question here would accomplish nothing. Nothing He could say would convince them or change their heart.

He challenges their right to interrogate Him on the ground of precedent. Seeing that the work of Jesus reforming the temple has a connection with John the Baptist, both would stand and fall together.

If they acknowledge John as His forerunner, they must, of necessity, receive Jesus as the Christ. They refused to answer. They didn't want to reject the claims of Christ nor damage their reputation in front of the people.

The Parable of the Two Sons (21:28-32)

The first one represents the Gentiles who began their life by rejecting to work. But they repented later and went to work in the vineyard. The second one refers to the Jews, who said, (Matt 21:30) "I go sir," but they did not go.

Truly the Jews accepted the work in the kingdom, but it was a wordy acceptance with no work at all. They therefore cast themselves out from the vineyard, to leave their place for the Gentiles who did not listen to God at the beginning, but then they obeyed Him.

As the old saying goes, *we must not just talk to the talk, but we must walk the walk.*

The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (21:33-46)

Jesus uses the parable as a metaphor predicting His death at the hands of the Jewish religious authority and their eventual destruction and loss of authority as God's representatives to His people.

The landowner represents God while the vineyard represents His people, Israel. The vinedressers were the priests and teachers of the law.

Here the Lord reveals to them that throughout history they were not only idle, but they have also persecuted God's men most cruelly. Even the son of God Himself, when He came as the only heir, they cast Him out of Jerusalem to kill Him.

The Lord showed them the result of their deeds, which is the necessity to pull down the old building, so the kingdom of God would be established on a new foundation.

What is this rejected cornerstone? It is said that when Solomon's temple was being built, the builders found a very huge stone, and they thought it is of no use, and so disregarded it. But when they needed a rock for the cornerstone, they found nothing better than this rejected rock. This was a symbol of the Lord Jesus who was rejected by the Jewish religious people. They did not know that He connects the two walls in the new temple, binds the Jews and the Gentiles in Him, so all would become members in the new kingdom. This is mentioned in Psalm 118:22-23.

From this parable, we learn that God is amazingly patient. He waited, and still waits, a long time to punish those who act so rebellious and scornful toward His good plans for them.

The kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to the chosen nation; not any particular nation, but those chosen out of the nations to be a distinctive people.

44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” Their falling upon the Stone (Christ) caused their nation to be ruined.

When the Stone fell upon them, [fulfilling Jesus’s prediction because they rejected Him], they faced severe consequences in the destruction that took place approximately thirty-seven years later when Jerusalem was burned.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Do you have fruits or leaves?

Sometimes we go to church out of habit. It is a ritual many of us have done our entire lives. Are you really drawing near to God? Are you really going to pray? Or are we just going because that is what we do on Fridays and Sundays? **What kind of reasons make people go to church?**

1. Social life: People go to church because that is where their friends are. Hey, churches have lots of nice people and it is easy to make friends there. There are lots of activities around the week to enjoy during one’s free time. This includes trips, parties, meals, games, etc. This is not to say that any of these things are wrong. However, it is all too easy to begin going for the fun, food, or friends. Church is not meant to be a club to meet your friends! Are you going to church to worship God and grow or to be with your friends?
2. Safe feeling: Many others go to church for the feeling of safety that it provides. It makes them feel they are doing well spiritually and won’t feel guilty.
3. Warm feeling: Many people feel comfortable and peaceful when they go to church without ever really knowing the gospel.
4. Pressure: Another category go to church because their parents or friends put pressure on them to go.
5. Pharisaic – Another very common reason for going to church is that it has become an ingrained ritual. We go because “we have always gone”.

We need to have the right attitude and motivation. If you have been going for the wrong reasons, confess and ask God to give you right motivations. When you go to church, focus on worshiping. Focus on listening to the sermon and growing spiritually. Choose one or two points and practice them during the week. Most importantly, remember to go to church for the right reason and don’t think about what you can get out of it.



fruitless



fruitful

Lesson 19: Chapter 22 ” The great commandment”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_22.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, chapter 21, we discussed Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, His cleansing of the temple, and His interactions with religious leaders. It includes the parable of the two sons, the parable of the wicked tenants, and Jesus being questioned about His authority.

Memory verse:

22:21 “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”

Lesson opener:

In our world today, it’s easy to be on the go, and honestly, it’s easy to end up just getting distracted. Can anyone relate to that? Has anyone ever been distracted? whether it is being distracted on our phones and becoming what some people call phone zombies; we could get distracted with the newest TV Or even getting engrossed in the latest topics. We could even get distracted with our decision making. Someone probably, again, is distracted right now.

You’re probably thinking about, what am I going to eat after service? What am I going to do?

According to Harvard Business Review, we as people We make 35,000 decisions every day. Thirty-five thousand, not every week, not every month, every day. Before coming church, you probably thought, Should I buy food out? Should I just eat what’s in the fridge and cook? You probably changed what you wanted to wear maybe five times this morning. You probably are just figuring out what to wear next week. We make decisions about what we’re going to say, how we’re going to say it. And with all the things that fight for our attention and all the decisions that we make as we go about our lives on a day to day, my question for us is, **what is the most important thing to do?**

We will see the answer when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment.

Lesson Goal:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Lesson body:

The Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14)

This parable as presented to us by the Lord Jesus applies to the Jews, particularly the chiefs who have rejected the Messiah's heavenly kingdom. This applies in some way or another to every soul that rejects the real kingdom inside it. There are many meditations on this parable, here is one of them:



- ✓ The king is God
- ✓ His son is Jesus Christ
- ✓ The bride is His church
- ✓ His 1st group of servants were the forefathers like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who got the promise.
- ✓ His other servants were the prophets who were beaten and killed or the apostles and other disciples in succession.
- ✓ The wedding is Christ's incarnation [The Communion]
- ✓ 1st group to be invited represent the Jews.
- ✓ 2nd group to be invited are the Gentiles.

Imagine how God must have felt when He invited many people to an amazing party [heaven] but every day, He would see people making up excuses not to go. Jesus explained that the gate is narrow, and path is not easy, that is why the first would be last and the last would go first.

Let us think how to make sure we are among those accepting His invitation.

When the banquet was ready, He sent His servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.' He doesn't care to come. Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.' Guess he didn't want to come, either. Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' Everyone that the king had invited to the feast had some excuse for not coming.

The group with these useless excuses, temporal concerns and sensual enjoyments, their oxen, lands and wives, declined and disrespected the offer. They neglected this salvation, and they preferred secular enjoyments to the kingdom of Christ. They persecuted the apostles and early church. The king got wrathful and punished them, here Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman army about 40 years later.

What the Lord did with the Jews, He does with us all. He does not get tired of sending servants to call us to this wedding in all different ways, so we accept that He works in us. He calls us by means of servants, His gospel, and the surrounding events, as well as He talks to us by His Spirit that is in us. He is standing at the door, knocking, and waiting for us to let Him in to our hearts.

The cost for the invitation is His own life. He offers us His sanctified body and blood, spiritual food and drink, a feast for the new kingdom. It has all been prepared, waiting for us to enter the sanctified banquet, which in its essence is to rise up to the heavenly life.

Actually, this banquet feast is offered every day on **the altar, during liturgy**. Jesus is inviting each of us to join to partake of His body and blood to get closer to Him. Do we feel how precious this invitation is? Do we realize how hard it is for God to prepare this feast as well as heaven for everyone then people start making silly excuses, telling Him how busy they are? We do not want to keep ignoring this invitation till the time comes when God tears the unaccepting invitees off and we see others who were last become first and enter heaven happily.

Then the king opened the wedding doors to the Gentiles. It was an invitation to everyone, and forgiveness of all the past. The bad were invited, not to remain bad, but in order that they might become good. These were invited from anywhere and everywhere, every economic status and every walk of life. Once at the wedding feast they were clothed with Christ's righteousness. However, one person tried to make it on his own with his old "clothes" and was rejected.

The garment of life is our work; this idea is mentioned so no one presumes that faith alone is sufficient for salvation. Not everyone accepts the grace of God that sanctifies him, actually, they are few who receive it and respond to it. It is then that they receive the garment of 'the sanctified life, appropriate for the divine wedding.

The wedding guest without the wedding garment was he who came but did not care about the bridegroom enough to take the time to present to him a purified soul through repentance and works of faith.

The king/God called upon him to confess but he failed to ask for forgiveness.

"Not having on a wedding-garment?" Not having put off the old man and put on the new, not being made a new creature, not having put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It also refers to Baptism.

It is not God's desire that any should perish; He has made the invitation for us to come to salvation. The "chosen" are those who both accept the invitation and comply with its condition.

The Pharisees: Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? (22:15-22)

The Pharisees had instructed their disciples and the Herodians to speak in this seemingly friendly manner to our Savior, that they might put Him off His guard, and thereby trap Him; thinking that Jesus like other men could be led away by flattery.

Jesus declared a spiritual principle: 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's! What is surprising is that He gave to Caesar his right before giving God His rights. The Christian attitude of obedience to Caesar or to the rulers and giving the nation's rights such as taxes and other obligations whether they be social or financial, is a true testimony for the account of God Himself.



St. Augustine says, "Just as Caesar asks for his image on the currency, likewise God asks for His image in us." This means that he who finds his image in us, possesses us and enslaves us. If God sees His image in us, it becomes His right to possess us as much as we possess Him. Likewise, if Satan sees his image in us, we cannot escape from him, but he rather has the right to possess us and enslave us. If the world sees its image in us, then it enslaves us, and humiliates us under its feet.

The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? (22:23-33)

Jesus has stunned the Pharisees and the Herodians, and now the Sadducees [the party which the chief priests belong to] try to test Him. They do not believe in after life.

To argue against resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees proposed an extreme hypothetical case of a woman who married in turn seven times to brothers.

They assumed that life after death was very similar or the same to life now, hence marriages would still be intact. The Lord answered their question from two aspects from the logical aspect, the eternal life is a sublime one, on the level of angels, and from the writing aspect, God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is the God not of the dead but of the living. Also, when we are raised from the dead, we carry the kind of sex we have, but we do not practice the sex function.



The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All? (22:34-40)

In this brief answer the Lord showed us the commandment concept through the Christian outlook: that the commandments are all unified in one, undivided one from the other. If our love to God is boundless and is the greatest of all the commandments, our love to our brothers is not any less in importance. For, we cannot love God, who is invisible, away from our love to our brothers who are visible. By our love to God and to man we make perfect all the commandments and the prophets.

He who loves God supremely cannot live in disobedience to Him. One who loves his neighbor as himself, will seek the welfare of those around him.

Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? (22:42-46)

Jesus turns the tables on the group of Pharisees and asks them a question, quoting from Psalm 110:1. He wanted to show the people that the source of all the misleading questions of His opponents was their ignorance of the prophecies related to the Messiah.

The promised Messiah was identified in the Scriptures as the son of David. Christ is David's Lord eternally and his son according to time. He is David's Lord, born of God the father. He is also David's Son, born a son to the virgin Mary, and conceived through her by the Holy Spirit. Let us hold on strongly to both of them.

Finally, our Lord put the four great sects of the Jews [Herodians, Pharisees, Sadducees, and the scribes] to silence, in one day, one after the other.

Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

Option 1:

How to love God and your neighbor?

What does it mean to love God?

According to the Bible, loving God means keeping His commandments.

That is what Jesus taught when He said: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15.

Pretty straightforward, right?

Of course, to keep God's commandments, we need to understand what those commandments are. And the only way to do that is to read and study the Bible, just as we are doing now.

There is a common misconception among some that if we simply do what we think is right then we will please God.

Granted, that is usually the case.

However, we can sometimes get into big trouble when we do that.

Consider the following warning from the Book of Proverbs:

“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” - Proverbs 14:12.

Once we read and understand this scripture, we can no longer accept that following our gut is how we please God.

There are things that God commands us to do that sometimes will not make sense to us or are not what we want to do. [Give examples]

We need to do them anyway. That's the point!

That is how we show our love for God, and that is how we demonstrate our faith. True faith means believing and trusting God in all things, all the time.

Not just when it is convenient.

The way that we show our love for God, is by keeping His commandments. To do this, we need to commit ourselves to studying the Bible regularly and then acting on what we have learned.

LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELVES

Immediately after teaching about the greatest commandment, Jesus also spoke about what the second greatest commandment is, to “love our neighbor as ourselves.” (Mathew 22:38)

Before we consider what, it means to love our neighbor, we first need to understand who our neighbor is.

Quite simply, our neighbor is anybody that comes into our lives.

God brings people into our lives for specific reasons. He always has a plan! (Jeremiah 29:11)

Sometimes it is to discipline us (Proverbs 3:12).

Other times, it is for reasons that we may not ever understand (Isaiah 55:8-9).

One thing is for certain, once God has brought somebody into our lives, our job is to love them!

Of note, Jesus did not simply say, “You shall love your neighbor.”

No, that is only part of what Jesus said.

The full command that Jesus gave was to: “Love our neighbor as ourselves.” (Mathew 22:38)

Adding the word “yourself” to the end of that command is significant.

Loving your neighbor as yourself means prioritizing their well-being and happiness as much as your own. It involves showing kindness, compassion, and understanding, and striving to create a community where everyone feels valued and supported. It doesn't necessarily mean that you always want to be with that person as this love might only be felt towards our close people, but you love everyone else through your actions and prayers for them.

To love our neighbors, we must try to take the time to get to know them.

That is what Jesus did, and He is the example that we are to follow.

CONCLUSION

It should not surprise us that the two greatest commandments in the Bible are about love.

God IS love! (1 John 4:16)

Option 2:

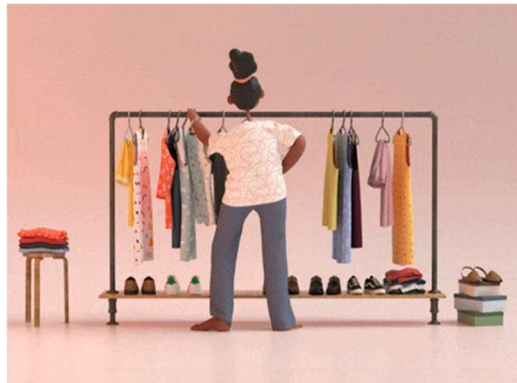
What is the garment in the parable of the Wedding feast and how do we get it?

It is important to understand the garment and the attitude of the guest not wearing the garment. Let's first look at what the garment represents.

The Bible tells us exactly what the garment of this parable means. Revelation 19:7-8 states: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is ***the righteous acts of the saints***"

It is all about personal righteousness → good decisions made by the individual. This requires repenting of sin and living according to God's will. The Bible uses clothing as an analogy to show how we "put on" behavior that is pleasing to God.

The new invitees were either dressed properly from home or they would ask the King's servants how to get the proper attire before entering. That represents us who are invited to heaven, and we need to change ourselves to match properly or ask God's people how to repent and be ready for heaven. It is not hard but needs one to respect the precious invitation.



One piece at a time

- Every morning, we get out of bed and dress for the day.
- We put our clothing on one piece at a time, layer by layer.
- Character change is, likewise, put on one piece at a time—one action at a time.
- Some things are easier than others. If you have had anger issues for years, it can be very hard to change to a calmer nature, but it can be done.
- If someone is filled with pride and lacking humility, just a single trial can reshape him to a humble person. Ask anyone who has lost a job or gone through a life-changing event.
- Characters can be altered. But it requires that we have a deep desire to change.
- Thus, one must come to the point where he or she has a *desire to change* for any hope of a new "garment" to be worn and with that desire we must also have commitment to follow through.
- Christian life is a life of REPENTANCE.

Willful defiance

- ✓ With this in mind, we return to the guest at the supper who was found to be lacking the right garment.

- ✓ This man did not have on the right garment *by choice*. Knowing what was required, he willfully chose to come to the feast without wearing the right clothing.
- ✓ Further, he was determined not to put on these garments or ask the servants at the door to help him dress properly.
- ✓ He was opposing the king and everything the marriage feast represented.
- ✓ It's important because the man was making a statement against what the marriage feast represented. His presence was an offense to the king.
- ✓ It is shocking to realize that our actions have consequences. In our modern ways of thinking we'd like to pretend that our choices and actions don't matter all that much and that everything is relative, but this parable shows that simply isn't true.



Many are called, but few are chosen

The parable concludes with a statement from Christ that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

The word "chosen" here applies to those who not only receive a call, but willingly choose to come, being sure they are dressed in the right garment, and remain committed to the Kingdom of God. To them the Kingdom means *everything*.

They are willing to pay any price, make any sacrifice, and remain committed for life to God and His values.

How about you? Are you missing a garment while thinking you are all dressed and ready? This parable is a wakeup call for all of us to make sure we wear the right garments of godly righteousness!

Lesson 20: Chapter 23 “Religious Hypocrisy”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_23.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson , chapter 22, Jesus responds to questions and challenges from religious leaders. The parable of the wedding feast emphasizes that God extends a broad, persistent, and generous invitation to all, and that a response of genuine repentance and transformation is expected.

In response to a question about the greatest commandment, Jesus identifies loving God and loving one's neighbor as the foundation of all the law and the prophets.

Memory verse:

23:12 “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Lesson opener:

Imagine you saw a group of men take a child and throw him in to a river. The child crawls out so this time they tie a heavy object to the child and throw him in again.

How will you feel? How will you act? What will you say? It would be completely right for you to be angry, to speak harshly, to be rude, and to call them “murderers” or whatever other name fit their behavior. Your compassion for the child would actually stir up righteous anger toward these people’s behavior. And that is what we are seeing from Jesus here in this chapter.

Sometimes doctors must take extreme actions to revive someone who has almost died. These could include shots of adrenaline, bursts of electricity from a machine, or “violent” CPR. Generally, a doctor will slowly increase these things in order to “shock” the person awake. Well, the religious leaders were spiritually dead. They were extremely cold to Jesus and not sensitive to anything He said. Jesus was not going to be with them much longer. So, He said some very strong things as a last-ditch hope to shock them awake from their spiritual apathy.

Lesson Goal:

Examine your own hearts and motives, ensuring that your actions align with your faith.

Remember the importance of humility, service, and genuine love for God and others.

Lesson body:

Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-36)

The Pharisees and scribes had sought to discredit Jesus with the Crowds. After He had secretly condemned them in His parables, He publicly rebuked them in this chapter.



Here are a few points of what they have done to deserve those woes.

1-Teaching Without any Work: v 1-4:

The Lord had to declare the woes before the multitudes and the disciples, not to scandalize the scribes and the Pharisees, but to warn His people lest these by their actions, be an offense to them, lest His people fall in what the others have fallen in.

He, in all compassion and gentleness, said to the crowds ‘Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do! but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.’

What they spoke of was not of their own, and neither was it the fruit of their wicked hearts, but it was the fruit of the seat of Moses on which they sat. As for their deeds, these were fatal sermons that carried the fruits of their defiled hearts. This is why the Lord encouraged the multitudes to listen to them regarding what springs from the chair [God’s law], and not what springs from their hearts.

Let us accept the servants’ words, and not follow their weaknesses and their wickedness, as well as not judge their actions.

God’s commandment is not impossible to perform, but when it springs from teachers who do not struggle for it, the multitudes find it too difficult to bear. The teachers have bind it not to carry it with the people, but to burden others with it. But as for them, they do not even think of moving it with their finger. Their goal was to appear holy before men.

2. Asking for the foremost positions: v5-12

God commanded the Jews to keep His laws in front them day and night. But the Pharisees interpreted this commandment literally. They used to write the commandments on small leather strips, twist them, and bind them on their heads, to carry them every day before people.

These bandages were called 'Phylacteries', derived from a Greek word meaning protection. According to their thinking, he who has this on, has special kind of protection. So, the Pharisees did not understand that they had to carry the commandments in the heart and not on the body.

In verses 8-10, Jesus advised the people not to single out their religious leaders for excessive titles of honor and praise that would make them equal to God the Father and the Messiah.

Does the Lord Jesus want us merely to cancel the titles 'teacher, father, rabbi' regarding the spiritual people?

No, but we are not to know for us earthly physical rulers, fathers or teachers away from Christ, we should rather know them as spiritualists in Him.

What is dangerous is that the leaders seek leadership instead of service.

3. Wronging Others yet practicing Worship: v13-14

Eight woes are given in this chapter. In this judgment Jesus accuses the scribes and Pharisees of hindering God's plan for humanity and shutting themselves and others out of heaven by rejecting Jesus' Gospel message of salvation.

4. Being an offense to others: v15. They try to win people but then their evil deeds cause those people to stumble and never return to God again.

5. The materialistic outlook in worshipping: v16-22

Hypocrisy destroys the vision of the teachers. They see the temple gold better than the temple itself, and the oblation of more value than the altar itself. He who swears by the gold of the temple or the oblation is committed to the vow, or he who swears by the temple itself or the altar itself is of no importance. That is all twisted and does not make sense because the temple and altar are more important.

6. Being literal in the commandment, and spiritless: v23-24

Why did they tithe even their spices? Was this not a good thing?

They appear, when carrying out the commandment, to be extremely meticulous for the sake of appearances. They have hatred in their hearts, jealousy and envy, and they leave out truth and faith. But they appear as lovers of the truth. The Jewish leaders teach the people to care for the tithing more than the poor and widows because they benefit from these offerings.

They strain the wine lest they drink an insect by mistake, but they swallow a camel [forbidden animal to eat it]. Jesus is using exaggeration to make His point that the Pharisees and scribes, who claim to be the most religiously observant of the covenant people were failing in the adherence to the spirit of the Law.

Application: As believers, we need to be careful to major on the majors. We must not stray away from the heart of what it means to follow Jesus. We must not pick out or focus on minor things and let these things distract us, divide us, or in any way become the end goal rather than a means to the end.

Do not focus on the minors. Be well balanced in your faith. Remember 1 Corinthians 13, which says that if we do all kinds of amazing things for God, but do not have love, we are nothing.

7. Appearances in worshipping, yet with no life. V25-28

For people's sake, they appear as being meticulous, not only in carrying out the commandment, but also in the rituals. They were very concerned about the cleanliness of the cup and the plate from the outside, yet they did not care what they carried inside because it was unseen. Then therefore seemed like beautiful white graves from the outside, but from the inside they were full of rotteness and every defilement.



Indeed, it is very dangerous for man to be concerned about the outer appearances in worshipping, without encountering the Lord Jesus Himself, the essence of our worship and mystery of our life.

They honored the prophets by building monuments to them, instead of following their teaching or imitating their lives.

Application: We should be careful about doing certain things to impress others.

Do not try to tell others often about the good things that you did, either the money you gave, the time you spent, or how you helped others.

Do not often talk about yourself. Instead ask about others. Do not always try to get the public or "spotlight" position. Instead, be willing and happy to serve in the background. Do not seek appreciation or thanks from others for the tasks that you did or get upset when they didn't give it. Instead, help others with no thought of reward. What are some things which we may tend to do to try to impress others?

Is there any thought of impressing others or getting recognition? Make sure that the reasons you do these things are pure. Ask God to give you a humble heart, a heart of service.

8. Those Resisting the Truth under the Cover of Religion: v31-36.

By killing Christ, they will fill up what is lacking in the iniquity of their fathers until the measure is full; until as much has been committed as God can possibly bear, and then shall come upon them all this blood, and they shall be destroyed.

Their crime would greatly exceed that of their fathers because they would kill the Lord of the prophets who their fathers had killed.

This generation did this, and they would reap the consequences. Only 40 years later Jerusalem was conquered and its people scattered.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem (23:37-39)

Verse 37 – We see Jesus’ heart of compassion. Even in the face of their scorn and rejection, He still thought of them as His children. He loved them and wanted to protect them and care for them if they only accepted Him. But they didn’t.

St. Augustine thinks the Lord drew the similarity between Him and the hen, because when it embraces its eggs, or little ones, her body is greatly weakened, and its feathers drop off, due to her care of her little ones. It is as if this is a symbol to the work of the Lord Jesus, who came down for us, carrying our frailties in His love and divine care.

Takeaway and discussion questions:

- What practical steps can we take to ensure our religious practices are not merely outward shows but sincere acts of faith?
- How can we balance adherence to religious rules with prioritizing justice, mercy, and faith?
- In what ways does Jesus' criticism of those appearing righteous externally but are internally corrupt challenge us to cultivate inner righteousness?
- How do you respond to Jesus' assertion that the greatest must be a servant?
- What steps can we take to avoid the pitfalls of religious hypocrisy outlined in the "Eight Woes"?
- What does the sorrowful prophesy about Jerusalem tell us about the consequences of rejecting Jesus?

Lesson 21: Chapter 24 “When is the 2nd coming?”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscOPTS.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_24.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson in Matthew 23, it centers on Jesus condemning the religious hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. He delivers a series of "woes," criticizing their actions, teachings, and motivations, which are driven by a desire for public recognition rather than genuine faith.

Memory verse:

24:42 *“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming”.*

Lesson opener:

When I was a young child, I remember our family trips to Disneyland. One of the things I remember most was how long the drive in the car was. The drive from our house to Disneyland was about 6 hours. That was kind of like waiting an eternity for a kid. I can remember looking out of the car window at the road and thinking it would never end. I tried to stop thinking about Disneyland but couldn’t. I just couldn’t wait to get there. So, from time to time I would ask my mom, the famous long car ride question, “When are we going to be there?” And Mom would say, “In a little while.” In a little while? What does that mean? Kids do not know what a little while means. What I wanted to know was when exactly this car ride would finally be over. I want to get to Disneyland!

That car ride was kind of like how it was for Jesus’ disciples. They were asking Jesus the same kind of questions a kid would ask his mom. They asked, “Tell us when these things will be?” They wanted to know exactly when Jesus would establish His kingdom. They wanted an exact date and time, but Jesus instead answered like my mom did and said, “in a little while”. He did not actually say it like that, but He definitely did not give them an exact date.

Jesus gave them enough information to keep them looking and expecting.

The Bible does not give us an exact time when we can expect the second coming is. In Matthew 25:13 Jesus says, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the son of Man is coming.” Jesus

gives us an idea about the time, and He tells us what things will be like just before His return, but the important thing is to keep watching and expecting.

My mom did give me something to look for on our trip. She said when we got close, we would start looking for the Matterhorn Mountain. Believe me, I kept looking and looking and looking. Then finally it happened, I saw the top of the mountain. This is like what the Bible calls a sign.

We will see things happen around us that will help us to know that Jesus' return is very close. Are you looking for the return of Jesus? I know I am.

Lesson Goal:

Be ready, because you do not know the time Jesus is coming.

Lesson body:

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple (24:1-2)

The Jews were preoccupied with the greatness of the outer temple skeleton, rather than the sanctity of the inward heart temple.

What the Lord said was fulfilled in the year 70 AD. This was when the Roman soldiers, under the leadership of Titus, insisted on destroying the entire temple. This was a declaration of establishing the new temple of the New Covenant Church, in new concepts.

The Signs of the Times and the End of the Age (24:3-14)

Overlooking the temple area and Jerusalem, the disciples asked this three-part question.

1. When will these things be?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Our Lord mentions the signs which should precede His coming:

1. **False Messiahs** [v4-5] Evidently there will be deceivers who will try to give them false answers to their questions, deceptions intending to confuse and frighten them. There will be false Messiahs, wars and rumors of wars. But these are not to be taken as signs of the end.
2. **Wars and Rumors of Wars- Famines and Earthquakes** [v6-8]
It is not surprising that the signs for the Lord's coming in its totality represent various aspects of sorrows, sufferings and disasters. For, this is the way, prepared for His coming. How so? Whenever the adversary, that is, Satan, realizes the kingdom of Christ is coming at the door, his wars are increased against the believers, to win over as many as he can as members in his kingdom, resisting Christ's kingdom. All of this increases the watchful believers in their strength and stability and are thus exalted.
3. **Times of persecution** [v9-10]
After trying the general hardships, Satan will take it to a personal level with the believers. They will be persecuted for the name of Christ.

4. **The false prophets:** [V11]

The third arrow from Satan, and the most dangerous one is the arrow against the faith, so people would be far diverted from the kingdom path. From the historical aspect, there have been many false prophets deceiving many. This also takes various shapes, as the appearance of new philosophers may be hidden behind the religious faith.

5. **Lawlessness** [v12]

Human society was created to live within the boundaries of God's law, His moral principles. When evil grows, it opposes those boundaries. Some periods of history have been more lawless than others. In the time of the New Testament, lawlessness had become a serious problem. Prostitution, homosexuality and infanticide were promoted and protected by countries' law as were many other offenses against God's revealed moral order.

When love in a society dies, it grows cold like a corpse.

As lawlessness rises in the world as it has in many periods of our history, it should not discourage believers to give up. The cycle of sin keeps on. These things should stir us to renewed effort to promote evangelism and to influence society toward godliness in every way we know how.

Verse13 “But he who endures to the end shall be saved”:

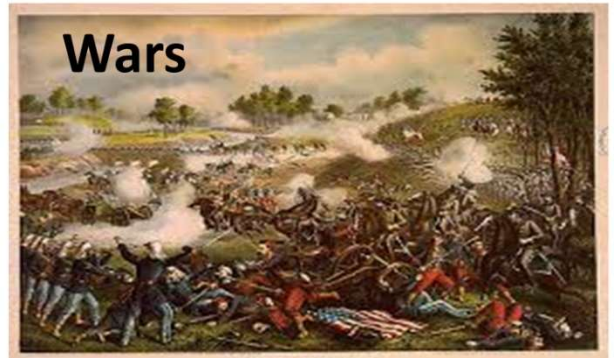
The Lord gives us a promise to arouse hope in us. It is a struggle between light and darkness that ends in the victory of light.

It is interesting to note that while over a million rebellious Jews were brutally slaughtered in the attack on Jerusalem in 70 AD which also brought the destruction of the Temple, there is no record of any Christians being killed in the conflict. Those who were faithful to Christ and heeded His warnings were spared when the great judgment Jesus spoke of finally came because Jesus had warned them.

6. **The Gospel of the Kingdom .. to the Whole World** [v14]

The good news about the Kingdom of God would be declared in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations. During the time of the Apostles, the good news to the Gentile nations had been essentially extended to all the earth, that is to all the nations known at that time.

This could be another sign before His second coming. If it refers to the end of the world, there is the greatest probability that true faith will have been announced to every part of the globe, before that period.



The Great Tribulation (24:15-22)

What is this 'abomination of desolation'? It is the Hebrew expression found in Daniel 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11.

St. John Chrysostom says, "It means the army by which Jerusalem became desolate and destroyed" [in year 70 AD]. Also, according to Daniel 12:11, it seems to refer to the defilement of the sanctuary by the mad attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to stop the "daily sacrifice," and to substitute it by an idolatrous worship.

From the historical aspect, when the Christians in Jerusalem saw the Romans besieging it, they realized the disaster that would befall it, as the Lord had said, and so they fled away.

This is what will happen in the coming of the anti-Christ, for the church will see he has set himself up as a god in the Lord's temple (2nd Thes.1-4). They flee to the wilderness (Rev.12:6).

In verse 17, he who should be on the house -top when this tribulation come upon the city "should flee without delay;" not to take his possession from the house as this would delay him.

In verse 19, the Lord declares misfortunes befalling those expecting children in their pregnancy, and those who are nursing. Who are these pregnant other than those souls who, though they know the Lord Jesus, yet the fruit of the Spirit has not yet been manifested in them. Those nursing ones are those who have their fruits as little as nursing babes.

Those who are practically fruitless or who have little fruit are unable to face the hard times, particularly the time of the anti-Christ, before the coming of Christ.

In verse 20, The Lord asks us to pray so our flight would not be in the winter or on a Sabbath day. This means our life would not be stricken with the fatal cold of the spirit, just as happens in wintertime, and neither would it be on an idle restful day as the Sabbath. The soul that is cold and idle falls under the deception of the anti-Christ and is unable to encounter the Lord of glory Jesus.

The great tribulation in v 21 will befall the church in the days of the deceiver or the anti-Christ.

The Appearance of False-Christ: (24:23-28)

The secret behind this great tribulation is the appearance of the anti-Christ and his followers. The deceiving Christ and his followers will use all means by which they would deceive us. They will make miracles and wonders that are of the deeds of the adversary. He has deceiving thoughts as well.

The last coming of the Son of Man will not be followed by wonders or miracles, and He will not be manifested in the wilderness, or in a hidden place. He will come from on high, all of a sudden, on the clouds, just as lightning, brightening the entire earth. He will carry us from the four corners and raise us to His heavens.

What does He mean by the words, "For whenever the carcass is there, the eagles will be gathered together"?

Because the Lord Jesus has offered His body a sacrifice of love on the cross, the believers come as strong eagles, hovering around the cross.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-31)

This indeed is a must, for the eternal kingdom of Christ to come in perfect glory, the present world collapses. The Lord will reign on us and in us forever.

After the anti-Christ kingdom is being stubborn in resisting the kingdom of Christ, that is, His church, and after the sun and the moon do not give their light and the stars fall, and the heavenly hosts are shaken -----after all this, the Lord Himself comes in His angelic procession, with the sign of the cross ahead, declared in the skies. This makes the church rejoice, the church that embodies the heavenly nature. It rejoices for the coming of the Groom, whereas all the tribes of the earth grieve, for they have embraced the deceiver, and they could no longer bear the Truth.

The Parable of the Fig Tree (24:32-35)

It is as if He is saying if you know how to discern the times and can realize summer is near by means of the fig-tree when its branch is tender, and its leaves turn green, it is therefore of more importance to look for those signs I have given you.

His words in verse 34 refer to the final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, and the beginning of the expansion of the Apostolic church. It was all fulfilled within one generation, less than 40 years, just as this passage indicates.

No One Knows the Day or Hour (24:36-44)

It is certain that Jesus Christ knew the day of judgment and all things to come, by a knowledge which He could not but have, because of the union by which His human nature was united to the Divine person and nature. He speaks to His disciples telling them only what He intends to make known to them, so they don't ask for more. He gave them signs but not the time.

The Lord Jesus tells us of the flood that saved Noah and his family, and devastated the evil humanity, as an example of His coming, where the children of God will be blessed with the eternal crown. They

will enter glory, just as into the ark, whereas the evil ones will perish as happened in the flood. The evil ones were unprepared, and their hearts were preoccupied with eating and drinking and marrying, and they were never exalted to God.

Indeed, eating, drinking and marrying, all of which are not evil. The world gets lulled into apathy and complacency by the usual. Even in its disobedience and rejection of God, it plans to go on with its daily routine forever. It becomes immersed in its business and simply ignores God's prophetic warnings.

While two men are working in the same field, and two women are working on one grinder, yet one of them has an uplifted heart to heaven, and the other is disturbed about what is earthly. One works and thanks God and praises Him, whereas the other works to serve his belly and satisfy his passions, and is disturbed about the earthly matters. The Lord asks us to be watchful so as to meet Him, even though He did not specify the time of His coming.



The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant (24:45-51)

The Master's stewards will either receive blessings for faithful service in governing God's household/the Church and feeding the members of His household at the proper time, or they will be judged and condemned for their mistreatment of the servants.

Lesson 22: Chapter 25 “Well done, faithful servant”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_25.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson was Matthew 24, it provides a prophecy about the end times, focusing on the destruction of the Temple, the signs of the end of the age, and the second coming of Christ. It emphasizes the need for watchfulness, preparedness, and endurance in faith amidst tribulation.

Memory verse:

25:23 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

Lesson opener:

In the parable of the talents, we notice that the last servant was fired from the job, and we have a job opening!!!

What kind of help-wanted ad might the master place to replace the servant who hid the talent?

(Let students speculate and have fun with this. One possible ad would read “Help wanted: A servant who is trustworthy, hardworking, willing to use what’s been given to him or her and knows about business investments.”)

What do you think Jesus is trying to teach about the abilities He has given us?

Some of your students may not feel as if they have any talents at all, while some might have inflated ideas of what talents they have. Stress the idea that God has given everyone, without exception, some special quality, talent, or gift to use to honor God and bless others.

Ask students to list any talent or gift that they can name (not just ones they believe they have) and write on the board. Encourage students to think beyond the typical church setting to include business, the arts, and other areas. Feel free to add or suggest abilities that students don’t mention.

Give an index card to each student. On the blank side of the card, let each student write down one talent from the board that they have or think they have and fold it in half like a greeting card. If they would like to use that gift to honor God, have them write a short prayer on it.

Lesson Goal:

God expects His followers to use their gifts, talents, and resources to serve others and advance His Kingdom.

This lesson emphasizes that people will be held accountable for how they use what God has entrusted to them.

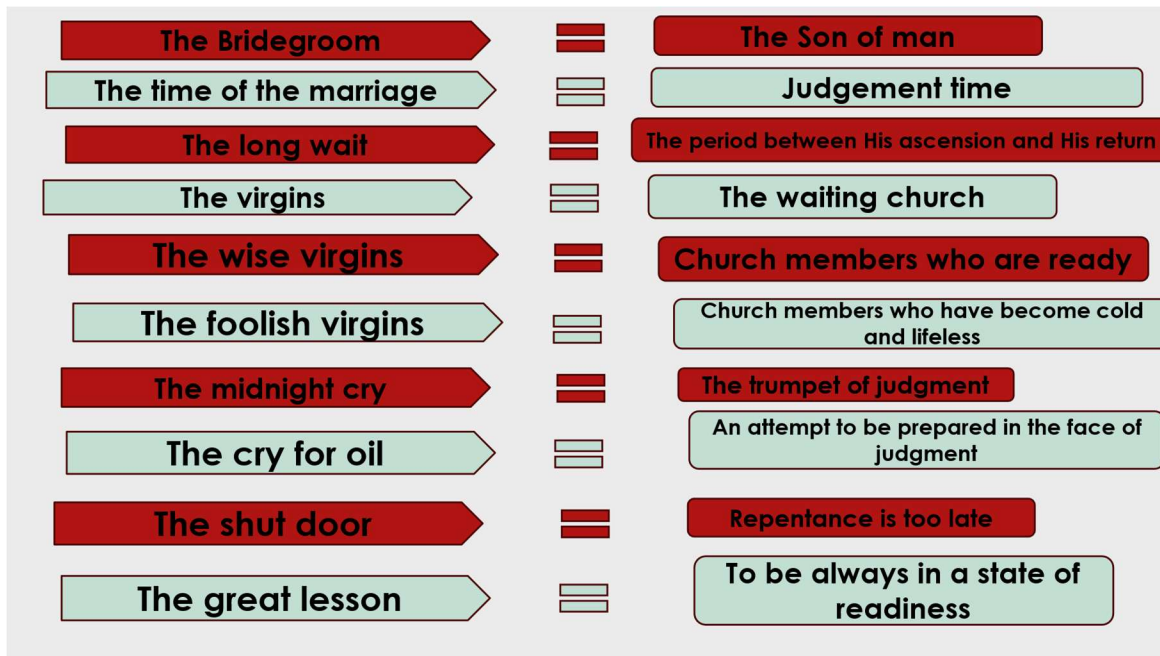
Lesson body:

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13)

The Lord Jesus offers us three parables when He was in Jerusalem as a lamb to be presented as a sacrifice for the Passover in our place. He spoke of live concepts for the kingdom we are awaiting .

1. The Wise Virgins 1 – 13
2. The Parable of the Talents 14 – 30
3. The Coming of the Son of Man 31 – 46

At every midnight, we read this chapter of the gospel in the first service of the midnight prayer. We are careful to be one of the wise virgins who enter the eternal wedding.



St. John Chrysostom believes that this oil refers to the good and righteous deeds that distinguish the live man from the dead one. The believer offers his sanctified senses to the Groom in faith that works in love (Gal 5:6).

The ignorant ones carried their lanterns, but were unable to possess the holy oil, that is, the good deeds in the Lord. The oil is the grace and salvation of God or that faith which works by love. They carried dead faith, and worshiping appearance. The foolish virgins had little oil in their lamps at first, enough to make them shine before men by showing off to get their respect but they did not have enough oil in their hearts to produce good works that lead to salvation.

The wise virgins will have their oil ready, and their lamps trimmed and burning and soon prepare themselves to give their accounts to their Lord. The foolish, having made no provision of the oil of good works, are compelled to seek it at the time they are to be judged.

When daytime is over, and the nighttime comes when no work can be done, it is not possible for anyone to burrow oil from someone else, and thus they are unable to encounter the Groom. They remain outside when the door is shut. The son of man will appear on the clouds; the foolish virgins will see Him only as the fearful Son of Man and will only see His eyes kindled in fire. As for the wise ones, their hearts, or rather their inward eyes are pure, and could see God and could enjoy His splendor.

It is not surprising that the Lord says, "I do not know you," for they have not entered with Him in real partnership, and neither have they seen His glory inside them.

At the final day of judgment, there will be no room for prayers and good works (St. Jerome).

What a miserable thing it is, not to discover the emptiness of one's heart of all good till it is too late to make any changes. The door was shut - dreadful and fatal words! No hope remains!

Takeaway:

Perhaps the virgins had been waiting for a long time and some of them thought "*He is not going to come tonight; let's sleep first and get more oil in the morning.*"

Satan often does not tempt people by saying, "Don't get ready. Don't be prepared. Don't do that good work." Instead, he would tempt us by saying, "*Sure get ready, just do it tomorrow.*"

Procrastination is bad enough when you know a specific deadline to finish something. But we do not know the time or the hour of Jesus' return so procrastination in this case is much worse than on a test exam or a business project when you may still hope to cram what you need to do in the last day.

God does not ask us not to sleep physically. But we should be ready all the time for His return, which means we should not sleep spiritually. We should not become complacent like the foolish virgins.

Also, your salvation does not guarantee your children's salvation. You cannot pass oil to them.

There is a limit to God's patience / at some point there will be no more chances – For those living at the time of Noah, they could have repented and entered the ark with Noah at any time before the door closed. But they did not. Then God closed the door. After that it was too late. It will be the same at the Second Coming.

Now there is still a chance. Tomorrow there may be a chance. One day there will be no more chances. Therefore, keep watch.

When ?
“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”.



The Parable of the Talents (Read 25:14-30)

In this parable the Lord offers His servants money. He gives to one five talents, to the other two talents, and to the third only one talent. Each one is given according to his capability (Matt 25:14,15). He knows how to distribute to each one according to his potential. What God has given us as talents has not been given haphazardly, for He knows what is appropriate for each member for his own salvation.

God wants us to use the resources He has given to us for building His kingdom. Some of these resources include our spiritual gifts, our natural talents, our time, our money, our knowledge of the Bible, etc.

God is not expecting any gain, and He is not concerned about the quantity; He is rather concerned about the loyalty of His servants or their negligence. What the servants of the five and the two talents have profited is only ‘the honesty in the job.’ They were worthy to be in charge of a big amount. But as far as those of the one talent, their problem is their carelessness, for they have hidden their talents, and have led idle lives.

The one who had the five talents, because he gained five more talents, he was appointed over more, by entering to His master’s wedding. Moreover, he was given the talent that the careless servant had neglected. As for the owner of the one talent, because he was careless and lived an idle life, he not only did not gain another talent, but he also lost the one he had and he fell into another sin, which is his accusation of His master by saying He was cruel and unjust. Each sin led to another one.

When the master began to condemn His servants and asked them for the account, He began with that who had the five talents, then the two talents, and lastly him who had the one talent. Whenever the talents are more, our condemnation begins ahead of others, and we are asked for more.

The servants give what they made back to the master because it was from Him, and it was His.
Application: Everything we have is from God. We must not try to keep it for ourselves.

The temptation to view God as being harsh and unfair goes all the way back to Satan’s conversation with Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7). Here Satan introduces the idea that God was unjust and keeping them from obtaining something good and useful, which they would enjoy, and Eve falls for it. Today you don’t need to look far to see people questioning God’s goodness and accusing Him of all sorts of terrible things.

The Son of Man Will Judge the Nations (25:31-46)

In the first part of chapter 24, Jesus tells the disciples about His second coming, specifically what the signs will be. After that, He shares several application-centered parables reminding believers of the need to be ready. Each contain this basic point of being prepared for the second coming and not being surprised. Being prepared means living our life with the knowledge that He will return, and we should give an account for our lives.

The parable of the sheep and goats contains this same basic reminder of being ready, but from a slightly different angle. In the other parables, Jesus mentions that there will be a separation. True believers will be ready and will be rewarded. False believers will be punished for the wrong they have done. **The twist in this parable is that many of the false believers will not even realize that they are in the wrong group and are unprepared.**

Sheep and goats are quite similar. They have similar sizes. Both have wool coats. Their diet is very similar. Even the sounds they make are difficult to distinguish. Jesus picked two very similar animals to highlight the fact that many people who think that they are believers or in some ways act like a believer in fact are not. A goat living with a flock of sheep could go through his life thinking he was a sheep. Likewise, a person could have knowledge of God and think that he/she is going to heaven, but in fact he is not.

St. Kaprianous says, “How can Christ declare this more clearly? How can he urge us more to do righteousness and mercy than His saying that all what you give to the poor and needy is only given to Himself. If anyone is in the church and does not give for the sake of his brother, let him think of Christ and he may be touched. He who does not think of his colleague, the suffering poor person, might think of His God who dwells in this rejected man.”

Jesus will praise the sheep for their selfless behavior. Note the types of things He praises them for: feeding the hungry, showing hospitality to strangers, visiting the sick or the prisoner. All these things are acts of kindness shown to people who very likely cannot repay you. What is more, they are acts of kindness demonstrated in largely private places like prisons and hospitals or your own home. He does not commend them for their public and popular services.

The Lord has not prepared man for the outer fire, but rather for the eternal kingdom. The wicked ones have chosen themselves to be thrown out into what was prepared for others, that is, for ‘Satan and his angels.

God is invisible. Thus, it is sometimes difficult to know how to love someone who we cannot see. The answer is right here. We serve God by serving those around us. We love God by loving those around us (1 John 4:20). Simply put, this is the way God has designed for us to show our love for Him.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:



Five Lessons for Our Lives from the Parable of the Talents:

1. This parable teaches us that success is a product of our work:

We were made to work. As Christians we have a mission that our Lord expects us to accomplish in the here and now.

Far too many Christians today see their salvation as simply a “bus ticket to heaven.” They believe it doesn’t matter what they do while they “wait for the bus.” The Parable of the Talents teaches us what we are supposed to do while we await the return of our King. We are to work, using our talents to glorify God, serve the common good, and further God’s kingdom. The spiritual success is working diligently in the here and now using all the talents God has given us to produce the return expected by the Master.

2. The Parable of the Talents teaches that God always gives us everything we need to do what He has called us to do.

A talent indicates a large sum of money, maybe even as much as a million dollars in today’s currency.

We are tempted to feel sorry for the servant who received only one talent, but in reality, he received as much as a million dollars from the master and buried it in his back yard. He was given more than enough to meet the master’s expectations.

The servants were given enough to produce more – it is the same with the gifts God has given us. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

3. The Parable of the Talents teaches that we are not all created equal.

The master understood that the one-talent servant was not capable of producing as much as the five-talent servant. We want to protest this as unfair, why give someone less than others? Yet we know this is true from our own experience. Diversity is woven into the fabric of creation.

Equality in this parable comes from the fact that it takes just as much work for the five-talent servant to produce five more talents as it does the two-talent servant to produce two more talents.

4. The Parable of the Talents teaches that we work for the Master, not our own selfish purposes.

The money that is given to the servants is not their own. The money they earn with the capital is not theirs to keep but to honor God and give back to Him.

5. The Parable of the Talents shows that we will be held accountable.

The unfaithful steward in this parable didn’t so much waste the master’s money – he wasted an opportunity. As a result, he was judged as wicked and lazy. We are responsible for what we do for God with what we have been given, and one day we will be held responsible.

What we hear from the Master on that day is up to us.

Lesson 23: Chapter 26 “Betrayal and Trial”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_26.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 25 contains three parables: the Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the Sheep and the Goats. These parables serve as a warning to believers to be prepared for Jesus's return, emphasizing the importance of vigilance, wise stewardship of God-given gifts, and compassionate service to others.

Memory verse:

26: 41” Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Lesson opener:

The introductory lesson on Aikido, a traditional Japanese form of martial arts, was an eye-opener. The teacher, told us that when faced with an attacker, our first response should be to “run away.” “Only if you can’t run away, then you fight,” he said seriously.

Run away? I was taken aback. Why was this highly skilled self-defense instructor telling us to run away from a fight? It seemed counterintuitive—until he explained that the best form of self-defense is to avoid fighting in the first place. Of course!

When several men came to arrest Jesus, Peter responded as some of us might have by drawing his sword to attack one of them. But Jesus told him to put it away, saying, “How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matthew 26:54).

While a sense of justice is important, so is understanding God’s purpose and kingdom—an “upside-down” kingdom that calls us to love our enemies and return evil with kindness. It’s a stark contrast to how the world might react, yet it’s a response that God seeks to nurture in us. Jesus healed the ear of the man Peter had struck.

May we learn to respond to difficult situations as He did, always seeking peace and restoration as God provides what we need.

Lesson Goal:

Jesus remains faithful to us even when we are faithless, and salvation rests in His faithfulness, not our own strength.

Lesson body: [It is a long chapter, read only the verses that are marked to be read and summarize the other sections]

The Plot to Kill Jesus (26:1-5)

Jesus Christ informed His disciples of His sufferings which were soon to take place at Jerusalem, lest they might be discouraged. It was on a Tuesday evening [the beginning of the Jewish Wednesday]. When Jesus mentioned “two days” in verse 2, He was referring to Friday.

The Feast of the Passover is sometimes called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover feast commemorated their liberation from Egypt through God’s great miracles and the unleavened bread was a reminder of how they left that land in haste.

The chief priests and scribes sought to kill Jesus for a long time. Only now we see that they are not willing to wait much longer, wanting to kill Him before He grew more popular. While they looked down on the common people, they also feared them because they were not always easy to control. Because many of the common people believed in Jesus, they were afraid of the backlash if they just arrested Jesus publicly. Thus, they sought to capture Jesus in secret.

The Christian Tradition originated the fasting on Wednesdays because on this day Judas betrayed Christ and the Jews ordered His death. The fasting on Fridays is because on that day Jesus suffered death for our redemption.

The Anointing at Bethany (Read 26:6-13)

Jesus had likely healed Simon the leper before. Even though others may have avoided Simon even after healing, Jesus had valued him when he was sick and when he was healthy and went to his house.

Who was this lady pouring the perfume and how valuable was her gift?

This woman is probably Mary, Martha and Lazarus’s sister.

The perfume she poured cost about 300 denarii. That is roughly what a well-paid worker would have made in an entire year. This was no small gift! We should give our very best to Christ – She did not hold back. This perfume was probably being saved for a very special event, maybe her wedding. And to her, this was the perfect event. Jesus was special. He was more important to her than anything else in her life and was worthy of this kingly gift.

She was scolded for her gift rather than praised. She didn’t seem to care what other people thought but only cared what Jesus thought.

She was radical in her service to Christ – This lady went far above and beyond the call of duty to show her love to Christ. It seems illogical to “waste” such an amount of money on this anointing that would wear off in a short period of time. But actually, it is the most logical thing in the world.

She was happy that her brother was raised from the dead, so she came willingly with a thanksgiving offering. She came right on time to anoint Him before His death, if she was one day late, she would have missed this opportunity. Jesus commended her action and mentioned it was for His burial.

After His ascension, we are to offer our gifts to Him through caring for the poor.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus (26:14-16)

Judas did not betray his divine Master out of fear, but out of greed and love of money. He saw more miracles than the commoner and heard much more of Jesus' teachings. And yet, finally he betrayed Jesus.

Christ ate the Paschal lamb after sunset. And when the Paschal supper was over, He consecrated the blessed Eucharist.

Judas had already betrayed him, Matthew 26:15, and he was now about to deliver Him into the hands of the chief priests, according to the agreement he had made with them.

Jesus Celebrates Passover with His Disciples (Read 26:17-25)

Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover meal in the upper room of St. Mark's house in Jerusalem. Jesus kept the name unknown to the rest of the disciples. As Father Theophlactius says, so that Judas might not know the place and so inform the chief priests and the scribes and thus arrest the Lord before offering His divine Passover.

What is surprising is that the Lord spoke of His betrayer in the midst of them all, without pointing at Judas. But when the Lord saw they were truly sorrowful, and each of them asked Him, (Matt 26:22) "Lord, is it I?" therefore He had to point at him.



Lest the disciples assume that what was about to happen to the Lord is out of weakness, He confirmed to them assumingly (Matt 26:24) "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

The Lord declared the misery that would befall Judas to assure them that what is being fulfilled, even though it is of God's provision, yet what Judas was doing is not to be fulfilled without his own will. Judas was evil indeed, and God has used his wickedness to fulfill His divine issues.

Jesus told him to go ahead with his plan. Judas, therefore, left before the Lord's Supper was instituted.

Takeaway:

It is easy to look at Judas and think about what a foolish decision this was. But what about us? Every time we sin, we do a similar thing. Whenever we choose to satisfy our flesh, our lust, or our greed, we despise the commandments of God in return for short-term pleasure that we ourselves will despise as the guilt of our sin overcomes us. Do not make the same mistake Judas did. Do not knowingly reject any commands of God for short-term gratification.

Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper (Read 26:26-30)

He offered Himself a new Passover in place of the entire humanity. He declared the sacrifice of the cross was not fulfilled haphazardly. It was of His own will that He handed Himself over to the cross. He transformed the bread and the wine into His own flesh and blood, sanctified, a true sacrifice given for the remission of sins (Matt 26:28).

He has offered them to His church for us to obtain through generations, as confirmation to the continuance of the cross sacrifice. It is a live sacrifice, a unique and unequalled one, by means of which He grants the believers His sanctified flesh and blood as the mystery of their lives.

V29 → What is this 'new' that we will drink with Him in our Father's kingdom other than our enjoyment in the partnership of the unity with God in the sacrifice of His Son in heavens on a new level. It is an extension of the current liturgy, but in a way that cannot be uttered!

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial (26:31-35)

On His way to Mount Olive, He warned His disciples, and encouraged them, speaking all the time of the cross and the resurrection as well. He warned them that they would be scattered but He will meet them in Galilee after His resurrection.

By means of the cross, the enemy wished to strike the shepherd to scatter the flock. But the cross has been changed to resurrection, and the Lord will go ahead of us to Galilee.

St. Peter the apostle assumed he can stand next to the Lord and never doubt Him. He never realized his weakness. Jesus told him, he will deny Him and gave him a word of comfort that he will rise again.

The Prayer in the Garden (26:36-46)

Gethsemane is an Aramaic word meaning 'an oil grinder'. The Lord, so willingly, is entering this grinder and that it was not possible for the disciples to enter with Him, so He told them to wait for Him a bit farther except for the three disciples.

The secret and reason of His sorrow is not because of the fear of physical suffering, but it was due to the weighty iniquity which the Lord could not bear or tolerate. But it was for this that He came, and in our place, He yielded in obedience to the Father, to carry the death of sin in Him.

No one is to understand that at this point Jesus is pleading like someone in need of strength or support from someone else. For, He Himself is God, the Father's strength, able and authoritative, He rather did this to teach us, so He would cast away our carelessness at the time of temptation and be watchful.

Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane (26:47-56)

He had to accept the pain at the hands of one of His disciples, and through one kiss, His wound was as bitter as it could be since it was wrapped in false love.

The Lord gave Judas the last chance, even at the last moments when He was being arrested. He blamed him in gentle words (Matt 26:50) "Friend, why have you come?" [Jesus hoped Judas had changed his mind and not came]. With a kiss, Judas gave up His Master.

St. Peter, the apostle stretched out his hand, took his sword to strike Malchus, the servant of the chief priest, and he cut his ear (Matt 26:51). But the Lord commanded him to put his sword in its place, and He healed the servant's ear. He did not want us to use the swords in resisting our enemies, but rather to use love and reverence, and thus win over those against us.

The eleven apostles who a little while before thought they never could forsake the Lord fled away as soon as He was seized. St. Mark left his clothes and ran. *How many Christians, when their attachment to Christ would lead them to danger, leave Him and flee!*

Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin (26:57-68)- Peter Denies Jesus, & Weeps Bitterly (Read 26:69-75)

He was accused of being a blasphemer for the words He said (Matt 26:61) "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days." This was a false accusation, for He did not say so. He rather said (John 2:19) "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He was actually speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:12). But as for them, they understood He was speaking of Jerusalem's temple. As for the second aspect of blasphemy, it was because He said of Himself, He is Christ, the Son of God.

The chief priest was unable to bear the Lord's answer, so he tore his clothes. This was a sign of the tearing down of the Levite priesthood and its coming to an end. A new priesthood thus came up on the rites of Melchizedek.

St. John followed Jesus and entered the court while St. Peter waited outside then entered later. Many are like St. Peter, they "follow Him," but at a distance; far enough that it is difficult to discern that they are His followers.

St. Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. Then one servant girl came forth to accuse him of being with Jesus. But he denied it before all. As he was going out at the gateway, another maid saw him and

accused him as the first one. But again, he denied it. After a while, those close by said his speech betrayed him. But he began to curse and swear he didn't know Him, at that moment the rooster crowed.

He wept in regret in bitter tears, when Jesus looked at him, because of his very serious sin.

Judas sinned, betrayed and sold the Lord because of greed. Afterward he was sorry, but it was the sorrow of this world that produces death, not repentance. He hanged himself.



Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Why did Peter deny Jesus?

1. Peter Was Overly Self-Confident

Peter's first step down was self-confidence. He was placing overconfidence in himself, directly contradicting what Jesus said, and almost boasting at the expense of others. [Mat 26:33]

It's never a good idea to boast about how much you love God. Rather, boast about how much He loves you. Peter was about to learn that pride goes before a fall.

2. Peter Didn't Pray When Told

Peter's second step down was falling asleep when he should have been doing as Jesus asked of him and the two other disciples. Jesus asked them to pray at the garden.

We must not forget that prayer is not only for petitioning to receive something but also for protection and preparation for something that's coming.

Jesus was preparing the disciples. He knew a storm was brewing, that in a matter of moments the lives of the disciples were going to change forever. Note that it can be a sin not to pray.

3. Peter Trusted in Human Effort

Peter's third step down was trusting in human effort instead of God's power.

I suppose it's commendable that Peter wanted to help Jesus by cutting the servant's ear, but he was going about it in the wrong way. He couldn't get it right; he was boasting when he should have been listening, he was sleeping when he should have been praying—and now he was fighting when he should have been surrendering.

4. Peter Followed at a Distance

Peter's next step down was following at a distance at the time of the trial. Distance from fellowship with the Lord is at the heart of every fall. Peter was still following but at a distance. Granted, it was more than some of the others could say, but he was at a distance.

This is the problem with some people of the church, they follow at a distance. They're late to church, early to leave, etc.

But when you follow at a distance you increase your vulnerability. Think about it: If the devil sees everyone moving together and then sees the half-hearted person following behind at a distance, that's a much easier prey to catch.

5. Peter Was in the Wrong Place

We see the fifth step to Peter's fall is when he joins the enemy's fire. He was now in the wrong place, with the wrong people. And when you hang out in the wrong places, with the wrong people, it's just a matter of time before you do the wrong thing. That's what happened to Peter. He would ultimately deny Jesus three times while there.



Lesson 24: Chapter 27 "the Passion of Christ"

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_27.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, Matthew 26, primarily focuses on the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, including the plot against Him, the Last Supper, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, His betrayal by Judas, and Peter's denial.

Memory verse:

27:54 "they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Lesson opener:

What does it mean for justice to be served? When is justice not served? Which event in the life of Jesus shows the most injustice?

Jesus, though innocent, is condemned to death through the envy of the Jewish leaders. Pilate bowed to the pressure and the crowd turned against Jesus.

Discuss how Jesus's willingness to suffer injustice ultimately paved the way for salvation, highlighting the sacrifice involved in His death.

Lesson Goal:

St. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus's suffering and death were not random events, but rather the fulfillment of prophecies throughout the Old Testament.

Lesson body:

Jesus Handed Over to Pontius Pilate (27:1-2)

The religious judgment remained all night long, amid the darkness of envy and hate. The Jewish rulers were asking for the Messiah, the Savior so He would deliver them from the Roman rule, and He would establish for them the earthy kingdom of the Messiah. Each one coveted to have authority and a prominent position in it. But the Lord has destroyed every materialistic concept for this kingdom and has declared the spiritual one instead.

They therefore resorted to the Roman chiefs themselves to pass judgment over Him, not only from their religious point of view, but also as a national traitor who established a kingdom for Himself. The power to execute death judgment was taken from them or they needed the Roman governor's permission.

They pretended to be defenders to Caesar [who they hated], against the Savior!

Judas Hangs Himself (27:3-10)

Judas assumed, in his greed, he would gain thirty pieces of silver, but as a result he gained disaster and misfortune. So, he went to return the silver pieces in regret, without any repentance, and in bitterness without any hope. He could no longer stand his life, so he went to strangle and hang himself. Peter repented; Judas regretted

The chief priests did not accept the silver to be put in the treasury, since it is the price of blood. They bought a potter's field, a graveyard for stranger, and it has been called he 'field of the blood', as a witness to what mankind did to their Savior.

In verses 9-10, why did St. Matthew referenced Jeremiah, while the prophecy was mentioned by Zacharias?

Sometimes Jeremiah is used as a representation of all the prophecy books or might have also been mentioned in some of his writings but was lost.

Jesus Faces Pilate (27:11-26)

It was probably around 7 am when they presented Him to Pilate, hoping for a death penalty without questions but Pilate demanded charges. The Jews accused Jesus of seeking to make Himself King for the Jews.

His answers to Pilate the governor are concise indeed, to the extent in which He reveals the truth and so He would have no excuse. Pilate saw that it was envy that excited the Jewish priests against Him.

Pilate's plan to release a prisoner was an attempt to shift off the responsibility, knowing Jesus was popular among the people, he wanted to rescue Him from the priests and expected that the people would prefer Him to a hateful robber and murderer, Barabbas. The people were greatly under the influence of the priests. The Lord saved Barabbas with His own death!

It was not only a torturing and painful death, but a very shameful, humiliating, and an accursed one.

They could not answer Pilate question, what evil has He done? He had done nothing, and they knew He had done nothing, but they shouted, "Crucify Him".

The Soldiers Mock Jesus (27:27-31)

The profane and disrespectful soldiers dress Jesus in a red robe to mock Him for claiming to be the King of Jews, this one who was indeed a true King. Having arrayed Him, in royal robe, crown of thorns, and mock staff, they kneel before Him and ridicule Him. They spit on Him to insult Him.

The King on a Cross (27:32-56)

What does Golgotha mean?

It is the Aramaic name of the crucifixion site, meaning skull. Kranion (Lk 23:33), the Greek word for "skull". Several writers believe it was called that, from Adam's skull, whom they guess to have been buried there, also some say that it is part of the mountain where Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac on.

On the way to the crucifixion, He fell several times due to the heavy weight of the cross. They therefore called a Cyrene man named Simon, to carry with Him the cross. It is as if he is representing the church of the new covenant that must be committed to carrying the cross with the Lord in His crucifixion.

Why did they offer vinegar?

This was a custom with the Romans in crucifixion; the vinegar was given, mingled with bitterness, as a way of anesthesia so the crucified one would not feel the weighty suffering as much. But the Lord tasted the sour vinegar, and refused to drink it, so that He would bear the pain in its totality, out of His own self will. They offered wine/vinegar again before He surrendered His life, but He refused.

What did they do with His garment and robe?

Concerning His garments divided into four parts, this refers to the church that has Christ's body glued to it. It has spread to the four sides or corners of the universe. It has become in the hands of the Roman soldiers, in the hands of the Gentiles, and they are able to obtain the membership in it.

As for the robe that had no seams to it, all woven from the top, this is not split or divided, this refers to the one church that should have no divisions or splitting. It was a prophecy fulfillment.

He has been crucified with the two robbers, and for their sake, to the extent that one of them wished to be accepted inside Him, a real king, uplifting him to His paradise. The Lord answered him; "Today you will be with Me in paradise."

Who felt the danger of the cross?

Satan might have felt the danger of the cross, and he got terrified, and was eager that the Lord comes down from His cross. But it was too late; he therefore motivated those blasphemers to ask of the Lord to come down from the cross. Even the two robbers reviled Him (Matt 27:44) and asked Him to come down if He could.

It was not an ordinary day in which the sun shines as usual from morning till dusk. But from the sixth hour [12pm] there was darkness at midday, till the ninth hour [3 pm]. As it was mentioned by Zechariah and Amos.

(Amos 8:9) “And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord God, that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight”. Indeed, the creation lamented itself to God; for the sun darkened, the rocks cracked, and the temple itself was clothed in sorrow, for the veil got torn from top to bottom.

V46: With this His cry, He might have wished to awaken the Jewish thinking from its sleep, to go back to Psalm 22, that has begun with this cry “Eli, Eli”, declaring in detail the crucifixion events. It is as if He wished to confirm that what was happening is only of His divine and Godly provision, previously prophesied by the prophets.



Jesus Buried in Joseph’s Tomb secured by Roman guards (27:57-66)

We have not heard of St. Joseph of Arimathea before, for he was a secret disciple to the Lord for fear of the Jews. Joseph and Nicodemus came up to Pilate bravely and asked for the sanctified body. St. Joseph had hewn a tomb for himself in the rock, but he used it for Jesus.

It became the Sabbath at sundown; therefore, Jesus' body was removed from the Cross prior to sundown in accordance with the Law.

“These matters and events have not been planned haphazardly; the body was placed in a new tomb where no one has been put before so that no one would think that the resurrection has been to someone else placed with Him. This is not only to the disciples alone, but also to the enemies as well, by sealing the grave and appointing soldiers to guard Him as witnesses to His burial”. St. John Chrysostom.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Meditations on the Passion of Christ:

1. What had our Lord done, that the Jews should hate Him so much? He was no robber, or murderer. He was no blasphemer of their God, or reviler of their prophets. He was one whose life was love. He was one who "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." He was innocent of any transgression against the law of God or man. And yet the Jews hated Him and killed Him.
2. The catalogue of all the pains endured by our Lord's body is indeed a fearful one. Seldom has such suffering been inflicted on one body in the last few hours of a life. The most savage tribes, in their refinement of cruelty, could not have heaped more agonizing torture on an enemy than were accumulated on the flesh and bones of our beloved Master. Never let it be forgotten that He had a real human body, a body exactly like our own, just as sensitive, just as vulnerable, just as capable of feeling intense pain. And then let us see what that body endured.
3. Our Lord, we must remember, had already passed a night without sleep, and endured excessive fatigue. He had been taken from Gethsemane to the Jewish council, and from the council to Pilate's judgment hall. He had been twice placed on trial, and twice unjustly condemned. He had been already scourged and beaten cruelly with rods.

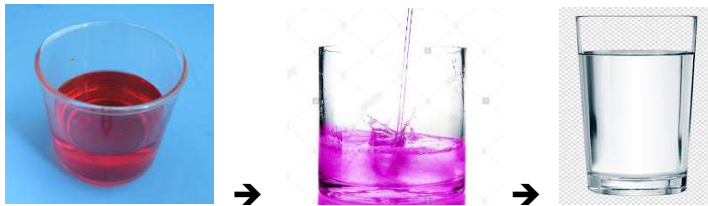


4. And now, after all this suffering He was delivered up to the Roman soldiers, a body of men no doubt expert in cruelty, and of all people least likely to behave with delicacy or compassion. Then harsh men at once proceeded to work their will. They "gathered together the whole band." They stripped our Lord of His clothing, and put on Him, in mockery, a scarlet robe. They platted a crown of sharp thorns and placed it on His head in derision. They then bowed the knee before Him in mockery, as nothing better than a pretended king. They spit upon Him. They smote Him on the head. And finally, having put His own robe on Him, they led Him out of the city, to a place called Golgotha, and there crucified Him between two thieves.
5. But what was a crucifixion? Let us try to realize it and understand its misery. The person crucified was laid on his back on a piece of timber, with a cross-piece nailed to it near one end — or on the trunk of a tree with branching arms, which served the same purpose. His hands were spread out on the cross-piece, and nails driven through each of them, fastening them to the wood. His feet in like manner were nailed to the upright part of the cross. And then, the body having been securely fastened, the cross was raised up and fixed firmly in the

ground. And there hung the unhappy sufferer until pain and exhaustion brought him to his end — not dying suddenly, for no vital part of him was injured — but enduring the most excruciating agony from his hands and feet, and unable to move. Such was the death of the cross. Such was the death that Jesus died for us! For six long hours He hung there before a gazing crowd, naked, and bleeding from head to foot — His head pierced with thorns — His back lacerated with scourging — His hands and feet torn with nails — and mocked and reviled by His cruel enemies to the very last.

6. Let us meditate frequently on these things. Let us often read over the story of Christ's cross and passion. Let us remember, not least, that all these horrible sufferings were borne without a murmur. No word of impatience crossed our Lord's lips. In His death, no less than in His life, He was perfect. To the very last, Satan found nothing in Him.
7. Let us leave the story of our Lord's passion with feelings of deep thankfulness. Our sins are many and great. But a great atonement has been made for them. There was an infinite merit in all Christ's sufferings. They were the sufferings of One who was God as well as man. Surely it is fit, right, and our bounden duty, to praise God daily because Christ has died for us.
8. Last, but not least, let us ever learn from the story of passion, to hate sin with great hatred. Sin was the cause of all our Savior's suffering. Our sins platted the crown of thorns. Our sins drove the nails into His hands and feet. Because of our sins, His blood was shed. Surely the thought of Christ crucified should make us loathe all sin.

“All Clear” game:



- ❖ Fill three clear plastic cups with 8 to 10 ounces of water. Add a small amount of liquid bleach to one of them. You'll also need red and blue food coloring and a clear pitcher or jar to hold the water from all three cups.
- ❖ *Drop four drops of blue food coloring into one cup of plain water.*
- ❖ Say: **When Jesus came into our world, He had to leave His home in heaven [blue skies]**
- ❖ Say: **When Jesus grew up, He suffered and died on a cross.**
- ❖ *Drop four drops of red coloring into the second cup of plain water.*
- ❖ Say: **Red reminds us of the blood Jesus bled and how much he hurt. Pour the two cup at once into the large pitcher or jar.**
- ❖ Washing Our Sins Away
- ❖ Say: **Purple reminds us that Jesus had to leave heaven, come to our world, and become a person like us so He could shed His blood to take away our sins. When Jesus died on the cross, He had done not anything wrong. He was clear and clean just like our last cup.**
- ❖ Pour the bleached water solution into the purple water. Say: **Jesus never sinned. Jesus died on the cross because He loves each of us so much. Keep your eyes on our blue/purple water. It'll become clear.**

Lesson 25: Chapter 28

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_28.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson in Matthew 23, it centers on Jesus condemning the religious hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. He delivers a series of "woes," criticizing their actions, teachings, and motivations, which are driven by a desire for public recognition rather than genuine faith.

Memory verse:

2:6 "But

Lesson opener:

Ask:

Lesson Goal:

God's word in our heart keeps us from sinning.

Lesson body:

Jesus Handed Over to Pontius Pilate (27:1-2)

Bethlehem means:

Jesus' family flees to Egypt to escape Herod (Read 2:13-23)

An angel warns Joseph

The magi visit Jesus (Read 2:1-12)

Bethlehem means:

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The magi visit Jesus (Read 2:1-12)

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Jesus' family flees to Egypt to escape Herod (Read 2:13-23)

An angel warns Joseph

"Fulfillment statements" in St. Matthew's Gospel:

1. Jesus childhood: 1:23; 2:15, 17 1. Jesus childhood: 1:23; 2:15, 17-18, 23

2 Galilean ministry: 4:14 2. Galilean Galilean ministry: ministry: 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17 16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35 21; 13:35

3. Jesus' last week in Jerusalem: 21:4 3. Jesus' last week in Jerusalem: 21:4-5; 27:9 5; 27:9-10

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Joseph obeyed without delay:

Unit 4: [1 lesson]

Chapter 24

Chapter 24

Servant's preparation:

1-A sermon from upper room app about Luke 24

The unexpected: <https://subsplash.com/upperroommedia/lb/mi/+u573sgg>

2-Is the resurrection real?

<https://m.soundcloud.com/copticanswers/is-christs-resurrection-a-real-fact-part-2>

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Luke? He was a doctor, a painter, and a Gentile from Antioch. He accepted Christianity at the hands of St. Paul the apostle later after resurrection.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Greek after collecting testimonies from eyewitnesses to accurately record all details of Jesus's life.
- ✓ What is the main message of the book? ***St Luke offered Jesus to the Greeks as a Lover of mankind***, who cares for the educated and uneducated, the philosopher and the unwise, the rich and the poor, the Jew and the Gentile, the man, the woman and the child.

Remember:

Last lesson we learned from Peter that pride and excessive self-confidence is all what Satan wants, to get us to fall. Satan likes to sift us like wheat, with God's permission, to allow all the weed or unnecessary things to be separated showing the best of what we have, just like Peter after his temptation, He became much stronger and preached boldly.

Main points in the Chapter 24:

- 1- The Empty Tomb 1- 12
- 2- The Amos Disciples 13- 35
- 3- Appearing to His Disciples 36- 43
- 4- Sending His Disciples 44- 49
- 5- His Ascension Into the Heavens 50- 52
- 6- Their Relationship to the Temple 53.

Lesson overview:

Please go over main events of the chapter briefly as follows:

The Empty Tomb 1- 12

- Luke ends the 23rd chapter by noting that the women who had been a part of Jesus' entourage since the days in Galilee followed Joseph of Arimathea as he took Jesus' body and laid it in his own tomb. Since it was late Friday afternoon and the Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown Friday, there was no time to give Jesus' body the proper preparations for burial, which amounted to wrapping the body carefully along with spices and perfumes. So, the women, obedient to the Law, waited until Sunday morning.
- At the first ray of light, the women hurried to the tomb. Mark tells us that on the way they realized that they had no one with them who could roll away the huge stone that sealed the tomb (Mark 16:3).
- The tombs of the rich in Palestine were either natural caves or artificial caves carved out of a mountainside. They were sealed with a huge circular stone that was rolled in front of the mouth of the cave.
- But when the women reached the tomb, they discovered that the stone had already been rolled away. They entered the tomb but found no body. Jesus left the tomb empty, and the stone sealed. This is just as He was born of the Virgin and her virginity was untouched. He sent His angel to roll the stone, so that the believers might find in the empty tomb the deposit of the resurrection. As they were puzzling over this turn of events, two gleaming figures appeared to them (v.4). No doubt the women were terrified because these were no ordinary men.
- The angels said to them the most wonderful words ever spoken on earth: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (vv. 5-6). Then they reminded the women that Jesus had predicted, as long ago as during the days in Galilee, that He would be raised again on the third day. "Then they remembered his words" (v. 8). We can certainly understand why these words had been forgotten in the trauma of the previous days.
- Luke tells us that the women went back to where the Eleven were gathered. (Notice Luke's change in terminology from "the Twelve" to "the Eleven.") That these men were all together indicates that they had regrouped at some point following the Crucifixion. One can only imagine what they had been discussing during the Sabbath.
- The men refused to believe the women's report, labeling their words "nonsense" (v. 11). But Peter, ever the bold in spite of his indiscretion in the high priest's courtyard, ran to the tomb. There he discovered that the women were right: Jesus was not there.

The Amos Disciples 13- 35

- In Acts 1:3, Luke's second volume, Luke indicates that a period of about 40 days passed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, during which time Jesus "spoke about the kingdom of God." We have very little record of these 40 days. In his Gospel, Luke records only three incidents.
- In the first incident we find two of Jesus' disciples, one named Cleopas (v. 18) and the other unnamed, apparently returning to their home village of Emmaus, some assume he could be St.

Luke. Both were believed from the 70 apostles. Emmaus was a small town just seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. These two had apparently stayed in Jerusalem until after the Crucifixion and had not been able to return home because of Sabbath travel restrictions.

- As they were walking on the road, they were joined by a third person. Naturally these two disciples were discussing the events of the past few days. The third individual [Jesus] joined their discussion and began to interpret the incidents they were relating in light of Old Testament prophecy (vv. 25-27). When they reached Emmaus, the two disciples invited him to stay the night with them.
- During their evening meal, Jesus apparently took charge of the supper and "took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them" (v. 30). Perhaps because this was so reminiscent of Jesus' actions during the Passover meal, they suddenly recognized that this individual to whom they had been talking all day was Jesus himself.
- We can only speculate why these two disciples had not recognized Jesus earlier. Perhaps the appearance of the risen Lord was very different. Perhaps God had for some reason prevented them from recognizing Him to get a chance to explain many prophecies to them. But as soon as they did recognize the Christ, He "disappeared from their sight" (v. 31).
- Immediately they headed back for Jerusalem, located the apostles, and told them their story. While they were still relating what had happened to them in Emmaus, Jesus appeared in the room.

Appearing to His Disciples 36- 43

- Understandably the disciples "were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost" (v. 37). Jesus reassured them and allowed them to have physical proof of His reality.
- John, who was present at Jesus' first appearance to the Eleven, even adds the detail that the doors of the room were locked "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). "They were terrified till He gave them peace.
- Even though His wounds were healed, yet their traces were still there! The Lord saw this is useful to the disciples, to keep the scars of His wounds, so the wounds of their souls be healed, and they believe in His resurrection. He was not hungry, but He asked to eat. He thus ate in His authority, not out of necessity, so that the disciples realized the reality of His body.

His Ascension into the Heavens 44- 52

- During the 40 days that Jesus walked among the disciples, He commissioned them as witnesses to carry the message of salvation to all nations (vv. 46-47). After that, He "left them and was taken up into heaven" (v. 51). What is surprising is that the disciples did not grieve over the Lord's ascension, and His being physically separated from them. They rather returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
- In Luke's account of the Ascension in the Book of Acts, he adds the appearance of an angel who promised, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). We know that the disciples lived the

rest of their lives in the daily anticipation of the fulfillment of that promise. And so, have Jesus' disciples for nearly 2,000 years.



Goal we learn:

In this lesson, we will dive into some apologetics to defend the story of resurrection and explain why we believe it is true.

Lesson delivery idea

ENGAGE THE WORD

Will The Real Jesus Please Rise !

This activity begins with an encounter with three imaginary theologians, Rev. Julius Wishyheart, Prof. Malcom Souldeath, and Dr. Herbert Faithstrong.

Rev. Wishyheart represents the viewpoint of the liberal Christian scholar, Prof. Souldeath represents the viewpoint of the skeptic, and Dr. Faithstrong represents the viewpoint of the orthodox Christian.

Ask three of your youths in advance to be prepared to read these three theological statements or, for fun, have youth role-play the theologians. Will the Real Jesus Please Rise:

Well, let's listen to them as they express their views on what happened after the Crucifixion:

1. Rev. Julius Wishyheart: At some point soon after Jesus' death, after the disciples had recovered from their initial shock and grief, they began to reflect on all that Jesus had taught them. It was at that point that they realized that He had not really left them. His inspiration would always be with them. And because He was God and had returned to eternity to join the God the father. To express this concept, and especially to teach it to new converts, they created parables, just as Jesus had done like The parable of the Ascension. The last chapter of Luke is true, but not literal. The things described there did not literally happen, but the ideas they illustrate are true. The Christ is alive in God and in our hearts.

2. Prof. Malcolm Soul-death: Obviously, Jesus, having royally botched his life, wound up being executed by the Romans with the blessing of the Jewish leaders. The disciples—poor, naive dupes that they were—could not bear to admit their stupidity and failure and return to their homes in Galilee. So, in the days following the Crucifixion, while they were hiding from the Jews like cowards, they cooked up the story of the Resurrection. Somehow, they convinced other simple people that they were telling the truth. They told this story enough times that they probably began to believe it themselves. And this story became the foundation for the church, which has perpetuated the mythology of Jesus for some 2,000 years.

3. Dr. Herbert Faithstrong: Jesus was right when He said that only those who have the childlike qualities of faith and trust can enter the Kingdom. If God is who we believe Him to be, if He could create the universe, if He is omnipresent and omnipotent, what is so hard about believing that He could raise Jesus from the dead? Neither of your theories, Rev. Wishy-heart, and Prof. Souldeath, explains the incredible change that occurred in the disciples in just a matter of days. No lie could take the cowardly Peter and turn him into the dynamic Peter who boldly preached in Jerusalem just a few weeks later. No myth could take the band of frightened, defeated, and demoralized disciples and turn them into giants who turned the entire known world upside down in a matter of a few years. Only the supernatural power of God, shown in the resurrection of the Christ, could cause that!

Well, who do you believe this time?

The youth will probably select the third one since it is the one they have heard all their lives. But press them to support their choice: Why do they agree with Dr. Faithstrong? Why do they think his position is superior to the other two? Why do they believe the other two are wrong? Let us explore the validity of resurrection.



Is the bible true?



We believe in the resurrection because it was documented in the bible but how do we know if the bible is reliable? Do we have an accurate copy of the original New Testament?

- No, but manuscripts [copies] are found from the mid-first century.
- No ancient work is even close in terms of manuscript support of the NT.
- The whole NT could be reconstructed by thousands of quotations used by early church fathers.
- At least 10 ancient non-Christians writers referred to Jesus within 150 years of His life.

Are the writers of the New Testament eyewitnesses?

- Yes, all NT writers record same basic events with different details. They cite at least 30 real historical figures, confirmed by ancient non-Christians and archaeology.
- Luke refers to many historically confirmed details in His gospel and Acts. Both were written within the first 70 years AD. If any reference was made up, contemporary people would have complained.
- Those writers gained nothing out of their faith in what they wrote and preached but they lost their own lives; this proves their honest testimony.

Did Jesus really die on the cross?



- It was researched by physicians and scholars. **Scourging** by Roman soldiers is an extremely cruel punishment that many die from it on its own.
- Jesus was nailed to the cross through His wrist and with every breath, He needs to pull on the nail in His feet to ease the stretched muscles and allow air in which is accompanied by severe pain. The breathing process continues until the person is too exhausted to breath in and die of **cardiac arrest**.
- Jesus's **legs weren't broken** because He was dead. No one can argue that those soldiers were experienced in identifying a dead person and know they would be killed if a crucified person escaped death.
- If we were to assume Jesus had escaped death on the cross and came out of the tomb, He would have been **handicapped and would not impress** His disciples to witness for Him. The opposite happened

Was Jesus's body really not in the tomb on Sunday morning?

- Being buried by Joseph of Arimathea could not be made up by gospel writers because he was a popular Jewish figure that everyone would notice if not true.
- We are sure there were guards either Roman or Jewish guarding the tomb or else the Jewish leaders would not have confirmed their presence by claiming they were asleep when the disciples stole the body.
- 24: 12 "Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves." If the disciples had stolen the body, they would not have folded the linens, but they would have stolen the body as quickly as possible.



Did Jesus rise from the dead?



What if the disciples were deceived that they saw Him after He rose as the atheist professor said?

As we know that no one was at the tomb while Jesus was rising but like any event, we have evidences for its occurrence even without seeing it. We know He died on the cross as proven by the physicians then we have eyewitnesses who saw Him after His resurrection. Why were they not hallucinating?

1. The early Christians could not have been hallucinating as a group over 500 could not imagine the same exact event.
2. The early movement of Christianity spreading in many countries shows that people have been convinced and touched by that faith to the extent of death.
3. No one in the first century would have believed in Jesus as God unless they were sure He rose from the dead.
4. The empty tomb is verified even by Jesus's enemies.
5. Jesus is not a legendary, but a true story and He was referred to by many non-Christians as a great teacher. If He is a great teacher, He could not have lied when He claimed He is God or else everyone would have called Him a crazy man, not a great wonder maker and teacher. He fulfilled numerous prophecies written hundreds of years before Him, He performed miracles and lived a sinless life. Finally, Jesus predicted and accomplished His own resurrection.

Take home Prayer

Thank you, dear Lord, for dying on the cross for my salvation. Thank you for giving me the joy of The Resurrection to make me feel the victory over death. Not only that, but we have many evidence for the truth of the bible that we can rely on and debate against the published thoughts around us trying to shake our faith. Let us have the faith of a rock that can never be moved by anything till the last breath.

Memory Verse: *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen!” 24:5-6*

BIBLE LESSON DELIVERY MAIN PARTS

