



6th Grade Bible Study

November 7, 2008

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NAME

LESSON ONE

What makes Matthew special? The Gospel According to Matthew is probably best known for what is known as the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7), which includes many familiar teachings of Jesus such as the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the Golden Rule. However, this particular Gospel is significant for a number of other reasons as well.

- Matthew has a distinct genealogy for Jesus (1:1-17, cf., Luke 3:23-38), which is tied directly to Matthew's particular theology, and which emphasizes Jesus' Jewish heritage and his intimate connection to the royal lineage of David
- Matthew provides the most detailed description of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (4:1 - 11)
- Matthew includes no less than nine parables not found anywhere else in the New Testament:
 - The Weeds (13:24 - 30)
 - The Hidden Treasure (13:44)
 - The Pearl (13:45,46)
 - The Dragnet (13:47 - 50)
 - The Storekeeper (13:52)
 - The Unforgiving Servant (18:23-35)
 - The Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)
 - The Two Sons (21:28-31a)
 - The Ten Virgins (25:1-12)

In Matthew, everything happens as a result of divine plan—the Gospel contains no less than ten “fulfillment citations” where Jesus is depicted as “fulfilling” prophecy, either in terms of prediction or in the sense of giving meaning to events that foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah (1:22; 2:5, 15, 17, 23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; and 27:9. Cf., 3:15; 13:14; 26:54, 56).

Why was Matthew written? The author of Matthew had the task of “explaining how Jesus could be the glorious and powerful Messiah of the Jews when he was known to have experienced a public humiliation and ignominious death by crucifixion. The author does this, in part, by turning to certain passages in the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate the numerous ways in which Jesus fit the profile of the Messiah that was to come. The author of Matthew fits Jesus to the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible just as much as he simultaneously fits those prophecies to Jesus (cf. Hebrews). The primary way in which the author accomplishes this is by depicting Jesus as a “new Moses” or the “prophet like Moses” that was to come (see Deuteronomy 18:15 - 19). As such, Jesus is understood to be the “true and final interpreter” of

the Law. He fulfills and follows the Law perfectly and expects his disciples to do likewise. This is not to say that Jesus replaces Moses; but rather, believers follow Moses by following Jesus. Throughout his Gospel, Matthew works diligently to emphasize Jesus' Jewish heritage, the apocalyptic nature of his message, and the antagonism between him and those who opposed and ultimately rejected him.

What's the story behind the scene? The author of Matthew is unknown to us. Although church tradition has, for centuries, identified him as the tax collector mentioned in 9:9, there is no strong evidence to support such a claim. It seems evident, however, that the author himself was Greek and that he wrote for a Jewish Greek - speaking community and thus one located somewhere outside of Palestine. The author drew heavily upon the Gospel of Mark as a source in the composition of his Gospel, but he modified and expanded a number of the stories, and it appears that he used at least one additional source as well. Most scholars date the Gospel of Matthew sometime during the last 10 to 20 years of the first century, though a few place it as late as the early part of the second century.

How is Matthew constructed? There are a number of ways that one might outline the Gospel of Matthew. The following focuses specifically on Matthew's story of Jesus.

- The appearance of Israel's Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God (1:1-4:16)
- The Messiah's ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (4:17-11:1)
- Israel's opposition to the Messiah's ministry and the establishment of a new community (11:2 - 16:20)
- The destiny of the Messiah to suffer, die, and rise from the dead in order to complete his mission (16:21 - 20:34)
- The final rejection, death, and vindication of the Messiah, and the Messiah's commission to his disciples to teach to all nations (21:1 - 28:20)

An important feature of Matthew's narrative is the emphasis placed on Jesus' teaching. This characteristic is demonstrated structurally by means of five teaching blocks (cf. the Torah or Law, i.e., often referred to as the “Five Books of Moses”):

- Chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount
- Chapter 10, teachings on the work of missions



- Chapter 13, parables on the kingdom of God
- Chapter 18, teachings on discipleship
- Chapters 24 - 25, the Mount of Olives discourse on the end of the age

END OF LESSON ONE

LESSON TWO

Genealogy [Matthew 1:1 - 17] - Matthew starts his gospel with a seemingly dry and boring discourse to which we may say, “What’s up with this string of names?” However, this is a list of people—people like us who testify to how God works through the ages, through various people and through circumstances. This even tells us how God redeems and works with and through not only the people we may expect Him to, but also the unlikely people we would perhaps never consider as worthy. Jesus comes from an incredible line of diverse people, such as Patriarchs and kings whom we might expect; in addition, listed beside Him are righteous people as well as those who were improbable, dubious, and even wicked, such as captives, the obscure, and the insignificant—even traders, prisoners, adulterers, and murderers.

This is a testimony and a testament of how God keeps His great promises, and shows Christ’s right to the Kingship of the world through the lineage of David. Jesus is the King! And, the King has arrived! This is the anticipation from the very beginnings of God’s introduction into humanity, through Adam and Eve’s failure and sin, and God’s promises to bring redemption through their descendants—a Savior to save us from our fall into sin. Here is that list (Gen. 3). A key point for us is that God made promises—and God keeps His promises!

Genealogy in Luke - There are several theories regarding the difference between the genealogies of Luke and Matthew. The prevailing view is that Matthew shows Joseph’s lineage, and Luke shows Mary’s, descending from David through his son Nathan.

Luke goes back to Adam (Luke 3:23 - 38), while Matthew comes through Solomon and goes to Abraham. Only principle names were used, and that is why they are different. Obviously, not all of the names of people could be used. Such omissions were the normal practice in Jewish genealogies as minor figures were deleted to make room for established, essential connections.

The most likely scenario is that Matthew does not give direct ancestors, but rather the names of

those who are “legally” in line to the throne, while Luke gives direct ancestry names. Both start with David. One is from the “flesh” while the other is from the “legal.”

What can we learn today from an obscure list of ancient names, of which only a few may be familiar? Salvation is not by birth or lineage; it is by what God has done and by the faith He gives that we receive; Christ had to intervene in history and in us personally. Perhaps, this passage is a small glance into the mystery and wonder of God’s Grace and incarnation, and how He intercedes and loves. It all points us to Christ, the One who saved us and the One whom we worship and trust as Lord over all—with our lives too!

Take this key point to heart and into the streets of your life: God is the God of promises. God made promises, and God keeps His promises! This means for you too! Jesus the King, who was also the son of David and the son of Abraham, fulfilled that promise and demonstrated this faith! Jesus is the ultimate humbler; He humbled Himself by taking on the likeness of a mere man; He was still also fully God when He came to this earth. He is God, Messiah, the Lord who was foretold and who has come, our Lord, our Savior and the King (Phil. 2:5 - 8; Heb. 2:9 - 18)!



Review Questions

- 1) Have you ever researched your family tree? How far back can you trace your family? What does knowing your family history tell you about whom you are? What did your family pass on to you (consider genetics, behaviors, culture, etc.)?
- 2) How can knowing the stories behind the people in this genealogy—all of the adventures, faith, struggles, and such—inspire you?

END OF LESSON TWO

LESSON THREE

Infancy Narratives [Matthew 1:18 - 2:23] - Normally, two human parents who are born in sin and without divine intervention conceive a person. Christ was not just born; He came into our world as a man—as a baby, no less! He was brought into this world as any baby would be; with the extreme exception that Mary did not have normal sexual relations to conceive Him! Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, He was pre-existent, and He was sinless. He has the title and name of Immanuel, meaning “God with us,” inferring that He is our salvation. For us, this means that Jesus is with us, because as God, He was, and is able to take our sins upon Himself and appease God’s wrath because of our sin. He is

“God with us,” because He walked, lived, worked, and existed in all aspects as any human ever has. He became identified as one of us while still remaining God, the Creator of us! Jesus is both God and man; He is not a hybrid like Hercules, nor a percentage of one over the other; He is fully God and fully human.

The Real Living Nativity [Matthew 2:1 - 12] -

This passage depicted for many centuries to countless people the classic Christmas scene. Wise men guided by a star sought out the new King. Uproun occurs that causes Joseph to flee with his new wife and child far away from his home, work, relationships and family. All because Christ is God incarnate and demands a response from His creation. So we all respond to Him in various ways. The response to Christ’s birth in 2 or 3 BC—the universe responded with a star, the gentiles responded with honor, and the Jewish rulers responded by trying to kill Him. How do you respond?

Fight and Flight: Jesus, “The Early Years” [Matthew 2:13 - 23] -

Jesus always invokes a response, if not in this life, then, in the life to come, from every person who has ever lived. We either accept Him or reject Him; we will fight against Him, or devote our lives to please Him. Herod had the incredible opportunity to be one of the first people to give such a response; however, he chose fear and deception as his appropriate reaction to the newborn King. Joseph had to respond, too. Joseph’s response was to take his family and travel to a foreign land, away from family, friends, and work, all that he knew. It required great faith and trust twice, once to flee, and then to come back. We do not know much of Jesus’ early years, only Matthew and Luke record something about the first thirty years. Matthew’s concern was to point out the events, predicted by the prophets, which prove Jesus to be the Messiah, as his audience was the Jews.

Review Questions

1. What do you think of Joseph’s character, and his reaction to Mary’s pregnancy? How does God provide you with opportunities and situations to better yourself? What gets in the way of your seeing them? What about our habits of not looking or being so consumed by past experiences, expectations, and/or hurts that we refuse to strive in our faith?

2. Joseph was willing to bear ridicule from his family and village because of Mary. He could have put her away, but he did not. Why?
3. Are you ready to receive the reality of who Jesus is? How did Joseph decide to obey God and trust in Him rather than in his cultural peer pressure? What does this mean for you?
4. Why is the Virgin Birth important?

END OF LESSON THREE

LESSON FOUR

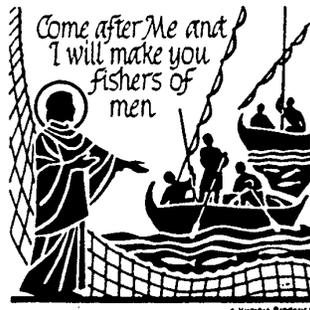
Baptism & Temptation in the Desert [Mt. 3:1 – 4:11] - (Also in Mark 1:1 - 11; Luke 3:1 - 22; John 3:22 - 36)

The Baptism of Jesus [Matthew 3:13 - 17] - By the river Jordan a strange figure named John the Baptist proclaiming repentance prepares for the coming Messiah. This event served as the climax to John’s ministry, and the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The setting is the area frequented by major Biblical events. This was the area where Abraham built altars to God, and where Jacob saw the ladder

to Heaven. Just to the south is where the once fertile valley and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were judged and destroyed, where nothing grows even today. Just to the east is the mountain Nebo where God shows Moses the land and the future of Israel, where also he dies and is buried. This was the spot where the waters divided for Joshua on Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land and just to the west was Jericho,

where walls fell down. This is where birds fed Elijah and where the chariots of God carried him away to Heaven. And this is the spot where Jesus was facing his 40-day temptation and then goes to a bewildered John to be baptized!

The Temptation of Jesus [Matthew 4:1 - 11] - Jesus is led out into the desert to be tempted by Satan with the destiny of His creation and humanity at stake. During this time, He fasted and remained true and loyal to who He was and to His mission to come. Satan pulls out all of his efforts and abilities in a futile attempt to convince Jesus to serve him. In so doing, Jesus would receive greater honor and glory faster by having more control. The problem is that Jesus was already fully God, thus had total sovereignty, glory, and control. Satan based his attack on what he thought would be Jesus’ greatest weakness, His humanity. However, Satan failed, as Christ, using His humanity and not His divinity as identification and model for us, defeated Satan’s attack through Scripture, the Spirit, prayer, and



obedience. (3:13 - 17; also in Mark 1:12 - 13; Luke 4:1 - 13)

Review Questions

1. Why do you think John chose the location for his preaching and baptizing?
2. If you were John how would you have handled Jesus' request, considering you were baptizing for repentance and He was free of sin? Why did Jesus submit to John's Baptism?
3. Why would it be wrong for a Christian to act one way on Sunday and another on Monday? If it is wrong, why do so many do it?
4. Why do you suppose the Spirit led Jesus to be tempted?
5. Even the devil cannot stop God's plan for us. So, how does this passage affect spiritual warfare?
6. Have you ever considered that when someone misuses Scripture they are modeling Satan?

END OF LESSON FOUR

LESSON FIVE

Jesus begins His public ministry [Matthew 4:12 - 17] - The backdrop is the area of Nazareth, which people thought for centuries was a small agricultural village. Recent archeology digs have found it actually to have been a large city 20 miles from Capernaum, which too has been found to be much larger than previously thought. It seems the Herodic kings had built a very large city hub at both places, which were also "motel" centers for Gentile travelers. It was this area that Jesus had spent the past 30 years of His earthly life experiencing humanity, all that man is, does, goes through, and can become. Then, He fulfilled His duty in baptism, and the Triune God acknowledged and endorsed who He is and what He will do. Then, Jesus defeated Satan in round one, and now set out on a journey to Galilee to invade Satan's territory. It is here that our Lord embarked on His mission to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven.

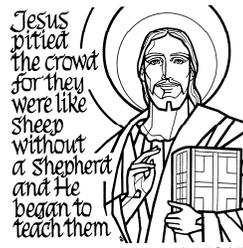
Becoming Fishers of Men (4:18 - 22) - An uncommonly incredible, strange, and insightful person approached a small group of young fishermen working in their family fishing business to challenge them to make a life changing decision. They were in wonder of this Man's teaching, and the miracle of the fish as recorded by Luke that was performed for them. Their substance and living depended on fishing. They provided a much needed and vital food to their region—fish—which they caught with nets suspended from the back of their boats. The floats and weights that spread out the nets

to catch as many as possible as they rowed in the Sea of Galilee, was done much the same as fishing boats operate today. Then the fish were dried, cured with salt or pickled to preserve them, and then sold. They were perhaps in a business that provided them with a much higher standard of living than many other people around them. A call was extended to them and a response was given, a call without irresistible pressure, yet with passion and conviction. "Follow me." That call was unprecedented in their culture and understanding. Normally a student would seek out a teacher, a Rabbi. A Rabbi would never seek students, as it was a pride issue. Jesus broke the pride and arrogance to model that we are to be seekers of disciples and not just wait for them to come. We are to challenge each other to leave our comfort zone and enter the realm of His worship and service.

Jesus went throughout the region and into the synagogues proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand (Matt. 4:17; 4:23). However, public preaching was not His main goal or reason for doing so! Jesus' main goal for His interrelations with humanity was "disciple-ing" above any other activity (Matt. 9:9)! Jesus taught the need for repentance publicly. He further taught and challenged His disciples, both personally and systematically that Christianity does not end at repentance and conversion—it begins there!

Because of His primary goal of molding disciples, Jesus went directly and personally to call those with whom He wanted to work. He took them from the normal ways of life. He did not go to the universities or synagogues, but literally to the "man on the street." Jesus built His own group of select "disciples." He called Peter and Andrew (Matt. 4:18 - 20). He called James and John (Matt. 4:21 - 22). He called Matthew (Matt. 9:9). The rest are chosen (Mark 3:13 - 19; Luke 6:12 - 19). He sent them out (Matt. 10:1 - 15). Jesus ended His time on earth with an imperative command for them to make more disciples (Matt. 28:19 - 20), which is also our call!

What is a disciple? - Jesus said, "Follow Me" (Matt. 4:19; 9:9). Jesus did not mean that they should just physically follow Him on the road. They were set apart, challenged, and taught their call and mission. Just as they had worked at catching fish, now they would be catching men (Luke 6:39 - 40)! The word "disciple" literally means someone who pledges to be a "learner." Moreover, it is someone who follows another's teaching, and adheres to it. It is a commitment and a process. It involves



commitment, and time to undertake the learning, and, as a Christian, a yearning to imitate Jesus! Discipleship is also reciprocal, that is, when one learns, he/she makes the commitment to train someone else. That is what Jesus meant by, "I will make you fishers of men." It is not just catching them and then storing them (fish were processed and sold for the battement and use of the community); it is training, and placing, so they, too, can catch, train, and place! Discipleship is the primary earthly goal of the Church as a whole, and the Christian as an individual. It is our duty, and the one thing Christ directly commands us to do (Matt. 28:19 - 20). In so doing, we will become like Him in character and share His outlook and concerns (Luke 6:39 - 40). We are never to make disciples in our image, like whom we are, how we think, feel, and act, but like Christ! It all comes down to a decision. Will we make our faith real and impacting, relinquishing our pride to allow us to learn and grow, and in turn teach others, or will we plant our rears in the pew, so that our only impact is our butt print in that pew!

Christ the Traveler and Healer [Matthew 4:23 - 25] - This passage summarizes Jesus teaching and touching ministry to the people, which sets us up for the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord traveled all through Capernaum and Galilee teaching, ministering, healing the multitudes, and training His disciples. He did not wait for people to come to Him; He was the Itinerant preacher going to the people, where they were. Making the ultimate act of humility as God incarnate lowering Himself on so many levels on so many occasions from becoming one of us and then seeking us! He was moved by compassion to minister to the physical needs of the people. He did not merely address the metaphysical and spiritual without being there physically, getting His hands dirty. He was face to face with our depravity and hopeless needy state, a people who mostly sought Him for what they could get from Him, uninterested in things eternal only in the now, only interested in His service and not His salvation. Seeking the free gifts and not the Gift Giver! Yet, He persevered to the cross for the ungrateful stiff neck people we are!

Review Questions:

1. Have you thought through the fact that Jesus, the Disciples, and Paul spent considerable time in preparation for their public ministries? How does it affect you that many people today will start preaching and teaching God's Word

without or with very little learning, training, or preparation?

2. What is the role of repentance? Why would repentance give glory to our Lord?
3. Do you think repentance is as needed today, if not more so, than in Jesus' time? Then, why do most churches fail to proclaim and teach this?
4. What is a disciple to you? Does my saying that Jesus' main goal or reason was the importance of discipleship, which outweighed His preaching, surprise you? Why, or why not?
5. Look at a Bible map and see how far people traveled to see Jesus. Keep in mind they had no means of transportation other than their two feet. What would their journey have been like? What do you think their expectations were? Why do you suppose Jesus never stayed in one place very long?

END OF LESSON FIVE

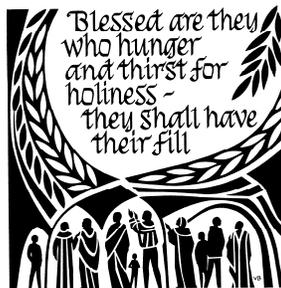
LESSON SIX

Sermon on the Mount [Mt. 5 - 7] - Christ is the Teacher, but He is not only a Teacher! If we see Him only as a teacher, we will become flustered by being totally unable to do as He instructs. He has set a standard that we could never meet on our own. What point could there be to a Christian life and Church if Christ is just a teacher? What point would there be to a sermon that cannot be followed, or as some proclaim, does not even apply to us until Christ comes back! When we have the notion that we can carry the Lord's message and work without His inward work in us, we will fail and be a

hindrance. Then, we will not be the blessing we are called to be. We have to see Christ as our Savior and Provider, so we can respond in character and actions. We cannot do this just out of duty or obligation, but from a heart that is transformed. None of these blessing components could work if all we have is a lesson. They must be manufactured from within us by the raw materials He gives us. We become the factory of blessing by receiving Him, modeling Him, and in turn helping others build their own factory. These 'beatitude factories' do not just proclaim what He teaches, but also actually become what He teaches!

Sermon on the Mount Ponderings...

- Significance of the multitude?
- Significance of the mountain? (Exodus 19:3)
- Who came unto him (up the mountain)?
Disciples = learners*



- What are some parallels between Christ and Moses?
- Jesus sits – this is a traditional teaching posture, and thus he assumes the authority of a teacher. See 7:29
- What does the Sermon on the Mount teach about grace and works?

Overall structure of the sermon:

- I. Introduction 5:3 - 16 Beatitudes
- II. Main Section 5:17 to 17:12
 - B. Antitheses 5:21 – 48
 - C. True Motivation 6:1 – 18
 - D. Some applications 6:19 - 7:12
 - E. Key summary: 7:12 => Matt. 22:34 – 40
- III. Epilogue 7:13 - 29 Way of Life and Way of Death

Review Questions:

- 1) What does mercy look like in your life? Where does it come from? Have you experienced the mercy of God this week...and remembered to thank him for it?
- 2) How is your seasoning? What do you do to be a positive influence to those around you?
- 3) Why is salt and light essential to life? Why is it essential to the life of the Church? Why did Jesus use this illustration to apply the Beatitudes?
- 4) Why would Jesus warn us against losing our ability to be flavoring and preserving? After all how many Christians do you think actually follow this passage, is it a big deal, does it apply to me?
- 5) As Christians what does it mean that we are the light for the world? We as citizens of the kingdom we are called to give the world "flavor" where must that flavor come from and how can you make sure it keeps coming and not lose its enhancing and preserving ability?
- 6) We have to find a way to influence the world without being influenced negatively by their sin and corruption. So what are three ways your church can do this?
- 7) We are to also influence creation that is the environment for the positive! Yet many Christians ignore this. How can you make sure you and your church do not ignore God's creation and your role to be good stewards of it?
- 8) Do you like to watch movies and TV shows that have a revenge premise to them? If so, what would that movie be like, and would it be interesting, if the main character held to the precepts of this passage?
- 9) What do you think the motivations were of the teachers of the law who twisted and contorted what the law said to serve their own agenda?
- 10) How do you regard the Sermon on the Mount? Is it an ethical blueprint for contemporary life? Or is it a utopian vision for the future? Or is it perhaps a revolutionary political agenda of a now distant culture and history? Does it apply to everyone? Or is it directed only at those within the kingdom of God? What is the basis for your interpretation and what are its implications?

END OF LESSON SIX

LESSON SEVEN

Jesus as Healer [Matthew 8 – 9] - The main

thing: Jesus demonstrating the nearness of the Kingdom by defeating death 'before the time'...Remember 4:23... As you read, fill in the table...

	Before	After
A man with skin disease (8:2)		
A Centurion's servant (8:6)		
Peter's mother - in - law (8:14)		
Two demoniacs (8:28)		
A paralytic (9:2)		
An unnamed little girl (9:18)		
An unnamed woman with bleeding (9:20)		
Two blind men (9:27)		
A mute demoniac (9:32)		

Discussion questions

1. How can we keep our eyes open to the reality of death?
2. We know about *The Resurrection!* But which camp will we join?

END OF LESSON SEVEN



LESSON EIGHT

The Missionary Discourses

[Matthew 10 - 14] - After telling His disciples to "pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (9:38), Jesus then send His disciples out to the fields. Matthew chapter ten comprises the second of the five great discourses in the Gospel, sometimes called the "Missionary Discourse." Jesus first gives chooses twelve of His disciples to send, He gives them authority, and then sends them forth. In this chapter He is instructing them and preparing them for the opposition the Gospel always faces.

Key Verse - "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town." Matthew 10:14 (NIV)

Jesus' Disciples Become the Twelve Apostles (10:1 - 15) – The Twelve. The chapter begins with Jesus calling the twelve to Him and giving them authority (exousia, not power) to cast out demons and to heal all kinds of sicknesses, the same authority that Jesus had demonstrated in chapter 9. Unlike power, authority may be transferred. Authority concerns office and vocation while power is intrinsic to the self. Matthew then lists the twelve who had been conferred this authority. It is illustrative to compare the list with those in Mark (3:13 - 19) and Luke (6:12 - 16): Peter is always first, and Judas is always last. We assume that

Bartholomew is also named Nathaniel, and is Philip's brother whose call is recounted in John 1:43 - 51. Notice how Matthew alone adds to his name "the publican," showing both great humility and thankfulness to God. Thaddeus apparently had two other names: Lebbaeus and Jude (the brother of James, we assume that this is the second James, the son of Alphaeus). One easy way to remain the names of the 12...

B – Bartholomew (Nathaniel)

A – Andrew

P – (Simon) Peter and Phillip

T – Thaddeus (Jude) and Thomas

I – James and John, sons of Zebedee, Judas Iscariot, and James the Lesser

S – Simon the Zealot

M – Matthew

Sent - The Greek word for "send" is *apostelo* (here *apve,steilen*), **apostle**. This is the same word from which we get the word "postal"...so an apostle is like a letter from their teacher. The disciples are hearers and followers, the apostles are sent. There sending here is a temporary commission, before the ascension it will be timeless. Jesus gives the Twelve very specific instructions:

1. Where to go (to whom) - 10:6 - 7
2. What to do - 10:7 - 8
3. What to bring - 10:9 - 10
4. What to do upon arrival and departure - 10:11 - 15
5. What to expect - 10:16 - 31

First, we notice the difference between the send here and the send at the end of the Gospel. After His ascension Jesus sends the Twelve "to all the nations," here it is *not* to the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (compare to 9:36). The Twelve disciples are to go only to the Twelve tribes. The Gospel is always first to Jerusalem and then to Samaria and the ends of the earth. See also what these Twelve are to be doing: preaching that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (see 3:2; 4:17), and healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead(!) and casting out demons. All this is a gift, given to them that they are to give away. The miracles always accompany the apostolic preaching to comfort the hearers. The signs show that the Twelve have been given the authority to preach. This is necessary because the apostles have an "immediate call," like the prophets they are called directly by God without means.

Confess Christ Before Men (10:32 - 42) – At the end of chapter ten, Jesus speaks of confession. "Whoever confesses Me before men..." The word

"confess" is the Greek *homologeō* (here *o`mologh,sei*), to say the same thing or echo back or agree. We confess when we say what we have heard, when we agree with God.

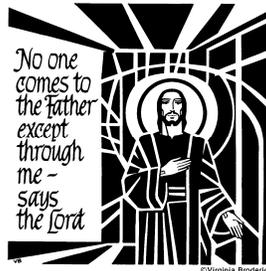
John the Baptist: More Than a Prophet [Matthew 11:1 - 19] - The idea of who and what a Messiah was and was to do was a big controversy in the first century. John the Baptist sits in a prison cell because of the actions of corrupt religious leaders and a cruel king. He dedicated his life to be the herald; forsaking all he knew, friends, family, status, and comfort to bring the message that God had given him. Now, because of his efforts, he is on a dirt floor awaiting his impending death—and he sends two of his disciples to make sure all was not in vain, that what he did was worth it. Then Jesus answers John's disciples with what they observed. Jesus then tells His disciples how wonderful and important John was.

Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath! [Matthew 12:1 - 8] - The religious leaders were looking for another opportunity to put Jesus on the spot to try to

prove He was a fake. So, Jesus gave them their chance and turned their condescending remarks into a testimony of His deity. He pointed out their assumptions and doctrinal errors and showed them the Truth. These religious leaders took the rest that God gave them in the Sabbath, and turned it into more work and burdens for the people. When they sought God's rest, the leaders forced

them to endure more hardships, and burdened them with legalism. A problem then, it still goes on today. What a tragedy it is for those to take your earned and deserved day off, and turn it into more chores for you while placing a bag on their heads so they cannot see the Lord. Traditions and assumptions became the focus of devotion and worship, not the Eternal God who gives hope and rest. Do not allow legalism and faulty thinking take your eyes off the rest that Jesus gives; He is the Rest, He is our Temple, He is the Lord, and He is our Comfort!

The Parable of the Sower [Matthew 13:1 - 23] - General Idea: This passage is the "Third Great Disclosure" of Matthew (See Matthew Background Material), and starts a series of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven, and how God works both in the Universe, and in our hearts. The Parable of the Sower is one of my favorite parables, as it explains how God is working in our lives, and, yet, how we try to keep Him out. In this parable, God is holding up a mirror to show us our real heart. What is inside of you? He is looking for faith, for authenticity, for



Fruit, for a soul who cries out to Him, so He can grow His seed in us. God also desires to multiply His seed so He can be made known to others. He is looking to see where His Word has fallen on you. How is His Word being used?

God scatters His Word in the world by planting it in our hearts. As with any agricultural endeavor, the goal is to reap the harvest, take the fruit, and let it be used. Yet, so much can stop the seeds from germinating; and, if they do germinate, their growth can easily be stifled by bad soil, weather, insufficient water and fertilizer, and negligence. The young plants can be trampled on, and, be pulled up, mistaken for weeds. Thus, when we are aware of what prevents a good harvest, we can work harder to remove the obstacles, and, be diligent to create a good harvest. It is the same with our Spiritual growth; when we know what holds us back, we can strive to push forward in our maturity and sanctification. Is His Word on His path, and, in nutritious soil, or choked off by the weeds?

John the Baptist is Martyred [Matthew 14:1 - 12] - Who is this Jesus? John the Baptist caused quite a stir in the Herodian household. He cut across his social and cultural status and directly challenged Herod Antipas the Tetrarch (ruling governor of Israel), who was the son of "Herod the Great." Antipas divorced his wife and married his niece, Herodias, who was also married to his brother, Philip. This is the stuff that even American soap operas do not touch—incest combined with adultery. The reason why John verbally pronounced judgment? Because, they were still Jews, bound to the law, and representing the Jewish nation—just as its former leaders who were steeped in sin. Perhaps this scandalous deed was hidden from the public, and somehow John found out by a "word of knowledge," which is basically an insight or proclamation from God. Thus, the public now had knowledge of this scandal; John just blew the whistle and aired their dirty laundry. The result is the entire Herodian household went to war with Israel's most popular sideshow, John the Baptist. Even though John was very popular and Herod seemed to like him by both fear and novelty, he subjected himself to family pressure and imprisoned John.

Later, at a dinner feast for Herod's birthday, where many guests and dignitaries were, he was tricked into having John killed because of his boasting and pride. Herodias' daughter—probably his brother's daughter danced, and received his attention and blessing. Her mother asked for revenge

against John, so John's head was brought to them. Then, when Jesus shows up, performing miracles and getting even more popular than John, Herod becomes fearful that this may be John the Baptist coming back from the dead to get him.

Review Questions

1. John did not doubt Jesus; he just wanted some reassurance as to what was going on. What reassures you when you have doubt or concern? How and why does Jesus reply to John's concerns? A lot of people give promises for their answers. What does Jesus do? How can this be a model on how you respond to people?
2. All too often, Christians only see God's Grace. How does knowing that God is a God of judgment, as well as a God of holiness and righteousness affect your faith and obedience? What happens to a Christian's growth and faith when all he acknowledges is God's grace, and not the rest of His attributes?
3. When, and how have you judged others? If you do not think you have, what about when you passed your Will and agenda onto others? What was the effect? What should you have done?
4. What can you do to take to heart in a deeper way that God is more concerned with your obedience than your knowledge? Why is it so important to live by the example you preach or claim to have? What happens when we do not?
5. What does the term seed mean to you? Where is your seed in this parable? How does this parable explain how God works in the Universe and in our hearts? Explain what the Path, Rocks, Thorns, and Good is in your life and experiences?



END OF LESSON EIGHT

LESSON NINE

Jesus Confronts the Hypocritical Pharisees [Matthew 15:1 - 20] - Jesus confronted, head on, the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who have elevated their traditions over honoring and knowing God. This infuriated our Lord who called them to task and gave them up to themselves by saying, let them alone, which means, let their own evil ways bury them. Total condemnation! They had their chance to repent, but, the hardness of their will and the focus of their pride alienated them from the very thing they said they were honoring! Their traditions clouded them and their people from knowing the real

God! Why such a strong stance from our Lord? Because, rituals and traditions can easily become equal to or have even more authority to men than God and His Word. They can elevate what is not important over what is!

Seeking a Sign [Matthew 16:1 - 12] - The Pharisees were hounding Jesus for more miracles to prove who He was. Even though Jesus gave them miracles that were greater than even Moses had shown, their faith was absent and their focus was skewed. The leaders were so concerned with appearances and their made - up doctrine they could not, nor wanted to see the real Truth. They interpreted and applied their ideas and judgments from the Law, but did not understand His plain truth as revealed in the Scriptures. So, they focused on trivial matters and burdened the people with silly laws that were not scriptural. They became obstacles to the truth and facilitators of confusion. They literally believed, with passion, the weather report based on superstitions, but not God's Word based on fact! They could see the sky and predict tomorrow's errands, but were unwilling to see God at work or His plan.

The Transfiguration! [Matthew 17:1 - 13] - Jesus, for the most part, has led a life of humility and humiliation. He, being fully God, rarely showed His divinity, yet was steadfast to His mission. The Disciples possibly questioned Peter's confession; was it correct? "But, how can this be when Jesus is so humble?" they wondered. Then, all of the humiliation and misunderstanding collapsed. Just as God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, God revealed His Kingdom and Glory! Jesus transformed powerfully, something that the special effects wizards in Hollywood wish they could do. Jesus spectacularly used Peter's testimony in the previous passages to give an incredible light show of hope for what was in store for them. A small glimpse of the coming Kingdom was given to the inner circle of Disciples. They came face to face with the law (Moses), the Prophets (Elijah), the Father's pronouncement of blessing, and the Son's coming work, all converging to fulfill it. If the Disciples had any doubts about who Jesus was, these doubts had ceased as real, tangible proof was given. Jesus' apologetic miracle was showing them the Living God! No longer was it just intangible teaching that they would not fully understand until later; here, they were face to face with God and His enfolding plan of redemption. Jesus represented the Law, which He lived out in perfection in our place. Jesus represented the Prophets, for He was the One

to whom they were pointing, and He continued the prophetic ministry in His teachings.

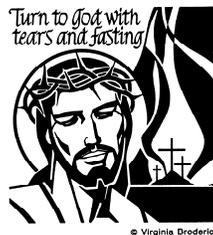
The Call for Caring [Matthew 18:1 - 14] - While the disciples were acting like children, Jesus used the opportunity to call us to take care of the children! Children are dependent on us for the quality of life and substance we provide. Jesus points out those who are in need—from little children to those who are weak or are new to the faith—and calls us to care for them. Do we step up to the plate of responsibility, or do we despise those who we think are beneath deserving care? Do we become good examples and point to the Way, or do we cause them to stumble because of our misdirected ways? Because children are dependent, they must have faith that they will be taken care of. This is a perfect illustration of how we are to have trust and faith in our Lord. But, how do we provide; what do we provide? Is it in line with God's call? We are called to take care of them; it is both a responsibility and a delight. It is a blessing to be

such caretakers, and it is imperative we never forsake our responsibility! When we are caring for His children, we are exercising what we have learned and are applying our spiritual growth. When we forsake such responsibly, we are the bad and spoiled child that brings shame to his or her family. In addition, our true allegiances become exposed, showing

that these allegiances are not to the Christ of the Bible.

Jesus questions the "Establishment" [Matthew 19:1 - 12] - Jesus challenges the religious establishment to move away from their presumptions and gives us a direct call to take marriage seriously! Jesus is the One who gives us marriage and is the One who can heal a marriage. The theme that marriage is sacred and it is God's plan that we succeed at it is sandwiched in between the scriptural context of forgiveness and abundant possibilities. To succeed in relationships, especially marriage, we have to look to God's precepts and not our desires. Our desires will lead us astray; His way leads to happiness and contentment!

The Parable of the Vineyard [Matthew 20:1 - 19] - Chapter 19 ends with the statement, "many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." This statement primes this chapter. Many pastors, over the years, have used this passage to teach about salvation and how we are rewarded. However, this has nothing to do with salvation because we do not work for it; salvation is a gift! This passage is not about rewards, either, because



we do not all receive the same reward (Rev. 22:12 - 13). This passage is about eliminating selfishness and the “me first” mentality, both of which are integral parts of our sinful nature! Our selfishness deprives us of God’s power, and of opportunities and true rewards! Jesus continues His retort to Peter, as well as to the rich young ruler, with a parable on how we are to trust and not insist on our rights and desires. The first group of workers demanded a contract, and by the landowner’s grace, was granted it; and he stuck to it, just as they requested. The other group of workers just wanted to work and to serve. This passage is about not allowing ourselves to be limited by our lack of foresight and vision. We are to trust in Christ, our motivation being to serve—not to demand what we think our reward or place is to be! Contracts may be necessary in business, but not in the Kingdom of God.

Review Questions

1. What does the transfiguration mean to you?
2. Why do you think Jesus only invites Peter, James, and John? Imagine if you were there seeing this marvelous event; how would you have felt? What would you have done and said? How do you think the transfiguration affected the Disciples’ faith and purpose? Why is the statement, after six days, important?

END OF LESSON NINE

LESSON TEN

His Final Teachings [Mt. 21 – 25] - Have you ever met someone who looked like they stepped out of a glamour magazine, yet whose attitude and character were as ugly as sin? It’s amazing how a person’s outward appearance can be so different from his or her character.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 21:1–23:39

Today’s reading includes strong words for such people—those who are so concerned with how they appear to others that they neglect to take care of their character. Jesus directs his words at some of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but we can tell they are for anyone who focuses on life’s minor issues instead of being concerned about what really matters to God. As you read, determine to focus on what’s on the inside, instead of merely working on your outward appearances. The passage also includes Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (which begins the final week of his life); more parables about the kingdom of God; and more vivid criticism of the scribes and Pharisees.

Review Questions

1. Appearing to be a Christian isn’t the same as being one. What’s inside your heart? Are you hiding behind a mask? Are you pretending to be a Christian? Are you covering up sins?
2. If Christ came for the accounting today, how anxious would you be about meeting him? What changes would make you more ready for his return?
3. In Matthew 24—25, Jesus warned his followers to be ready for his return. In what different ways did he want his disciples to be watchful (24:4, 42, 43; 25:13)?
4. What will matter most when we stand before God at the Last Judgment?

END OF LESSON TEN

LESSON ELEVEN

The Plot to Kill Jesus [Mt. 26 – 27] Mary, Judas, and Peter were all disciples of Jesus. Yet from their actions, we can tell that each had different values. Mary valued Jesus above all else, so she

thought nothing of using expensive perfume to honor him. Judas loved money, so he thought nothing of betraying the Son of God to a band of murderers. And Peter, otherwise loyal, cared very much about his reputation, which caused him to deny his association with Jesus when pressed to identify with him. Their experience is just like ours.

From time to time we will be forced to choose between God and things or God and our reputation. We will hold on to the one we value most and sacrifice the other. Mary’s example is the one we should follow.

When Jesus was arrested, his disciples fled. They didn’t show their faces in public again until after Jesus had risen and appeared to Mary, Mary Magdalene, and others. Once these cowardly men fully realized who Jesus was and what he had done, they were changed forever. Jesus’ resurrection did not merely intrigue them or become a footnote in history—it was the turning point for the disciples and for us. With the Resurrection, Jesus sealed our forgiveness, brought us power for living, and gave us a new commission. Now it’s our turn to give back to him all we can.

Review Questions

- 1) What motivated Judas to betray Jesus (26:14–16)? What weakness tends to drag you down? What can you do to compensate for or overcome this weakness?
- 2) Christ instituted the Eucharist in Mt. 26:26–29. What should a Christian do to prepare for



Communion? How can you celebrate Communion so that it affects your daily life?

- 3) What failure did Peter think he would avoid (26:31–35)? What does this tell us about our own weaknesses? How can we lean on God’s grace in times of weakness?
- 4) How does the experience of prayer between Jesus and the disciples in the garden compare to your own practice of prayer (26:36–46)?
- 5) Throughout these last events of Christ’s life, which person(s) would you like to have been beside (Judas, Peter, James, John, other disciples, Mary, Mary Magdalene, chief priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, Pilate, Simon from Cyrene, Roman soldiers, thieves on the cross)? Why?

END OF LESSON ELEVEN

LESSON TWELVE

His Resurrection [Mt. 28] - The women could not make the trip to the tomb until early on Sunday morning after the Sabbath. As dawn approached, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to see the tomb. Both of them had been at Jesus’ cross and had followed Joseph so they would know where the tomb was located (27:56, 61). Anointing a body was a sign of love, devotion, and respect. Bringing spices to the tomb would be like bringing flowers to a grave today. The last chapter of Matthew opens with strange happening in a garden...the story of the Bible begins in a garden, too.

This chapter ends with Jesus’ ascension and commission to us, his disciples. Jesus left the disciples with some last words of instruction. God gave Jesus complete authority over heaven and earth. On the basis of his authority, Jesus told his disciples to go and make disciples as they preached, baptized, and taught. “Making disciples” means—instructing new believers on how to follow Jesus, to submit to Jesus’ lordship, and to take up his mission of compassionate service. Baptizing is important because it unites a believer with Jesus Christ in his or her death to sin and resurrection to new life. Baptism symbolizes submission to Christ, a willingness to live God’s way, and identification with God’s covenant people. To baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit affirms the reality of the Trinity, the concept coming directly from Jesus himself. He did not say baptize them into the “names,” but into the “name” of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Previously Jesus had sent his disciples only to the Jews (10:5-6), their mission from here forward would be to go to all the nations. This is called the Great Commission. The disciples had been trained well, and they had seen the risen Lord. They were ready to teach people all over the world to obey all the commands that Jesus had given. While we await his second coming, Jesus’ followers have a mission to do—evangelize, baptize, and teach people about Jesus so that they, in turn, could do the same. The Good News of the gospel was to go forth to all the nations.

With this same authority, Jesus still commands us to tell others the Good News and make them disciples for the Kingdom. We are to go—whether it is next door or to another country—and make disciples. It is not an option, but a command to all who call Jesus “Lord.” As we obey, we have comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is always with us. This would occur through the Holy Spirit’s presence in believers’ lives. The Holy Spirit would be Jesus’ presence that would never leave them (John 14:26; Acts 1:4-5). Jesus continues to be with us today through his Spirit. As this Gospel began, so it ends—Immanuel, “God is with us” (1:23).

The Old Testament prophecies and genealogies in the book of Matthew present Jesus’ credentials for being King of the world—not a military or political leader, as the disciples had originally hoped, but a spiritual King who can overcome all evil and rule in the heart of every person. If we refuse to serve the King faithfully, we are disloyal subjects. We must make Jesus King of our lives and worship him as our Savior, King, and Lord.

Review Questions

- 1) Why is the resurrection of Christ important?
- 2) How does the fact that Jesus is alive affect your life?
- 3) What would be an appropriate way to thank Jesus for taking away your sins?
- 4) Jesus is alive today. What implications does this have for the way you pray...your confidence in God? ...your worries? ...your purpose in life?
- 5) This week make it your goal to talk to the living Jesus each day. For what will you thank him?
- 6) For what will you ask his forgiveness?
- 7) What requests will you bring to him?
- 8) For what will you praise him?