

The Gospels: Matthew

Matthew

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – July 19, 2020

7th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Matthew 1:17-25, 5:17-18, 10:5-7, 25:31-33, 27:3-5,24-26,45-53, 28:1-20

Reflection: Psalm 93

Greeting: May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Let us celebrate the love of Christ that brings us together in God's care. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: O Lord our God, help us this day. Help us live a life more and more like the example set for us in Christ Jesus. Help us to see with new eyes so that we may strive to be more and more like our Risen Savior. Guide us in all that we are and all that we do, that we may serve you, Lord, that all be for you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 93

The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength. He has established the world; it shall never be moved; your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

(Psalm 93 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 93 and we are reminded of God's strength and majesty. We are reminded that God established the world. We find comfort that God is everlasting. When you look around, do you see God's creation? God's continuing work in the world? Where do you find God when you are in need? How do you show others that God is always with us, always helping us? How do we honor the majesty and strength of God in what we do? What do we do for others that honors that holiness?

Prayer: God, our King and Creator. Help us to never forget the wonderous things you have done. Let us remember that your majesty is everlasting. That your goodness is all around us. Let us always call up the Father who guides us. Help us to always seek the Holy Spirit that leads us. And let us always celebrate the salvation of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. May praise always be on our tongues and love in our hearts. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. All of our readings come from the Gospel of Matthew today. We begin with chapter 1, verses 17 through 25.

So there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to Babylon to the Christ.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, And they will call him, Emmanuel. (Emmanuel means "God with us.")

When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus. (Matthew 1:17-25 CEB+)

Next, we turn to chapter 5, verses 17 through 18.

"Don't even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven't come to do away with them but to fulfill them. I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality.

(Matthew 5:17-18 CEB+)

And now, chapter 10, verses 5 through 7.

Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, "Don't go among the Gentiles or into a Samaritan city. Go instead to the lost sheep, the people of Israel. As you go, make this announcement: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'
(Matthew 10:5-7 CEB+)

Then, chapter 25, verses 31 through 33.

"Now when the Human One comes in his majesty and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his majestic throne. All the nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right side. But the goats he will put on his left.
(Matthew 25:31-33 CEB+)

We continue with, chapter 27, verses 3 through 5, 24 through 26, and 45 through 53.

When Judas, who betrayed Jesus, saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he felt deep regret. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, and said, "I did wrong because I betrayed an innocent man." But they said, "What is that to us? That's your problem." Judas threw the silver pieces into the temple and left. Then he went and hanged himself.

Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was starting. So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I'm innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It's your problem." All the people replied, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. At about three Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?" After hearing him, some standing there said, "He's calling Elijah." One of them ran over, took a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink. But the rest of them said, "Let's see if Elijah will come and save him." Again Jesus cried out with a loud shout. Then he died. Look, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised. After Jesus' resurrection they came out of their graves and went into the holy city where they appeared to many people.
(Matthew 27:3-5,24-26,45-53 CEB+)

And finally, chapter 28, verses 1 through 20.

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn't here, because he's been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you."

With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. But Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there."

Now as the women were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. They met with the elders and decided to give a large sum of money to the soldiers. They told them, "Say that Jesus' disciples came at night and stole his body while you were sleeping. And if the governor hears about this, we will take care of it with him so you will have nothing to worry about." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. And this report has spread throughout all Judea to this very day.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Jesus came near and spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

(Matthew 28:1-20 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

So we begin the next installment in our series about the Gospels by turning to Matthew. Matthew has an interesting place in the Gospels. It's place as the first Gospel in the New Testament cannon acts as a bridge. Matthew uses a lot of fulfillment citations, directly citing the Old Testament and linking it to the New Testament. When we come to the jump, Matthew is there to help stick the landing.

A few things can be said about the authorship of Matthew's Gospel account. As mentioned last week, there isn't much we know about the person who actually wrote the account. The name Matthew is often linked to the tax collector turned Apostle because of a change from "Levi" in Mark to "Matthew" in the Gospel. However, the way it is written and the time it was written make that unlikely. He was likely a multilingual Israelite writing in Greek for a Jewish audience. The Gospel itself has a very deep connection to Jewish tradition and teaching and is very much a Jewish Gospel so to speak. Matthew does seem to use Mark as a roadmap, where we see many of the same events play out. But Matthew gives much more detail and adds much to the Gospel narrative. Matthew contains many unique elements.

One of those is the birth narrative. As we started with our readings today, we get the tail end of the genealogy that begins Matthew. He notes 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to exile, and 14 generations from the exile to the coming of the Christ. 14 is the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew and may have influenced the way the genealogy is structured. What we do get is a direct line from the patriarch of the faith, to the greatest king, to the exile, and then to the Christ. This is an important part of declaring Jesus to be the Jewish

Messiah. We then dive into the birth narrative, but not exactly the one we use for the Christmas nativity plays. Matthew lacks the circumstances of Luke's account with traveling to Bethlehem, which we will cover next week. Instead, we have the reference to Isaiah for the virgin birth and Joseph's dream. After this account, we get the visit from the wisemen from the east and the fleeing into Egypt, another unique aspect of Matthew's Gospel. After settling in Nazareth, we move on to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. We meet John the Baptist and Jesus is baptized. Christ is driven into the wilderness. The account in Matthew is much longer than Mark, including Jesus quoting scripture while contending with Satan.

We then have the first of five discourses in Matthew. The five discourses may have been laid out in five to mirror the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. It begins with the Beatitudes. The section that I quoted for today from chapter 5 helps to highlight the deep respect that Matthew shows for the Torah, what we call the Old Testament. He hasn't come to do away with it, but he's come to fulfill it. What seems odd at first glance is that right after he says this, we immediately have Jesus giving what might be seen as new commandments. There are various "you have heard it said...but I say to you" statements where the scriptures are quoted. But we need to understand that Jesus isn't saying "don't listen to this anymore" but is offering new understanding of the scriptures. A deeper understanding. A new direction for a new time, building on all of the Law and the Prophets. Which highlights again that much of Matthew is expanding upon building upon Jewish understanding and tradition. Matthew quotes the Old Testament more than any other Gospel author. Jesus also specifically commands the twelve to go out and teach among the Israelites and not the Gentiles or Samaritans in Matthew, as seen in chapter 10. The message is from a Jewish teacher to the Jewish people.

The way I see Matthew, is that he is showing that Jesus was most definitely a devout Jewish leader offering a new path forward for the faithful Israelites. There is a lot of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of the time. This acts as a parallel for the conflict between emerging Rabbinic Judaism and the Jewish Christians in the early church. Matthew sees Jesus as the true path for the faithful of Israel. The conflict is between the old way that had become corrupt and this new path that truly honors the Torah, and that new path is through Christ.

Here we jump ahead. This isn't because there's nothing else to look at. No, Matthew devotes more time than any other Gospel author directly to the teachings of Jesus. We see the narrative from Mark greatly expanded. We have many parables and teachings and the other discourses. But I wanted to go to one of the biggest unique factors of Matthew, and that is the final discourse. The Judgement of the nations appears only in Matthew's Gospel. The Human One, or Son of Man in other translations, will sit on the throne in judgement. All the nations will be judged, the sheep who will inherit the kingdom and the goats who will not. Unlike the earlier command to only go among the Israelites, now judgement is for all. Jesus teaches that those who did what they could for the least you did for me. Those that ignored the least ignored Jesus. And they will go on to eternal reward or punishment. And this account only takes place in Matthew, but it greatly sets the tone for all Christianity.

Another unique attribute of Matthew's account is the death of Judas. No other Gospel has the death of Judas. Interestingly, Matthew portrays Judas as being filled with deep regret. He returns his payment for betraying an innocent man and hangs himself in despair. What's interesting is that Judas is portrayed much more harshly in some other accounts, with John plainly calling him a thief. But Matthew shows a Judas who very much seems to reject what he has done, and I have always found that interesting. Because Judas very much becomes a villain, a byword for the ultimate betrayal. Yet Matthew shows him full of regret and really doesn't seem evil. More that he made a terrible mistake. That he was tempted, and he failed. And Judas suddenly feels a little more human and a little more relatable.

With that, we move into the trial and the crucifixion, which I will be looking at in each Gospel because of the ways they differ from each other. Matthew follows much of the same pattern as Mark, including Jesus last words. However, the trial contains something that is unique to Matthew. Pilate gives up and he washes his hands of the matter. He declares himself innocent of Jesus' fate. And the people reply "Let his blood be on us and on our children" which is a huge shift from Rome being responsible. And this has been used for a lot of antisemitic teachings over the years. But with Matthew, this transfers the blame onto those who refused to believe. It also sets up the next generation to be the ones to suffer the destruction of the Temple, because they rejected Christ. It calls upon the reader to reexamine who Jesus is by showing that those that rejected him did suffer. As we move along into the crucifixion, we have the same narrative from Mark, but now after his death, the curtain of the sanctuary is torn. The earth shakes. And the saints come out of their graves. The holy ones of Israel show up, the faithful among the dead. After Christ is raised, they appear as if to say "see, he is *our* savior."

With the resurrection, we have guards in Matthew only. The women come to the tomb, and when it opens the guards fall to the ground. And a messenger tells them to go tell the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee because he's been raised from the dead. And before they can even tell, Jesus appears to the women and repeats the message! Now, this is more important than it might seem at first. Because now it isn't just an empty tomb, but they actually see Jesus on the way back. And this is important because Matthew also includes a rebuttal of a story that was still around in his day. That the story is that people stole the body while the guards were asleep. So Matthew explains how that story came about, that they were paid to say it. Matthew points out that it was those who refused to believe that started false rumors. And we finish with Jesus and the eleven on a mountain, and he commissions them to go and make disciples of all the nations. Now they are to go to everyone. We also get the only Gospel mention of the Trinity. And that is the end of Matthew.

I want to leave you with a few parting thoughts about Matthew. Matthew tells the story of a Jewish Messiah who can trace his lineage to Abraham and David. His story isn't just a story, it is a continuation of the story of Israel. It is the culmination of all the Law and the Prophets. It is that he has the story of what happens next as a people. For Matthew, this isn't just the story of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God. It is the anointed one, the Messiah, the one who would bring about great change for Israel as God's chosen one. We can see where Matthew builds on Mark while also telling a story that only pertains to Matthew's Gospel. Matthew wasn't writing to be

the first Gospel among many, but to be the deciding story of the life and ministry of a Jewish Messiah in Jesus. It was the good news for the Israelites, which became the good news for all the nations. So I encourage you to read Matthew for Matthew. Read it for the way that Matthew saw Christ in relation to the future of the faithful in Israel. Not combining the birth story from Luke with it, not adding to the crucifixion from other Gospels, not adding anything about Judas from other Gospels, but simply seeing the story that Matthew is telling. A story of Israel, with a new teacher to be greater than Moses. A story about the future of a people. That we read the Gospel of Matthew as a book unto itself, telling a unique story. And we see how the Gospels can be opened when you take each one and let the author speak to their own experience with Jesus Christ with their own voice standing alone. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now that we may be ministers of the good news wherever we go. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
John & Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Dave Yaw	Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Joyce Sly	Nancy Hoke	Larry Sidwell	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Pat Nebel
Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe	Brenda Hurt	Anne Winkler Heinrichs
Family of Jerry Jackson	Family of Tom Jester	Family of Mike Dooley	Family of John Veach
Robert Fryman	Susan Shoot	Lamar Family	Family of Dean Swim
Family of Jean Webster	Family of Ed Davis		
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Family of Novella Claiborn			
Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley	Tammy Fischer and Children	

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

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7/19/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

We are continuing in both online and in person worship at this time. I am thankful for all of the work that everyone has done to make this possible.

Prayers for our schools would be greatly appreciated, as schools across the country are figuring out how to safely begin soon.

So, onto the things we need to know about returning to worship. We will need to practice social distancing. People will need to be seated six feet apart and *everyone* in attendance must wear a mask at all times. There cannot be any exception for mask wearing while in the building, unless you have a valid medical reason. With that, it is strongly recommended to continue online or in print instead of in person. There will not be congregational singing yet, and the conference is recommending not having *any* live music at this time. There are also no responsive texts or communal prayers at this time. We also cannot pass anything between people. No shaking hands, passing the plate, hugs, etc. I will need to inspect the churches to make sure that everything is ready, including having seating marked. This will look a little different, but I am confident we can do it. There is also a special note that for those who are older, have a respiratory illness or injury, or have a compromised immune system, you are strongly encouraged to check with a health professional on if you should be out. I will continue to provide printed materials for anyone who wants them and am at least planning on having the sermon audio continue to be posted. I have decided to try to keep doing video for the time being. If you have any questions at all, please contact me! I'll do what I can to help.

There are copies of the Upper Room available in Greenup in the box and at Cottonwood. You can also find the current issue online. The new Sunday school quarterly is also in the box for whoever is interested.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! A printed copy of the service including the weekly sermon will be available online and in print. The sermon audio will be uploaded weekly as well. If you'd like to be updated when it is available, it is on Spotify, Google Play, and iTunes. I will also post updates to the church Facebook pages every week. If anyone you know is not getting a copy and would like one mailed, please let me know. I am trying to get them mailed out weekly.

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus. If you do go out, please follow all distancing guidelines, and if you can, cover your face. Please let others know, and together we will all see this through safely. This is a very real and very serious pandemic. Please do not share false information about it. It only works to undermine the people doing the dangerous work of trying to keep us all safe. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them or direct you to a source that can.

Lastly, a brief note about myself. If you've been wondering what all I've been up to, this is quite a bit of work for me. Currently, I put my sermon together during the week while also being a single father with little ones about. What you might not know is that I've never memorized my sermons but have always used an outline. This has always allowed me to let the spirit guide me. I still use that format to initially write my message. I now record my sermon mid-week. I then transcribe the audio so that I can have a printed version. I then use this to put together the printouts for the week. I then put together the bulletins for all three churches. On Saturday I do printing, and I record the video for the week and use the audio from it so that it will be available on Sunday morning. You may have noticed that I am reading my sermons right now. That is because with having 3 in person services, a printed copy, and the audio and video available, I am trying to make sure that all of them are consistently the same. It also helps me to gather my thoughts better right now. I know this is different from how I normally present, and it may feel a little different, but it is the best way for me to present a consistent message throughout the week.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

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