



Jesus the King
Matthew

Introduction

Welcome Back! I hope your summer was excellent. Now that we are back into the normal routine of the year, your small group members are excited to fellowship again with each other. Thank you for providing this incredible opportunity for faith and fellowship and Christian growth by opening your home and spending your time for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Goal 1 for this year is development. I want you to ask the question, "Who can I develop in my group? How can I develop this person?" Some of our small groups are full of many people who are all capable of leading a small group, and even rotate leadership. Maybe you could consider adding someone new who could take their turn growing in their ability. If you don't have anyone who could lead a group, think about how to make that happen.

Goal 2 for this year is authenticity. Romans 8:18 says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us." Speaking personally, I (Pastor Brian) have seen more suffering and walked through more suffering in the past few years than any other period of my life. By "authenticity" I mean developing a spirit within our groups where we can share our sufferings, bear one another's burdens, and even have confession of sin. We want to create an atmosphere of support and also of Christian growth.

Handling Matthew. Here are tips for handling a Gospel study.

1. Look at the characters in the passage. Who are they? What are they doing? What are they thinking and feeling?
2. Look at Jesus. What is Jesus doing? Why is he doing it? What are we learning about his character, kingdom, and mission?

3. Always check OT references. You will fall in love with Matthew if you see how the OT references shed light on the meaning of the passage.
4. Look for teachings about God. What do we learn about the character of God? Are there reasons to worship God in this passage? Do we learn something surprising or challenging?
5. Look for teachings about discipleship. What do we learn about how to walk as a disciple of Jesus? Are there commandments to be obeyed? Are there sins to be avoided, confessed, and repented of? Are there promises to be trusted?

"The Parable of the Soils"

Week 1

Matthew 13:1-23

September 23, 2018

Icebreaker question. What are you most looking forward to between now and Christmas? (Let everyone answer)

Prayer (now or end of study). Spend some time updating one another on your summer and share prayers of need and praises of thankfulness.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Have someone read the passage.
2. Survey the passage. What are the two settings in which Jesus speaks? Consider location and audience.

First, Jesus speaks by the beach with great crowds. Next, he is in a private setting with the disciples.

3. What are the differences in what he says to the crowds vs. the disciples?

The main difference is that with the crowds, Jesus does not explain the meaning of the parable.

4. Why does he communicate more detail to the disciples? (verses 11-14)

Because it has been given to the disciples to understand, but to masses, the prophecy is being fulfilled that they would hear but never understand.

5. Jesus says that the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled. Look at Isaiah 6:8-13.
 - a. Put Isaiah 6:8-10 in your own words.
 - b. Until what happened was Isaiah to preach? Look at Isaiah 6:11-13. Who will remain faithful in the whole land?

Isaiah was called to preach until the judgment of God fell on Israel and they were carried into exile. There would be a remnant, a "tenth" that would remain. But then even that tenth would be judged, and there would only be one thing standing. A stump.

- c. What is the "seed" in Isaiah 6:13?

The stump. The only one that remains after judgment.

- d. What does Isaiah's prophecy show us about Jesus' parable, and why he preaches in parables?

Jesus is finishing Isaiah's proclamation of judgment against Israel. And "faithful" Israel is the one solitary person remaining faithful one at the end – which will be Jesus, the holy seed, the remnant of the remnant. (Consider Gal 3:16 "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.")

6. What does it mean their heart is dulled, their eyes closed, and their ears barely hear? What is the solution for this?
7. What are the two ultimate outcomes of the seeds sown?
8. Why does Jesus go into detail about the various bad soils?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
2. What do we learn about mankind in this passage?
3. What do we learn about the life that God desires for mankind?
4. Are there any of the bad soils that you are afraid you might be?
How might you need to heed Jesus' warning?
5. Understanding this passage, are there any ways that your heart is moved to worship God?

"The Parable of the Weeds"

Week 2

Matthew 13:24-43

September 30, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- At this moment, what is the music or album that you are listening to the most?

Prayer (now or end of study). Has there been anything in the news that has happened recently that is worthy of prayer? Any personal requests? Let each person participate, and then pray.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Look at verse 31, 33, and 44. What is the main topic of this section of Scripture?

The kingdom of God is the main topic of this section.

- A parable is a story that illustrates one main point. There are three parables in this section, so let's take a look at each.

The parable of the weeds.

- Notice how this parable is both before and after the other two parables. We will ask about why this is the case later.
- What do each of the following represent in this parable?
 - The man who sowed good seed. **Son of Man.**
 - The field. **The world.**
 - The good seed. **The sons of the Kingdom.**
 - The weeds. **The sons of the Evil One.**
 - The enemy. **The devil.**
 - The harvest. **End time separation of sons of kingdom and sons of the Evil One.**
 - The harvesters. **The angels.**
- What do the servants ask if they should do?

- What is the main idea of the parable of the weeds?
The parable of the mustard seed.
- What does it mean that it is the smallest, but it grows to be the biggest?

Both this parable and the following parable emphasize the small beginnings of God's kingdom, yet its great and pervasive influence.

- What does it mean that the birds come and perch in its branches?

There is no definitive answer to this question. Let people consider the possibilities, or look them up in a Study Bible.

The parable of the yeast.

- What would happen if you worked yeast through sixty pounds of dough?
- What does this mean?
- Investigate Psalm 78, from which Jesus quotes in verse 35. Skim the passage, beginning, middle, and end. What is the main idea of this passage? How does it relate to these parables?

Putting it all together.

- What do these three parables have in common, and why are the two smaller ones sandwiched between the larger one and its explanation?

What kind of kingdom allows its opposition to go unchecked? That is the question the servants ask, but the master of the field says to let it all grow and it will be sorted out at the end of time.

I think the relation is this: the first parable talks about the nature of heaven and hell and eternity, with an agricultural metaphor

showing the need for patience from sowing to harvest time. The two other parables give confidence that the kingdom of God will indeed grow from obscurity into power. This gives the disciples this certainty is the reason they do not have to pull up the weeds.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Do you ever want to go and round up all the evil people and get rid of them? What does Jesus say? Why do you think he gives that answer?
- Jesus talks about the end of time, and the separation of the wheat and the weeds. How does that shape the way you should live today?
- Do Jesus' parables, which illustrate slow and steady growth from obscurity to pervasiveness, give you hope today? How? Why?

"Parables of the Kingdom"

Week 3

Matthew 13:44-58

October 7, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- How do you like to celebrate your birthday?

Prayer (now or end of study). Pray for the greater St. Louis Metro area. Pray for unity, peace, mission, revival. Pray for an end to homicides, for stability in homes. Pray for an end to racism in its various forms. Pray for economic development and job creation. Pray for police officers and the justice system. Pray for those in leadership at various levels.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Have someone read today's passage.
- Thinking thematically, divide this passage into two halves. At what verse would you start the second half? Why?

I would anticipate two possible answers. Verse 51 or verse 53. Verse 53 is a better answer, because it says, "When Jesus had finished these parables..." This is actually the transition from a teaching section to a narrative section, one of five major transitions in the Gospel of Matthew.

- How many parables does Jesus give in these verses? This is kind of a trick question!

Four! The first three are about the kingdom of heaven, but then there is a fourth about "every scribe trained for the kingdom..."

- What similarities do you see in the parable about the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price, and the parable of the fish? What differences?

Each of these parables has the idea of something of significant value worth finding. In the third parable, there is a difference that gives greater meaning to the previous. The fish are then sorted into those which are valuable and those which are not. That's why the kingdom of heaven is so worth finding, your place in it will determine your worth to God on the last day!

- What explanation does Jesus give about the parable of the fish?
- What does the parable about the scribe have in common with the others? What differences? What is the point?
 - **Note** the word "scribe" to describe the disciples is very unexpected. A scribe was a student of the Mosaic law.

This is the hardest parable to understand in today's passage. Perhaps it means that any of Jesus' disciples, who were trained in the kingdom of heaven, are able like a scribe to look at both the Old and New Covenants and to understand the treasure therein. The kingdom of God can be seen in the OT as well, if you understand the kingdom correctly.

- Now look at verses 53-58. What point is Matthew illustrating with these verses?

Matthew is illustrating that many do not value the kingdom. Jesus teaches the "good fish," and now we see the incoherence of the "bad fish" in rejecting Jesus (note how they acknowledge his power).

- What do the people acknowledge to be true about Jesus? Consider especially verse 54.

The people acknowledge his wisdom and power, yet still reject him. They see that he is the pearl of great price, he is the treasure worth finding, but still concoct reasons to reject him.

- How does this section relate to the previous parables?
- Do you have any questions about this passage? Any observations or ideas?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Think about what you consider to be your greatest treasure. Is it the kingdom of God? Is it Jesus? Are there ways you need to repent?
- How would you put into words why you think Jesus or God's kingdom is the treasure worth sacrificing everything to get? How would you say that to your unbelieving friend?
- Imagine what a community of believers could do if they all, together, were actively treasuring Jesus as the highest of all. What might they start to do and prioritize?
- Should we be surprised when people reject the kingdom? Why or why not?

“Jesus Feeds the Five-Thousand” Week 4

Matthew 14:13-21

October 14, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- What did you want to be when you were little?

Prayer (now or end of study). Spend some time praying for those you know who are weary and need perseverance. Pray for anyone who is downtrodden, discouraged, or chewed up by life, and anyone else you may want to pray for.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Have someone read the passage.
- Describe the scene according to verses 13-15.
- Why does Jesus tell them “You give them something to eat?” in verse 16?

The main reason here is to emphasize their complete inability to do it, and to contrast that with Jesus who will completely meet their needs. Jesus knows they can't do this.

- What may be significant about the number of loaves of bread left over, the number 12?
- ***Making the connection....*** Can you think of any other time when a great leader of God's people had a large number of hungry people in a desolate place, and fed them miraculous bread?
 - In Moses' case, who sent the bread? Exodus 16:4.
 - In this story, who made the bread?
 - What point(s) is Matthew making with this story?

Jesus is the new and better Moses who makes a people for God. What God did the OT, Jesus does in the Gospels. Jesus thus' speaks and acts with God's authority. If you don't buy this connection, consider also look at verses 22-23 where he goes up alone on the mountain to be with God... like Moses!

- Does this passage teach that God is the one who will provide for his people? Why or why not?
- Do you have any thoughts or questions about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- God is making a new people for himself through Jesus Christ. Why is this new development for the people of God important to understand?
- Are there any ways that you find yourself hungry, spiritually, literally, or otherwise? Are there any ways that you would like to see God take care of you? How does this passage give you hope?
- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about man in this passage?
- What do we learn about the life that God desires for man in this passage?

"Jesus Walks on Water"

Week 5

Matthew 14:22-33

October 21, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- Who is your favorite comic strip character? (or your favorite comic strip?)

Prayer (now or end of study). Let us spend some time praying for missionaries. Pray for any you know personally, and also pray for those supported by our church. Consider praying for different regions of the world.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Describe the scene from verses 22-24.
- Imagine seeing Jesus walking on the sea like verse 25. How would you react?
- How did the disciples react?

They were terrified. They cried out in fear.

- Note: The phrase "it is I" from verse 27 is the same phrase used of God in the burning bush when God said his name was, "I AM."
- How are the words "fear, afraid, terrified" woven throughout this event?

Notice how it is Peter's fear that is connected with his doubt.

- What does Jesus do when Peter doubts and is afraid?
- What do you think is the tone of his voice when he says, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
- The disciples began crying out with fear. How do they end?

- Do you have any other thoughts, questions, or observations about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Who do you say Jesus is? Do you worship him as the Son of God?
- Is there a step of faith that you are afraid to make? What is it?
- What promises does Jesus make as you step out in faith?

"Tradition Versus the Word"

Week 6

Matthew 15:1-20

October 28, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- Would you rather be an expert cook or a savant at playing the piano?

Prayer (now or end of study). Pray for the community around us. Pray that God would send the Gospel from our church to the north, south, east, and west. Pray that God would move hearts and send revival.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Have someone read the passage aloud.
- What issue do the Pharisees have with Jesus and his followers?

The issue here is Jesus' disciples not engaging in hand washings which were a required priestly duty. The Pharisees applied it to all Israelites in order to meticulously follow the Law.

- What is Jesus' response?

Jesus calls them hypocrites. He shows them how, by adding their own commandments to God's law, they violate it. The particular example is how they allowed people to dedicate their wealth to the temple before they died, and thus avoid their duty of caring for their aging parents.

- Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13. Read Isa 29:13-16.
 - What do we learn about what God will do in Isa. 29:13-14?

- What do we learn about the hearts of the people in verse 15?
- What do we learn about the attitude of the Pharisees' in verse 16?

They make themselves to be God, by disregarding God's law. By saying that he does not have understanding, they know better.

- How does Jesus explain the real point of hand washings? Make sure you have verse 20 in view as you answer.

Jesus recognizes that eating with unwashed hands may bring something unclean into the body, but what really matters is what comes out of the body. That is what defiles a person.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Are there man-made traditions that we hold that keep us from God? Why do we make up our own traditions and take them more seriously than God's Word?
- Jesus says what comes out of a person is what defiles them. Is there any way you need to change what you do or say?
- Jesus calls the Pharisees blind guides. How can you make sure you listen to the right voices when you are learning about God?

"The Canaanite Woman Believes" *Week 7*

Matthew 15:21-28

November 4, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- What author, star, musician or artist have you spent hours learning about?

Prayer (now or end of study). Let us lift one another up in prayer. Share worries, concerns, needs, or anything else going on.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- This is a very difficult passage! Have someone read it.
- Jesus was in Tyre and Sidon, Gentile regions. Describe the scene from verses 21-24.

Jesus refuses to respond to this woman's need. He states clearly that he was not sent (by God) to care for those outside of Israel. She needs help because her child has a demon.

- In verse 25, what does the woman further do to get Jesus' attention?
- How does Jesus respond? Was being called a dog a good thing?

Jesus shows complete willingness to reverse his initial derogatory comment. He is always extremely self-assured in his judgments, and the fact that he changes his demeanor so quickly at the end of this passage indicates that he was willing to heal her all along. It is best seen that this is an elaborate ploy to draw out her great faith.

- How does the woman respond? What does her persistence indicate about her belief in Jesus?

Don't miss the logic of the woman's argument. She says, "yes Lord, you are right, I am not an Israelite and have no right to the blessings of the Messiah. However, if I am a dog, you do have some duty to feed me, even if just the crumbs!" He accepts her argument.

Also, Jesus would commission ministry to the Gentiles after his resurrection. (Maybe that goes without saying...)

- Look at verse 22 and how she asks for mercy. What is mercy? Why should we have God's mercy in view when we make our requests to God?

Whenever we ask for something from God, we are acknowledging his mercy. He is not giving us what we deserve but is giving us a gift that we do not remotely deserve.

- Do you have any other thoughts, questions, or observations about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Is your attitude in prayer one of asking for mercy, or asking for your due? How could your attitude before God be more like that of the Canaanite woman?
- When Jesus does something in the Gospels, or perhaps in your life, that violates your sensibilities, how should you respond?
- What is the role of persistence in your relationship with God? Is it disrespectful to continually come to God with the same request?
- Is there something that you used to ask God for, that you gave up on, that you need to go back to God and keep asking for?
- Are there any ways you need to humble yourself before the King, Jesus?

"Jesus Predicts His Death"

Week 8

Matthew 16:13-28

November 11, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- What has been the highlight of the year for you so far?

Prayer (now or end of study). Pray for the United States of America in every possible way that you can imagine or think of.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Have someone read today's passage.
- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What is exceptional about the way Peter answers Jesus' question?
- Jesus promises several things to Peter here. Discuss what each means. I recommend paying attention to the sermon on this passage, and also reading online. Remember that when a given passage is unclear, going to other places in the Bible is OK in helping to understand.
 - "On this rock I will build my church."
 - "I will give you keys to the kingdom of heaven."
 - "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven."
 - "Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Volumes have been written on this verse. Here are a few things worth remembering. First, you can acknowledge Peter's unique role in Jesus' establishing the church (Acts 1-15) without naming him the pope. Second, entrance to the kingdom of heaven is done through the preaching of the Gospel – Peter was the foundational preacher for the church.

Third, authority in the church was exercised by the Apostles, but Peter had no absolute authority; Jesus' brother James had the final word in Acts 15 and Paul corrected Peter in Galatians. Fourth, authority in the church is delegated further to elders and the whole church body in Matthew 18.

- (Verses 21-23) Why does Jesus rebuke Peter? What does that indicate about Peter's misunderstanding of Jesus' mission?

Peter had no concept of a Messiah, the Son of God who would also suffer and die. But in Jesus' kingdom, the way up is down.

- (Verses 24-28) What are the discipleship implications of Jesus' death and resurrection?
- Any other questions or observations you have from this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Do you believe there is any authority in the church, in its pastors, elders, or congregation assembled? What did Jesus teach?
- Are you willing to lose your life for Jesus?
- What are ways that this world tells us to gain the whole world, yet we would lose our soul?
- How can we teach our children that it is worth it to lose our lives for Jesus?

"The Transfiguration"

Week 9

Matthew 17:1-13

November 18, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- If you could eliminate one thing from your daily schedule, what would it be?

Prayer (now or end of study). Pray for the Gospel to go to the ends of the world. Pray for unreached peoples and those without the Gospel, that they may hear and believe. Pray God would raise up laborers.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Have someone read the passage aloud.
- What happens to Jesus in this passage? What is the significance of it?
- Describe Peter's reaction to Jesus' change in appearance.

He starts talking and wants to build three tents for them to stay in...

- Notice that God interrupts Peter from the cloud! What do you think about that?

Peter is sort of babbling. He's not making sense and doesn't know what to do with the incredible situation he is in. It is actually sort of humorous. If indeed Matthew is based on Mark, which is based on Peter's own teaching, then Peter is being self-deprecatory here. His thoughts were unimportant compared to God's!

- How do the disciples react to God's voice?
- What does Jesus do to comfort the disciples?

- In verses 9-13, how does the setting change? How does the tone change? How does the content change?
- What is the point of verses 9-13? How is this a contrast to the previous section? What theological point is Matthew making?

Here we have a very clear example of Jesus' all surpassing glory "high on the mountain", contrasted with his "coming down the mountain." Matthew is teaching that the way to glory is through suffering.

- Peter gives the authoritative interpretation of this passage in his letter, 2 Peter 1:16-21.
 - When Peter thinks about his time on the mountain, he is encouraged to remember that he has something "more sure" than that experience. What is more sure than being present for the transfiguration? (2 Peter 1:19).
- Do you have any other thoughts, questions, or observations about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Does your understanding of Jesus include him being glorious, powerful, with a face that shines like the sun? Or do you picture him like a common picture on a wall, with a subdued (hopefully not but sometimes effeminate) face, carrying a lamb, etc. Now that Jesus is glorified, what does he look like?
- God says, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." How can you listen to Jesus more intently this week? (2 Peter 1:19-21)
- How would your life change if you believed that the path to glory meant taking on servanthood and suffering?

"Faith Like a Mustard Seed"

Week 10

Matthew 17:14-21

November 18, 2018

Icebreaker question. --- What is your worst travel experience?

Prayer (now or end of study). Pray for people in our community who are lonely. Pray for those who are depressed, going through separation or divorce, or any other sort of difficulty you can think of.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

- Have someone read the passage aloud.
- What is man's son's situation?
- What does Jesus say about the current generation?

Note that he calls it "faithless." That is a recurring theme.

- How is Jesus feeling about his time on earth with mankind?
- Why couldn't the disciples cast out the demon?
- Many times, in the Gospel of Matthew, we have seen Jesus not do miracles because of the lack of faith or do miracles because of faith. Have a person read the following passages: Matthew 9:22, Matthew 13:58, Matthew 14:31, Matthew 15:28. (There are others).
 - What does Jesus teach here about the quantity of faith needed?
 - What does Jesus teach here about the object of a person's faith (meaning, what a person puts their faith in)?

It doesn't matter how much faith you have to put in Jesus, it matters that whatever faith you have, you do put in Jesus.

Even the smallest faith can move a mountain, a common Jewish phrase meaning to do the impossible.

- Think about it. Why is it true that a small amount of faith can do the impossible?

Here is an example if your group is struggling to understand this concept. Imagine that you are slipping down a cliff, and you see a root that you can grab that can pull you to safety. The amount of faith you have in that root to save you is not as important as the strength of the root. You only need a little belief in the root to grab it.

Similarly, with Jesus, you only need to believe in him. You need to trust him, lean on him, reach out and grab him. If your faith is small, it doesn't matter, because the object of your faith is powerful and mighty.

- Do you have any other thoughts, questions, or observations about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- What do we learn about man in this passage?
- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about the life that God desires for man to have in this passage?
- Are there any ways that you are struggling to believe in God right now?
- Close by praying for each other's faith. If anyone needs encouragement in their walk with God, commit to encouraging one another in the time until small groups start up again.