

## Sunday, March Fifth

When pastors and church volunteers go to hospitals to visit people, they often take the time to pray with them and remind them of the hope they have in Jesus. It is especially comforting for those who are feeling lonely, weak, and afraid. Amidst the pain and agony that the hospital patients feel in that moment, the pastors and church volunteers point to the many blessings that Jesus gives them both now and in eternity. In today's passage, Jesus comforts those feeling lonely, weak and afraid.

*Read:* Matthew 5:1-16

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

Now that Jesus had a captive audience, He took the opportunity to preach some of His message to the people. The next few chapters of His message are often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

- Given the context of verses 23-25 from yesterday's reading, who is Jesus speaking to when He begins preaching?
- What does Jesus promise to those who are suffering in this world? (see verses 3-10)

The people in Jesus' time lived in a society that largely ignored the poor, the meek, and the hungry. And yet, at the very beginning of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls them "blessed." As He continues on in His ministry, Jesus will continue to provide, strengthen, and feed those who are poor, meek, and hungry.

- How are we to be a light to the world? (see verses 14-16)

Do you remember the Sunday school song, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!"? Like the song, Jesus reminds us that in order to be lights to the world, we must be willing to engage with those around us.

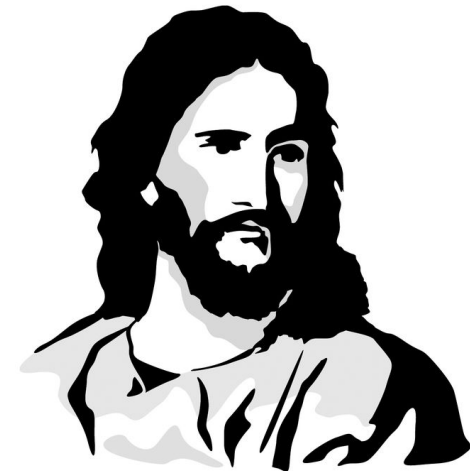
*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Think of somebody you know who is going through a difficult time. How can you be a 'light' to them today?

# Read through the Bible



## Matthew Week One



## Monday, February Twenty- Seventh

Welcome to our six-week Lenten journey through Matthew! This booklet is laid out to help you walk through a portion of Matthew's Gospel each day. Whether you start off your day with this, find some time during your lunch break, or sit down with it before you go to bed, the hope would be for you to engage with the Bible on a consistent basis as God engages you and calls you into His story. May your journey be filled with fresh perspective as you reflect upon the life, ministry, and passion of Jesus! – Pastor Chris

*Read:* Matthew 1:1-17

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to verse 1, who is Jesus a “son” of? Why are these two names important? (see Genesis 22:18 and 2 Samuel 7:12-13)

Jesus isn't literally the son of David or the son of Abraham, so what does Matthew mean by this? In Genesis 22:18, God promises Abraham that all people would be blessed through his offspring. In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God promises David that He will raise up one of his offspring to establish his kingdom forever. Both promises indicate that they will be fulfilled by a future individual from their direct lineage. In this way, Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is that individual from their offspring – their “son” – who has come to fulfill these promises.

- Who connects Jesus to the genealogy? (see verse 16)

If you look again through the lineage, you'll notice that the genealogy is connected by fathers. Joseph is listed as Jesus' father in verse 16, but there is a caveat – Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (see verse 18 in the next reading). In this sense, Jesus is both connected to and distinct from everyone else in the lineage.

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Matthew shows that God is faithful in keeping His promises. How might you demonstrate faithfulness to God during this journey?

## Saturday, March Fourth

During the 80s and 90s, coconut oil was largely shunned by the food industry and by the general public. Why? It was high in saturated fat. However, in the early 2000s, when researchers ‘re-discovered’ its many benefits, the popularity of coconut oil exploded. People were cooking with it. They were rubbing it in their hair. They were even using it to treat cuts and scratches. What was once a second-rate oil began flying off the shelves. In today's passage, Jesus' ministry explodes when people find out He can heal people of their diseases and illnesses.

*Read:* Matthew 4:12-25

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- What message does Jesus begin to preach? (see verse 17) Whose message is He echoing? (look back at 3:2)
- What does Jesus tell Peter and Andrew they will do as His followers? (see verse 19)

Peter and Andrew likely had no idea what Jesus meant when He told them they would “fish for people” (v. 19). But over time, while following Jesus, they would begin to understand what He meant. As you and I continue to follow Jesus today, we are also understanding more and more what this means.

- Why did news about Jesus spread? (see verses 23-25)

Notice that the people weren't originally coming to Jesus because of His message (v. 17). Instead, they were coming to be healed of their diseases and illnesses (vv. 23-25). Jesus' healings provided Him with two important things to carry out His message: 1) an audience, and 2) the audience's recognition of His authority. You can imagine an onlooker thinking, “Wow! If Jesus can heal people like this, I want to hear what He has to say!”

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

What situation or area of your life needs healing right now? How might you ask Jesus for that healing? Spend some time in prayer.

## Friday, March Third

On NBC's 'American Ninja Warrior,' contestants encounter a series of tests in an obstacle course to see if they have what it takes to outlast the other contestants. For these people competing on the show, the obstacle course is not just a show of strength, but also a test of endurance. In today's passage, Jesus' endurance is tested by a visit from the devil.

*Read:* Matthew 4:1-11

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

Lent is often said to mirror the 40 days of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness when He fasted. There are technically 46 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, but most churches don't count the 6 Sundays during Lent in that number.

- What does Jesus quote in responding to the devil's challenge? (see verses 3-4)

Whenever the devil 'tempts' us or 'tests' us, we can rely upon Scripture to help us determine how we are to respond.

- What does the devil quote when asking Jesus to throw Himself off the temple? (see verses 5-6) How does Jesus respond? (see verse 7)

It is interesting that the devil not only knows Scripture, but also tries to use it against Jesus! Jesus' response in verse 7 reminds us that we are not to use Scripture (like the devil did) to test God.

- How does this passage show us the "humanness" of Jesus? (see verses 2 and 11)

After 40 days of not eating anything, Jesus' ability to withstand temptation was remarkable...but He was just getting started!

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In times of weakness and temptation, how might you turn to God's Word for guidance before making a decision?

## Tuesday, February Twenty-Eighth

Every year, businesses, college groups, and volunteer organizations alike participate in what is called a 'low ropes course.' This half-day or day-long event consists of a variety of hands-on activities all centered on building trust amongst a team. In one activity, the group members must work together to make their way across an imaginary lava pit without stepping off of the 'rocks.' In another, team members can only use their eyes and their hands to communicate with one another as they try to solve a giant jigsaw puzzle. And in perhaps the most well-known of the activities, participants must fall backwards while trusting that one of their fellow group members will be there to catch them. In today's passage, Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, is confronted with a trust exercise of his own from an unexpected visitor.

*Read:* Matthew 1:18-25

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does Joseph react to the pregnancy? (see verses 18-19)
- What does the angel of the Lord call Joseph? (see verse 20)

The angel of the Lord isn't just calling him by name, but also by his lineage. By calling him "Joseph son of David," the angel is alerting Joseph that what is about to be said is concerning his lineage.

- Why is Joseph to call the child Jesus? (see verse 21)
- Which prophecy was fulfilled? (see verses 22-23)

Of the four Gospel writers, Matthew was most concerned with demonstrating to his readers how Jesus fulfilled many of the Old Testament prophecies. This has led many scholars to propose that Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience because they would be familiar with the history and prophecies of God's people.

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In times of crisis and uncertainty about the future, is it easy or difficult for you to trust God? Take some time to pray about the things and situations in your life that you are concerned about.

## Wednesday, March First

This past February, when the Kansas City Chiefs beat the Philadelphia Eagles 38-35 in the Super Bowl, fans of the 3-time NFL champions welcomed the news by flooding into the streets of downtown Kansas City to celebrate. Meanwhile, dejected fans in Philadelphia sat in their homes fuming over the Eagles' loss. That night, both fanbases received the same news of the final score, but their reactions to that news were vastly different. In today's passage, two groups of people give vastly different reactions to the news that the king of the Jews has been born.

*Read:* Matthew 2:1-23

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- How do the Magi describe Jesus? (see verse 2) How does the prophecy from Micah 5:2 describe Jesus? (see verse 6)

Both the Magi and the prophecy from Micah indicate that Jesus was to be a 'king' and a 'ruler' for the people of Israel. This, clearly, was news to Herod, and it threatened his authority. Herod's attempt to kill Jesus (v. 16) serves as a reminder that our God was not necessarily welcomed into the world with open arms. Instead, throughout His lifetime, Jesus was often threatened and persecuted by the very people He had been called to lead. Is that any way to treat a 'king'?

- How does Joseph receive instructions to flee to Egypt, to return to Israel, and to settle in Nazareth? (see verses 13, 19 and 22)
- How many prophecies are fulfilled in chapter 2? (see verses 6, 15, 18, and 23)

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Today, Jesus continues to be a divisive figure in our culture. While Christians praise His name, others curse it. How might you start a conversation with someone you know who feels 'threatened' by Jesus? As you think about this, pray for patience and discernment.

## Thursday, March Second

If you've ever gone outside and worked in the yard for a couple of hours, you can understand the desire to be clean! Your shoes are covered in dirt. You've got grass stains on the bottom of your shorts. Your shirt has dirt marks from where you wiped your hands after planting some flowers. Your arms and legs are covered in grass clippings and debris. Beads of sweat run down your face and make their way down your back. And it's in that moment when you find yourself dirty, grimy and sweaty that you think, "Boy, if I could just take a shower, I would feel so much better!" In today's passage, Jesus shows us what it means to be clean.

*Read:* Matthew 3:1-17

*Reflect:* Use the passage to work through these questions

- What was John the Baptist's message? (see verses 1-2)

The first step in recognizing the need for a Savior is acknowledging our inability to deal with our sin on our own. In this sense, John's call to repentance was largely meant to prepare the people for the arrival of Jesus (the only one who could deal with their sin!).

- How did the people respond to this message? (see verse 6)
- How is John's baptism different from Jesus'? (see verse 11)

When we are baptized with water and the Word today, we receive the Holy Spirit, just as John the Baptist says in verse 11.

- How does God the Father confirm God the Son at the beginning of His public ministry? (see verses 16-17)

At Jesus' baptism, we see all parts of the Trinity represented: God the Father (v. 17), God the Son (v. 16) and God the Holy Spirit (v. 16). This representation gives us a strong affirmation of all that Jesus is about to say, teach, and do throughout His public ministry.

*Respond:* Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time to thank your Father for washing you clean in your baptism, and for making you new every day in His Son, Jesus.