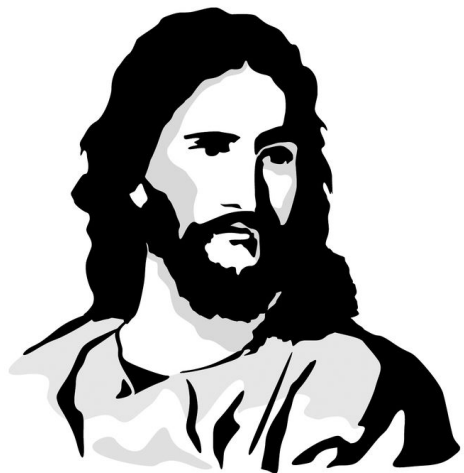


Read through the Bible

Matthew
Week Six



LIVE LOVE
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Monday, April Third

On the first day of school, elementary school teachers talk with their students about all of the various rules they will need to follow for the upcoming year. “Raise your hand.” “Don’t push or shove.” “No screaming.” “Don’t take things from other classmates.” At the end of the teacher’s lecture, students might feel overwhelmed by all the rules they will need to follow. To help make things easier, the teacher might simplify the list: “If you are being kind to me and to your classmates, you are likely following all of my rules.” In today’s passage, Jesus summarizes all of the rules.

Read: Matthew 22:1-46

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why did the original invitees not deserve to come to the banquet? (see verses 1-8)
- Why were the commandments in verses 37-39 so important? (see verse 40)

What we call the Old Testament today was referred to as the Law and the Prophets back then. By saying that “all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (v. 40), Jesus demonstrated that all of these rules can be followed by simply loving God and loving people (hence, Our Savior’s mission statement: “Love Jesus, Love People, Serve the World”).

- How did Jesus challenge the Pharisees’ description of Him as the “son of David”? (see verses 43-45)

As we’ve seen throughout our journey, the Pharisees were right to call the Messiah the son of David because He would ultimately come from David’s lineage. But Jesus also wanted them to know something else: He is also David’s Lord (v. 43). In this sense, David saw the Messiah as his God and not just some heir to His earthly throne. The Pharisees didn’t seem to quite understand this (v. 46).

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

What is one way you can love God and love people today?

Tuesday, April Fourth

For centuries, people have claimed to know when the end of the world will come. For example, Harold Camping, a Christian author and radio personality, predicted that Judgment Day would come on September 6, 1994. When that didn't happen, he revised the date to September 29th, and then to October 2nd. He later predicted that May 21, 2011 would be the day (womp, womp!). In today's passage, Jesus gives a definitive answer on when that day will be. This is a long reading today – hang in there!

Read: Matthew 23:1-24:51

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why did Jesus tell His disciples not to do what the teachers of the law do? (see 23:2-7)
- In all of these “woe” passages, how are the teachers of the law and Pharisees described? (see 23:13,15,23,25,27,29,33)

In Jesus' description of the teachers of the law and Pharisees, we are reminded that being a follower of Jesus means that we are to be authentic. We practice what we preach, and when we fall short, we seek forgiveness from God and from those we have wronged.

- During the end times, what will happen to those who stand firm in the faith? (see 24:13)
- When will the “Son of Man” come? (see 24:36-42)

While people like to predict the day and year that Jesus will come, the reality is that they don't know. In fact, nobody knows; only the Father (24:36). As Christians, Jesus calls us to not spend our time trying to figure out when that day will be, but rather, to be prepared for it when it comes (see 24:42-44).

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

Jesus' description of the end times in chapter 24 can be viewed as dark and troublesome. As a Christian, how does His description give you peace and not worry? Take a look at 24:13, 31, and 45-47.

Wednesday, April Fifth

A few years ago, the Hallmark Channel aired a movie that was filmed in St. Pete (guess who didn't watch it?). Filming took place in February, which meant that the director and team of editors only had a month (March) to take all of the footage and turn it into a movie. Because of the quick turnaround time, the editors did not have the luxury of casually taking their time or goofing off at the office. Instead, they had to be prepared and ready to take the clips of footage and turn them into a highly predictable (yet, well loved) movie. In today's passage, Jesus continues the theme of His followers being prepared for what is to come.

Read: Matthew 25:1-46

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does the parable of the ten virgins emphasize being ready for the day when Jesus comes? (see verses 1-13)
- Based on the parable of the bags of gold, what are we to do with the resources, gifts, and Gospel message that God has given to us while we wait for His return? (see verses 14-30)

Some people assume that when you become a Christian, nothing really changes – you just keep doing what you've always been doing. But Jesus makes it clear in this passage that He has eternal work for us to do in addition to our own earthly work and hobbies: we are to use the gifts and talents that God has given us as we share the Gospel with those around us. In this sense, our faith and gifts are not to be kept to ourselves (v. 18); we are to use them and share them with others.

- Why were the “sheep” taken to eternal life and not the “goats”? (see verses 31-46)

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

Jesus' story of the sheep and the goats gives us an important understanding on the nature of helping others. In light of Jesus' words in v. 40, take a moment this week to help someone in need.

Thursday, April Sixth

Maundy Thursday is a time for remembering The Last Supper between Jesus and His disciples. The name comes from the Latin word “Mandatum,” meaning “commandment.” This commandment from John 13:34 – “Love one another” – gives credence to the reality that the disciples were going to have to care for each other as they approached these very difficult days. In today’s passage, we will experience the events and emotions of Maundy Thursday.

Read: Matthew 26:1-75

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why did the chief priests and the elders not want to arrest Jesus during the festival? (see verses 1-5)
- In verse 31, Jesus cited a verse from Zechariah 13:7. How does the scattering of the sheep suggest why the disciples will “fall away” from Jesus? (see verse 31)

As much as Jesus prepared them for this moment, His disciples would still run away in fear after Jesus’ arrest.

- How did Jesus react to the reality of His impending suffering? (see verses 38-39, 42, and 44)
- What did Jesus call Judas? (see verse 50)
- Why did Jesus command Peter (see John 18:10) to put his sword away? (see verses 52-54)

Peter thought he was trying to be helpful, but Jesus reminded him that it was not his place to try and stop these events. After all, Jesus didn’t need Peter’s help. He had the power to put an end to all of this if He wanted to (v. 53), but He didn’t so that the prophecies of His suffering and death would be fulfilled (v. 54).

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

In the hours before His arrest, Jesus chose to spend time with His disciples (vv. 17-35) and His Father (vv. 36-46). Spend some time today with God and with those close to you.

Friday, April Seventh

If Good Friday is a day surrounding the death of Jesus, why do we call it ‘good’? The origin of the name is often debated, with some suggesting it stemmed from an older name – “God’s Friday.” Not all cultures, though, call it Good Friday. Some churches in Germany, for example, call it “Karfreitag,” meaning “Sorrowful Friday.” While Good Friday is certainly the darkest day in the life of Jesus, many Christians manage to find the ‘good’ by noting that Jesus’ death on the cross was the climax of God’s plan to save us from our sins. In today’s passage, we will witness the anguish, the sorrow, the pain, and the humanity of our humble Savior, Jesus.

Read: Matthew 27:1-56

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What caused Judas to have a change of heart? (see verse 3)

It’s one thing to betray someone in theory; it’s another to see it happen firsthand (v. 3). At the end of the day, Judas realized that his lust for money had gotten in the way of His faithfulness to Jesus. This is perhaps partly what drove him to his fateful demise.

- What largely influenced Pilate’s decision to wash his hands clean of Jesus’ persecution? (see verse 19)
- How did the peoples’ insults demonstrate that they did not understand why Jesus had to die? (see verses 38-44)

The rebels and elders laughed at Jesus’ helplessness, but they didn’t understand that this was all part of the plan. Could God the Father have rescued His Son? Sure, but in order to atone for our sins, a perfect sacrifice had to be made.

- What happened after Jesus died? (see verses 51-53)

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Spend some time in prayer and silence today reflecting on the death of Jesus. Consider the reality that our God sacrificed Himself for us so that we could be freed from the weight of our sin.

Saturday, April Eighth

We do a lot of waiting in our daily lives: waiting at a stoplight, waiting in line at a grocery store, waiting to use the restroom, waiting for somebody to answer your phone call...the list goes on and on. The hard part about waiting isn't necessarily the amount of time that has elapsed; it's often simply the fact that we just want to keep going with our day. After all, we all have things we need to do, and if we get held up, things are thrown off balance. In today's passage, Jesus' followers are forced to wait between the tragic events of Good Friday and the amazing moments of Easter Sunday.

Read: Matthew 27:57-66

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How is Joseph of Arimathea described? (see verse 57)

After crucified individuals died, the Romans would often leave their bodies on the cross to rot or to be eaten by animals. However, if a close friend or relative requested to retrieve the body from the cross, it was occasionally granted. Joseph of Arimathea was an ideal person to make such a request: he was wealthy and likely had great influence in government affairs. What Pilate probably didn't know, though, is that Joseph was also a recent convert (v. 57).

- Who witnessed the burial of Jesus? (see verse 61)
- Why did the Pharisees want Pilate to secure the tomb? (see verses 62-64)

Even after Jesus died, the Pharisees still felt threatened by Him! By having the tomb guarded to ensure the disciples didn't try and steal the body, the Pharisees unintentionally helped solidify the miraculous events surrounding Easter Sunday.

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

After someone dies, people often recall something that person said that impacted them. Think back to the things Jesus said during this journey through Matthew. What is something He said that has impacted you?

Sunday, April Ninth

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! As we arrive at the final day of our journey through Matthew, we spend today in joyous celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Let our voices resound in praise as we echo the spirit of that famous hymn, *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*:

Christ the Lord is ris'n today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Read: Matthew 28:1-20

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Who rolled back the stone on Easter morning? (see verse 2)
- What emotions did Mary Magdalene and the other Mary experience after their encounter with the angel? (see verse 8) Which emotion does Jesus address? (see verse 10)
- Why were the guards given a large sum of money? (see verses 11-15)
- What did Jesus command? (see verses 19-20a) What did He promise? (see verse 20b)

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

Amidst the Easter celebrations today, take some time to give thanks to our mighty and merciful God who has given us new life by the death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus. Alleluia!

Well, that's the end of the Gospel of Mathew! I pray your time in God's Word has filled you with fresh perspective as you reflected upon the life, ministry, and passion of Jesus. It has truly been a pleasure reading along with you! Happy Easter!

Questions? Comments? Contact Pastor Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 344-2684.