

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28¹

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written
for our learning:
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

MATTHEW 11²

11 Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.

Messengers from John the Baptist

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah[a] was doing, he sent word by his[b] disciples 3 and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” 4 Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

Jesus Praises John the Baptist

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John:
“What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?
8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone[c] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.
9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet?[d]
Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

11 “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,[e] and violent people take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John came, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 Let anyone with ears[f] listen!

16 “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

17 ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

¹ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

² All Bible quotations and footnotes are from Biblegateway.com, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)
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18 “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”[g]

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

20 Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent. 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum,

will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you will be brought down to Hades.

“For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.”

Jesus Thanks His Father

25 At that time Jesus said, “I thank[h] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.[i] 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Footnotes

11.2 Or the *Christ*

11.2 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *two of his*

11.8 Or *Why, then, did you go out? To see someone*

11.9 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *Why, then, did you go out? To see a prophet?*

11.12 Or *has been coming violently*

11.15 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add *to hear*

11.19 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *children*

11.25 Or *praise*

11.26 Or *for so it was well-pleasing in your sight*

OVERVIEW³

Matthew Chapter 11 draws from Q, has many shared verses with Luke, and divides into three segments: Jesus and JohnBap (11:1-19); the verdict of Jesus on the cities of Galilee (11:20-24); and the thanksgiving, proclamation, and invitation (11:25-30).

11:1-6 Messengers from John the Baptist

JohnBap, though in prison, hears about the deeds of Jesus. His curiosity is piqued, and he sends messengers to Jesus. Three possible reasons for inquiry:

1. waning faith because JohnBap already knows who and what Jesus is from his participation in Jesus' baptism;
2. rising hope; or
3. general bewilderment – the hoped-for Messiah is different than what he expected.

Many early Christian commentaries were convinced that JohnBap is asking on behalf of his followers.

Jesus response weaves together the events of his ministry into several passages from Isaiah and interprets his ministry to date as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. The passage interprets Chapters 4-10 as Jesus is the Coming One of John's preaching, the Messiah of prophecy who, through his proclamations to the poor and his miraculous and compassionate deeds, brings fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.

11:7-19 Jesus Praises John the Baptist

Matthew 11:7-19	Luke 7:18-23
<p>7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone[c] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet?[d] Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written,</p>	<p>24 When John's messengers had gone, Jesus[e] began to speak to the crowds about John:[f] "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone[g] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces. 26 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written,</p>
<p>'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'</p>	<p>'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'</p>
<p>11 "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,[e] and violent people take it by force.</p>	<p>28 "I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John, yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 (And all the people who heard this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged the justice of God,[h] having been baptized with John's baptism. 30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the law, not having been baptized by him, rejected God's purpose for themselves.)</p>
<p>13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John came, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 Let anyone with ears[f] listen!</p>	
<p>16 "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,</p>	<p>31 "To what, then, will I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,</p>

³ Sources include notes from Barton and Muddiman, Biblegateway.com, Brown, Raymond E., S.S., Harper Collins Study Bible, NRSV Version, France, R. T., Levine, Amy-Jill, and Marc Zvi Brettler Editors, Morris, Leon

17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'	'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.'
18 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." [g]	33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon'; 34 the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children."
Footnotes: 11.8 Or <i>Why, then, did you go out? To see someone</i> 11.9 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read <i>Why, then, did you go out? To see a prophet?</i> 11.12 Or <i>has been coming violently</i> 11.15 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add <i>to hear</i>	Footnotes: 7.24 Gk he 7.24 Gk him 7.25 Or <i>Why, then, did you go out? To see someone</i> 7.29 Or <i>praised God</i>

Jesus switches to speaking about JohnBap making five points, He is:

1. a prophet and more than a prophet (11:9)
2. the figure foretold by Malachi 3:1 (11:10)
3. the greatest of those born of a woman (11:11)
4. the turning point in salvation history (11:12-13)
5. is Elijah (11:14) (Unique to Matthew. Implied in Mark.)

Jesus asks three questions to the crowd which Jesus answers that JohnBap was a prophet and more than a prophet.

11:12 is without a doubt one of the NT's great conundrums. Matthew and Luke found contrary meanings in Jesus words in Q. In short, for Jesus and Matthew as for apocalyptic literature in general, the great redemption must be proceeded by a conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil. The conflict has already been joined.

Jesus makes two claims: 1) that all of the Prophets and Laws have been fulfilled in JohnBap; and 2) that JohnBap is a prophet and Elijah returned. The presence of the kingdom did, for Jesus, displace Mosaic law from center stage; the Torah was no longer the criterion of salvation. 11:12-13 though is about the kingdom, not the law and the prophets. It does not appear that Jesus is setting aside the law, what he is saying is that the kingdom of God has entered the present times.

That JohnBap thought of himself as one like Elijah is quite possible (3:3-4). That he identified himself with Elijah seems doubtful (John 1:21). To conclude that JohnBap is "Elijah the coming one" would send Jewish readers back to Malachi where the law and the prophets are concluded with JohnBap.

The identity of Jesus (11:2-6) makes his estimation of JohnBap (11:7-15) authoritative. So the reader is confronted by the truth about Jesus and then the truth about JohnBap. What follows is Jesus summary of how people have responded to those truths.

Despite the poor response of people, the works of God in Jesus have made plain to all of the people Jesus' identity and the need to respond to him favorably. If people still disbelieve, that is not Wisdom's fault, that is not Jesus' doing. The blame for the failure to understand and follow lies with those who have ears but do not hear. Were Wisdom to be brought to trial with the crime of not stirring up the people of Israel to faith, she would be acquitted. Wisdom and Jesus' works bear testimony to her and his labor for others.

11:20-24 Woes to Unrepentant Cities

The woes statements in Q may have originally dealt with the response to the disciples missions. Matthew applies the woes to a much larger theme of the decision for and against Jesus.

The two eschatological woes, whose forms (address, indictment, verdict) recalls OT oracles and carry forward the disappointment registered at the end of 11:16-19. Nothing prepares us for the mention of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The passage serves notice that Jesus' mission to Israel has not summoned collective repentance and the consequences will be devastating. Note: We usually hear of individuals repenting not towns and cities. What would it mean for a community to repent?⁴

11:25-30 Jesus Thanks His Father

Matthew 11:25-30	Luke 10:21-22
25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank[h] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.[i]	"I thank[g] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.[h]
27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.	22 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."
28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."	
Footnotes: 11.25 Or <i>praise</i> 11.26 Or <i>for so it was well-pleasing in your sight</i>	Footnotes: 10.21 Or <i>praise</i> 10.21 Or <i>for so it was well-pleasing in your sight</i>

Here are people who have responded to Jesus because he has revealed himself to them, "anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (v.27). For them Jesus speaks in the style of Wisdom by "thanking the Father for revelation" (11:25-27). This jubilant cry, drawn from Q, represents a type of high Christology very close to what we find in John's Gospel, where Jesus calls himself the divine Son to whom the Father has given all things (John 3:35; 5:22, 26-27). The divinity is inferred from the interplay of the language of what is handed to Jesus from the Father, that only the Father knows the Son and vice versa.

The "Come to me" invitation to the heavy laden (11:28-30) is added by Matthew from the Q material and is unique to Matthew. This duplicates the Wisdom and Johannine style, where Jesus promises rest to those who take on themselves the obligations of the kingdom, using the sweetest words ever attributed to him, words that make intelligible Paul's appreciation for the "I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:1).

3 elements: 1) an exultant thanksgiving which offers praise for the revelation that God has hidden from the wise and made known to the "infants"; 2) Christological declaration follows, that reveals the gnosis, "esoteric knowledge of spiritual truth held by the ancient Gnostics to be essential to salvation"⁵, resides in Jesus (11:27); and 3) the invitation:

⁴ Eugene E. Lemcio, PhD, Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Seattle Pacific University

⁵ Merriam-Webster

“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (11:28-30)

In 11:25-30 Jesus reveals that he is a revealer. And he reveals that he is the meek and humble Son of the Father. He fulfills the calling of Israel, embodying in his own person the Torah and Wisdom and thus making known the perfect will of God. 11:25-27 is referred to as “*a thunderbolt from the Johannine sky*”⁶ because it serves as a summary of John’s Gospel embedded in Matthew.

This passage appears Johannine because:

“First, the Father and Son are talked of in absolute terms, rather than the more usual Synoptic was of Jesus talking about ‘my’ Father or ‘our’ Father; and

Second, the mutual knowledge of the Father and Son uniquely of each other, which sounds similar to ‘the Son only does what he see the Father doing’ in John 5.19; and the sovereignty of both in revelation, which sounds similar to John 6.44.”

In contrast there is the view, initiated by Mark Goodacre the Frances Hill Fox Professor of Religious Studies at Duke University, North Carolina in 2017, that “this verse is not a Johannine bolt in the Synoptic blue, but a Synoptic platform for the Johannine rocket to launch from.”⁷

The Moses Comparison

There is also the Mosaic/exodus typography running through Matthew. Matthew sees it as a logical outworking of the fulfilment of Deut 18:15 and 18:18. Jesus is “*the prophet like me*”. But whereas Moses is the lawgiver, the mediator of the divine Torah. That is his glory and his office. But it is a glory and office he now shares with Jesus.

Jesus, as the Messiah, is also the lawgiver, the mediator of divine revelation (12:25-30). This is Matthew’s real interest in Moses. He is comparing and contrasting Moses and his revelation with Jesus and his revelation. In other words, how does the first Torah (Moses) and the eschatological Torah (Jesus) impinge upon and relate to one another?

Matthew is interested in Moses because he is interested in the law. The Mosaic motifs are the product of studied reflections on the relationship between Moses and Jesus as well as the manifest differences between them. This is what informs Matthews point of view for the entire Gospel.

Three convictions sum up everything:

- 1) the new revelation is like the old revelation (chapters 1-8, 17:1-8);
- 2) the new revelation does not conflict with the old revelation (5:12-19; 13:51-52); and
- 3) the new revelation surpasses the old revelation (5:20-48).

Thus the new lawgiver, Jesus, is like Moses:

1. in having a law that should be learned and studied (11:29; 28:20),
2. in being meek (11:29),
3. in being transfigured (17:1-8),

and yet at the same time he is incomparably greater.

⁶ Source: Karl von Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, 1876

⁷ Ian Paul, Adjunct Professor, Fuller Theological Seminary, “How did John influence the Synoptic gospels?” 2020

REFLECTION

How do you interpret anyone “*to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*” in your life? Are we chosen or do we have free will? (11:27) Are some “elect” and others not?

In your life, what burdens are easier born *turning toward* Jesus, and what burdens increase as a result of turning toward Jesus? (11:28)

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father,
 for the witness of your apostle and evangelist, Matthew,
 to the Gospel of Beatitude and Grace
 which you have given us in your Son, our Savior;
 and we pray that, after his example,
 we may with ready wills and hearts
 obey the calling of our Lord to follow him;
 through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you
 and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun

GOSPEL COMPARISON⁸

Pericope ⁹	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Continuation of Journey	11:1			
John the Baptist's Question and Jesus' Answer	11:2-6		7:18-23	
Jesus' Witness concerning John	11:7-19		7:24-35 16:16	
Woes Pronounced on Galilean Cities	11:20-24		10:12-15	
Jesus' Thanksgiving to the Father	11:25-27		10:21-22	
“Come unto Me”	11:28-30			

⁸ Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

⁹ An extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, “a book of pericopes”

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