

## OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28<sup>1</sup>

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 14<sup>2</sup>

### The Death of John the Baptist

14 At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus, 2 and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him.” 3 For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, 4 because John had been telling him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” 5 Though Herod[a] wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet. 6 But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and she pleased Herod 7 so much that he promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask. 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” 9 The king was grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he commanded it to be given; 10 he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. 11 His head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who brought it to her mother. 12 His disciples came and took the body and buried him; then they went and told Jesus.

### Feeding the Five Thousand

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15 When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” 16 Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” 17 They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” 18 And he said, “Bring them here to me.” 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

### Jesus Walks on the Water

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into a boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land,[b] for the wind was against them. 25 And early in the morning he came walking toward

<sup>1</sup> Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

<sup>2</sup> All Bible quotations and footnotes are from Biblegateway.com, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

them on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind,[c] he became frightened, and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

#### Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

34 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. 35 After the people of that place recognized him, they sent word to that whole surrounding region, and people brought all who were sick to him 36 and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

#### Footnotes

14.5 Gk *he*

14.24 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *was out on the sea*

14.30 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *the wind*

**PERSPECTIVE<sup>3</sup>**

**Chapter 14 Murder and Miracles**

Today's class goal is to discuss three things:

1. JohnBap life and death's significance in Matthew;
2. The role of miracles in Matthew's Gospel and the NT; and
3. How Matthew uses miracles to reveal Jesus and respond to JohnBap's fundamental question: *"Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"* (11:3)

When stories appear in two or more synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), and in John one should pay attention. Today's stories appear in three or more of the gospels:

| Pericope                      | Mark    | Matthew  | Luke     | John    |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
| Jesus is Rejected at Nazareth | 6:1-6a  | 13:53-58 | 4:16-30  |         |
| The Death of John the Baptist | 6:17-29 | 14:3-12  | 3:19-20  |         |
| Feeding the Five Thousand     | 6:32-44 | 14:13-21 | 9:10b-17 | 6:1-15  |
| The Walking on the Water      | 6:45-52 | 14:22-33 |          | 6:16-21 |
| Healings at Gennesaret        | 6:53-56 | 14:34-36 |          | 6:22-25 |

Matthew and Mark link all five stories in sequence. John presents the two miracles and the healings in the same order. Having all three stories appear in Mark and John provide two independent sources for the stories in terms of historicity. It implies that these were important parts of the oral tradition about Jesus and may have been understood to be either historically linked in time or in the telling. Nonetheless, rejection, murder, miracles, and healing are an interesting pairing.

**14:1-12 The Death of John the Baptist**

JohnBap is the second most written about figure in the Gospels after Jesus. After his baptism by JohnBap Jesus starts his ministry following JohnBap's arrest (3:13-17; 4:12-17), and he makes the same proclamation as JohnBap, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (3:2; 4:17)

The hostile reception Jesus has in Nazareth (13:54-58) is followed by JohnBap's murder at Herod Antipas' orders (14:1-12). It is easy to compare the birthday banquet of Herod Antipas that leads to JohnBap's death with Jesus feeding the 5,000. One is a kingly banquet of debauchery and danger and the other is a more humble banquet of divine abundance and grace.

JohnBap's fate can also be seen as a foreshadowing of Jesus' own fate. The story can also be seen as a hinge between when JohnBap is compared to Elijah (11:14), and in the next story Jesus acts like Elisha to feed 5,000 people.<sup>4</sup>

In Matthew's stories of JohnBap moves from a prophet who proclaims an eschatological hero and time is coming, to one who questions Jesus' nature, role of mission:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (3:14)  
 "the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals." (3:11)

<sup>3</sup> 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, and Wright, N.T. (Tom).

<sup>4</sup> Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp 863-4

“He will baptize you with[d] the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (3:11-12)  
 “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” (11:3)

The key to the disconnect appears to be JohnBap’s expectations versus Jesus reality:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| JohnBap Expectations (3:11-12)   | Jesus’ actual ministry (11:4-6)   |
| “He will baptize you with[d] the Holy Spirit and fire.   | The poor have good news brought to them.  |
| 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand,<br>and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, | 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, |
| but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (3:11-12)  | 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”  |

Does Jesus fulfill JohnBap prophecy? Does JohnBap have expectations of the Son of God, the Messiah, that are contrary to Jesus? How is JohnBap’s expectations an insight into the first century CE expectations for a Messiah versus the reality of Jesus?

In summary, JohnBap may have been a prophet, who made the way ready for Jesus. But his expectations of what and how Jesus would act, and Jesus’ actual actions do not line up.

**Miracles**

*“One is very often asked at present whether we could not have a Christianity stripped, or, as people who ask it say, “freed” from its miraculous elements, a Christianity with the miraculous elements suppressed. Now, it seems to me that precisely the one religion in the world, or, at least, the only one I know, with which you could not do that is Christianity.”<sup>5</sup> C.S. Lewis*

Before we move on, we should first discuss miracles. Christianity is a religion based on one fundamental miracle and many other supporting miracles: the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus is the catalyst for the religion and defines it with an indelible stamp.

“13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain and your faith is in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:13-14)

What do we mean by miracle?

Miracle is an extraordinary event which is believed to be the result of divine intervention, interrupting the normal or expected course of things.<sup>6</sup> Miracle stories provide a theological insight<sup>7</sup> into who Jesus is and what and where his authority and power comes from. They establish his authority and power over sin, the demonic, nature and death.

“The Scriptures reveal a God who is living and personal (Exod. 3:14). He is free to act in history to reveal, create, sustain, redeem, heal, judge, and so forth. Reality is not limited to physical realities, but also includes spiritual realities (Col. 1:16). The seen and the unseen worlds are both real and interactive (Gen. 1; Eph. 6:12). The creator God is unique in that He is both above and beyond the rest of creation (transcendent, Isa. 55:8–9; Eccl. 5:2), and He is also personally present to His creation (immanent, Ps. 104:29–30; Acts 17:27b–28). God actively created everything (Gen. 1:1), and through Him everything holds together (Col. 1:16– 17; Heb.1:3); therefore, we live in an orderly, consistent world which we can investigate with confidence.

<sup>5</sup> C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 81.

<sup>6</sup> Mills, Watson E., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 1990, p 577

<sup>7</sup> Mills, Watson E., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 1990, p 577

Because the God of classical Christian theism is transcendent, He is not restricted to act from within the patterns of nature that He established and upholds but is free to act in unusual ways to reveal, save, heal, and surprise (signs and wonders).<sup>8</sup>

In antiquity, many Jews believed in miracles, that is events that are inconsistent with the ordinary workings of nature, did occur. Examples of OT miracle workers include Moses and Aaron (Exodus), Elijah and Elisha (1 and 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles). There are also numerous Jewish miracle workers in Josephus and other rabbinic texts from before, during and after Jesus' time.<sup>9</sup> Though similar to other miracle stories of the Late Second Temple period, NT miracle stories are different for they reflect the early church's faith that the power of God had decisively broken into the world in Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

*"I contend that in all these miracles alike the incarnate God does suddenly and locally something that God has done or will do in general. Each miracle writes for us in small letters something that God has already written, or will write, in letters almost too large to be noticed, across the whole canvas of Nature."* C.S. Lewis

#### List of Miracles in Matthew

Miracles permeate the gospels, and in Matthew's case they are led by healings (13), exorcisms (5); controlling nature (3); feedings (2) and a single curse.

| Pericope   | Passage  | Type              |
|--|----------|-------------------|
| The Birth of Jesus the Messiah                             | 1:18-25  | Incarnation       |
| Jesus Heals Multitudes by the Sea                          | 4:25-25  | Healing           |
| The Cleansing of the Leper                                 | 8:1-4    | Healing           |
| The Healing of the Centurion's Son                         | 8:5-13   | Healing           |
| The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law                       | 8:14-15  | Healing           |
| The Sick Healed at Evening                                 | 8:16-17  | Healing           |
| Stilling the Storm   | 8:23-27  | Over Nature       |
| The Healing of the Paralytic                               | 9:1-8    | Healing           |
| Jesus Heals the Two Gadarene Demoniacs                     | 8:28-34  | Exorcism          |
| Jairius' Daughter and the Woman with the Hemorrhage        | 9:18-26  | Healing           |
| Jesus Heals Two Blind Men                                  | 9:27-31  | Healing           |
| Jesus Heals the Dumb Demoniac                              | 9:32-34  | Exorcism/Healing  |
| Healing the Withered Hand                                  | 12:9-14  | Healing           |
| Jesus Again Heals Multitudes by the Sea                    | 12:15-16 | Healing           |
| Jesus Casts out a Demon from a Blind and Dumb Man          | 12:22-30 | Exorcism          |
| The Miraculous Draught of Fish                             | 13:47-49 | Feeding/Abundance |
| Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand                              | 14:13-21 | Feeding/Abundance |
| Jesus Walks on Water                                       | 14:22-33 | Over Nature       |
| Healings at Gennesaret                                     | 14:34-36 | Healing           |
| Jesus Casts and the Syrophenician Woman                    | 15:21-28 | Exorcism/Healing  |
| Jesus Heals a Deaf Mute and Many Others                    | 15:29-31 | Healing           |
| Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand                              | 15:32-39 | Feeding/Abundance |
| Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by a Spirit                    | 17:14-21 | Exorcism          |
| Jesus Has Peter Pay the Temple Tax with a Coin from a Fish | 17:24-27 | Over nature       |
| Jesus Again Heals Two Blind Men                            | 20:29-34 | Feeding           |
| The Cursing of the Fig Tree                                | 21:18-19 | Curse             |
| Jesus Heals Large Crowds in Judea                          | 19:1-2   | Healing           |
| The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus                            | 20:29-34 | Healing           |
| The Resurrection   | 28:1ff   | Resurrection      |

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Bill, C.S. *Lewis on Miracles, Why they Are Possible and Significant*, September 7, 2019, C.S. Lewis Institute

<sup>9</sup> Levine, Amy-Jill, and Marc Zvi Brettler Editors, *The Jewish Annotated Bible* pp 680-682

<sup>10</sup> Mills, Watson E., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 1990, p 577

### Appearances of Miracle(s) in Matthew

The word miracle appears in Matthew and the other gospels, often in the context of debating what Jesus is able to do and how.

- Matthew 7:22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord! Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we drive out demons in your name? Didn't we do many miracles in your name?'
- Matthew 11:20-23 20 Jesus began to speak against the towns where he had done most of his miracles. The people there had not turned away from their sins. So he said, 21 "How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How terrible for you, Bethsaida! Suppose the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon. They would have turned away from their sins long ago. They would have put on clothes for mourning. They would have sat down in ashes. 22 But I tell you this. On judgment day it will be easier for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 23 And what about you, Capernaum? Will you be lifted to the heavens? No! You will go down to the place of the dead. Suppose the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom. It would still be here today.
- Matthew 13:54 They were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom? Where did he get this power to do miracles?"
- Matthew 13:58 He did only a few miracles in Nazareth because the people there had no faith.
- Matthew 14:2 He (Herod) said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist. He has risen from the dead! That is why he has the power to do miracles."
- Matthew 24:24 False messiahs and false prophets will appear. They will do great signs and miracles. They will try to fool God's chosen people if possible.

Matthew and the other Gospel writers are clearly comfortable with the word and idea of miracles being associated with Jesus and spoken by Jesus. This could mean that the oral tradition includes this language and debate, and that the historical Jesus' may have actually had these discussions.

### **14:13-21 Feeding the Five Thousand**

This is the first of two feeding miracles in Matthew (the other is the Feeding of the 4,000 in 15:32-38). This story is repeated in all four gospels and the essentials are very similar: the number of people, the loaves and fishes, the baskets and the sequence of verbs describing Jesus' actions.<sup>11</sup> There are at least three ways to interpret the miracle story: from an OT perspective; from a Jewish cultural perspective or from a NT Eucharist perspective. Interpretations include:

#### OT interpretation:

Moses in Exodus in the wilderness feeds a large number of people for an extended period of time with manna/bread from God (Exodus 16). Or Elisha who fed 100 people twenty loaves with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44). Matthew does not draw explicit attention to Jesus as the new Moses in the story itself, but the implication is hard to ignore.

#### Jewish cultural interpretation:

When Jesus asks the crowd to sit, he takes on the role of the head of a family at a Jewish meal. He takes the food, makes a formal blessing of the food, his looking upward indicates that the blessing is an act of praise of God the provider, as was usual at a Jewish meal.<sup>12</sup>

#### NT Eucharist interpretation:

Comparing the five synoptic feeding miracles with the three synoptic last suppers, all eight have the same sequence of verbs: "took... blessed/gave thanks... broke... gave". It suggests that the oral tradition and

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<sup>11</sup> France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 551-572

<sup>12</sup> France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 551-572

the evangelists framed their accounts of the feedings, and the road to Emmaus story, to reflect the wording of the well-known eucharist formula.<sup>13</sup>

The incident stands out as a spectacular event and a staggering display of Jesus' authority over nature and yet appears to be unnoticed and/or misunderstood by the disciples, and available only to the reader of the gospels. The story also stands in contrast to Jesus in 4:3-4 where he refused to turn stones into bread for Satan, but here does so here to feed the crowd. The banquet stands in contrast to Herod Antipas' birthday party for himself (14:6-11), and it may foreshadow a messianic banquet.<sup>14</sup>

The scale of the event is not left in doubt, 5,000 men, received enough food for them to eat all they could eat and have twelve baskets of food left over. Surprisingly there is no mention of the crowd's reaction. It is the disciples who are expected to be aware of the miracle not the crowd. Though the account does not record their reaction or awareness of what Jesus accomplished, though Mark records that they did not understand it (*"And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."* 6:51-52).<sup>15</sup>

### **14:22-33 Jesus Walks on the Water**

When looking at the Matthew version of *Jesus Walks on the Water* you can break it into two parts: the portion of the story which is shared with Mark and John, and the portions of the story that are unique to Matthew.

The shared story shows the disciples on the sea after the feeding miracle without Jesus and unable to make headway against the wind after a long night of high seas. When Jesus finishes praying on a mountain alone, he approaches them walking on the water. They recognize him and are afraid he is a ghost. In all three gospels Jesus says, "it is I; do not be afraid." The "It is I" statement can be read as I AM, the name of God in the OT. When Jesus joins them in the boat the winds stop and the seas calm.

#### What is unique to Matthew?

##### Matthew Omits:

"He intended to pass them by." (Mark 6:48)

Mark 6:48 should not be interpreted as Jesus desired to ignore the disciples. Three possible explanations include: the words record the impression the disciples had at the time; some modern translations have changed the language to say, "for he intended to pass their way"; or, the event is a theophany, a manifestation of the transcendent Lord, who will pass by as God did in Sinai before Moses (Exodus 33:19<sup>16</sup>) or on Horeb with Elijah (1 Kings 19:11<sup>17</sup>). Matthew's omission removes this ambiguous verse from his account.

##### Matthew Adds:

"28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind,[c] he became frightened, and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him,

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<sup>13</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew*, p 558

<sup>14</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 551-572

<sup>15</sup> France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 551-572

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 33:19 19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord';[a] and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. Footnotes: Exodus 33:19 Heb *YHWH*

<sup>17</sup> 1 Kings 19:11 11 He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.” (14:28-32)

It is part of the three Peter passages that appear in Matthew and not in Mark: Peter walking on water (14:28-31); Peter “on this rock I will build my church” (16:17-19); and The Temple Tax (17:24-27).

Peter’s story within the story (14:28-31) shows him wishing to imitate his Lord, who can share his authority and power with his followers. But Peter begins to sink because of his little faith and his doubt, and so cries out for help. Jesus is there to answer his call despite Peter’s lack of faith.

#### Matthew Changes:

In Mark, the disciples are astounded by Jesus actions (Mark 6:52), but they did not understand about the loaves and their hearts are hardened. Matthew changes this significantly, without linking it to the feeding miracle explicitly. When the wind stops in Matthew and Jesus gets into the boat, the disciples worship him and say ““Truly you are the Son of God.” (Matthew 14:33) Matthew does not directly link the two miracle stories as Mark had in his version.

Matthew makes explicit that the result of the Walking on the Water story is an epiphany for the disciples. Like YHWH in the OT (Genesis and Exodus), Jesus dominates the sea by walking on it and calming it. He also brings salvation to those in peril on the sea. This reveals YHWH’s powers working through him as God’s son. The story ends with the disciples having the epiphany, understanding it, and worshipping Jesus.

#### **14:34-36 Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret**

When Jesus and the disciples arrive back in Gennesaret, he is recognized and people bring their sick to him for healing, which he does.

#### **Take Aways**

##### Why are the stories linked?

Whether the stories were linked in history, or in the oral tradition, or by Mark in his written version, the run from rejection, to murder, to miracles paints a picture of how prophets are received and who Jesus actually is in Matthew’s view. Prophets misunderstood, rejected, persecuted, and killed.

However, Jesus is more than a prophet, he demonstrated authority and powers that YHWH possesses, miracle feedings and controlling the weather and natural elements. Matthew, without being as explicit as John, or as indirect as Mark, points to the divinity of Jesus in this collection of stories. He also signals that unlike in Mark, the disciples understand this and conclude worshipping Jesus as the Son of God.

What is interesting is why doesn’t this epiphany/revelation stick? Why in Mark, and Matthew to a somewhat lesser extent, do the disciples not learn and retain their insights about Jesus?

##### What do the two miracles accomplish in Matthew’s narrative?

Miracles, or signs, are a means of identifying the divine in action. In each miracle, Jesus is the initiator. The disciples and the crowds are being asked to pay attention and conclude for themselves what is the nature of Jesus. Is Jesus a prophet, a messiah, or something much, much, more?



### What is the role of miracles in the early Jesus movement?

Christianity is a miracle-infused religion from incarnation to resurrection to today. Though similar to other miracle stories of the Late Second Temple period, NT miracle stories are different for they reflect the early church's faith that the power of God had decisively broken into the world in Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup>

*"The Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle, the Christian assertion being that what is beyond all space and time, what is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe, and rose again, bringing nature up with Him."* C.S. Lewis<sup>19</sup>

We have reached the halfway point in Matthew. Matthew has erected a sign post for the reader. He is holding on to the old while presenting the new. This set of stories of rejection, murder, and miracles enable the reader to view Jesus as more than a prophet, teacher, healer, and exorcist in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE Jewish tradition. Matthew's Jesus is revealed to be divine in authority and power and on a collision course with the Jewish and Roman authorities, like his friend JohnBap before him.

### REFLECTION

What do I think and feel about the miracles in the NT?  
How central is acceptance/embrace of miracles to my faith?  
What are the miracles in my life where God has been present?

### 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*

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<sup>18</sup> Mills, Watson E., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 1990, p 577

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, C.S., *God in the Dock* (Eerdmans), p. 80

## SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



*The Inspiration of St. Matthew, Caravaggio, 1602*

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly series for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

Matthew's gospel is worth studying because the author attempts to uphold Jesus' Jewish past, with Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection, in the context of the 1st Century CE Jesus movement and early church, and in a hostile Hellenistic and Jewish world.

21st Century readers recognize Matthew as the source of many of the best-known stories and sayings of Jesus as well as a social philosophy that many non-Christians believe in. Famous for its Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, and other teachings, Matthew is often called the most Jewish of the Gospels, while also contributing with the Gospel of John to antisemitism.

The class is created and led by Joe Jennings and advisors include: the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA; the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, Episcopal Church of our Saviour, Mill Valley, CA; Eugene E. Lemcio, PhD, Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Seattle Pacific University; the Rev. Heather Wenrick, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Seattle; and the Father Vincent Pizzuto, PhD., vicar at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Inverness CA and Full Professor at the (Jesuit) University of San Francisco, New Testament and Christian Mysticism, in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Prior Slow Religion Classes include the Gospel of According to Mark (2021-22), the Foundations of Christian Faith (2020-21), the Holy Spirit (2020), the Gospel According to John (2019-20), and Paul's Letter to the Romans (2017-8).

For more information, to see class videos, our bibliography or to join the Slow Religion mailing list go to: [www.slowreligion.com](http://www.slowreligion.com)