

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 18²

True Greatness

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 He called a child, whom he put among them, 3 and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Temptations to Sin

6 “If any of you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,[a] it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of things that cause sin![b] Such things are bound to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!

8 “If your hand or your foot causes you to sin,[c] cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin,[d] tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell[e] of fire.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

10 “Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.[f] 12 What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of your[g] Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

Reproving Another Who Sins

15 “If your brother or sister sins against you,[h] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the

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) Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Forgiveness

21 Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven[i] times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, 25 and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. 26 So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. 35 So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Footnotes

18.6 Or *stumble*

18.7 Or *stumbling blocks*

18.8 Or *stumble*

18.9 Or *stumble*

18.9 Gk *Gehenna*

18.10 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add 18.11, *For the Son of Man came to save the lost*

18.14 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) read *my*

18.15 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) lack *against you*

18.22 Or *seventy times seven*

GOSPEL COMPARISON³

Pericope ⁴	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
True Greatness	9:33-37	18:1-5	9:46-48	13:20
The Strange Exorcist	9:38-41	10:42	9:49-50	
Warnings concerning Temptations	9:42-50	18:6-9	17:1-2	
The Parable of the Lost Sheep		18:10-14	15:3-7	
On Reproving One's Brother		18:15-18	17:3	20:23
"Where Two or Three are Gathered Together"		18:19-20		
On Reconciliation		18:21-22	17:4	
The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant		18:23-35		

Please note how much of the chapter is unique to Matthew, and somewhat shared with Luke. The unique to Matthew pericopes include the instruction, "*Where Two or Three are Gathered Together*" (vv.19-20) and the *Parable of the Unforgiving Servant* (vv. 23-25).

PERSPECTIVE

The fourth speech in Matthew is about how to be in the spiritual community of followers of Jesus. It is a series of moral teachings on a practical level about how to interact with each other and how to resolve conflict over behavior and perceived sinfulness. Jesus demands humility, the elimination of stumbling blocks for people, kindness, and forgiveness.

18:1-5 True Greatness

The sequence is entrance into the kingdom (18:3), greatness in the kingdom (18:4), and service in the world (18:5). One should become like little children, one should humble oneself as a child, for in the kingdom the humble will be great, and in welcoming children in Jesus name one receives Jesus.⁵

It has been remarked that the disciples have become increasingly sure that Jesus is the Messiah, and the kingdom of God was around the corner, and that the question they ask about personal greatness shows they do not know what either Messiah in Jesus case, or kingdom of God, mean.⁶

Jesus says there are things to be learned from small children. Their insignificance and unimportance in the ancient world stood in contrast the adult attitudes of strength and wisdom. Jesus is saying people who elevate themselves will not enter the kingdom. Without genuine humility it is impossible to get into the kingdom. Humility is a quality that Jesus displayed (Phil 2:8) and which he looks for in his own.⁷

v. 1 The question of who is the greatest among the disciples is a recurring theme in Matthew (20:26-28; 23:11-12) and it stems from the potential of the kingdom of heaven creating a new order among the followers of Jesus. So naturally the disciples want to know who will be on top. The question may also be tied to the preceding Temple Tax story where the comparative status of "sons" and "strangers" was discussed. If so, who are the privileged sons going to be? In addition Peter, James and John have been singled out in the Matthean narrative for special attention. Is it Peter?⁸

³ Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

⁴ An extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, "a book of pericopes"

⁵ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 867-868

⁶ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 456-477

⁷ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 456-477

⁸ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

v.2 Jesus uses a child as a visual aid to his parabolic teaching. He is calling for a radical inversion of the assumptions about leadership and the anonymous child helps serve his message.⁹

v.3 The concern for status that the disciples have shown is not compatible with God's kingdom. True discipleship must involve the eradication of this natural human tendency. Jesus is calling for the disciples to abandon human thoughts for personal status and to accept a place at the bottom of the pecking order. This is part of the conversion that he speaks of. To turn around and become like a child is in effect to start over on a new footing.¹⁰

V.4 Disciples have to accept the low social status of a child who has no self-determination and must submit to the will of adults. Then the least are the greatest and the last become first. v.5 Deals with how disciples should treat each other. The child is welcomed "in Jesus' name" which implies that the child represents Jesus himself. Jesus gives the least important person significance out of all proportion to their human standing.¹¹

18:6-9 Temptations to Sin

The tone shifts from promise to warning (18:6). To cause a believer to be misled or perverted morally brings a fate worse than being thrown into the dark, eternal grave of the sea. God sees to it that one cannot harm others without harming oneself.¹²

The self is called to rid itself of whatever in it leads to sin (18:8-9). The reference to hand and eye do not, as in Pauline fashion, reference people in the church. They are hyperbolic illustrations like 5:29-30. The underlying logic is that in order to avoid offending others (18:7) one must take of oneself (18:8-9). The self must suffer a "life giving mortification" (*Symeon the New Theologian*).¹³

Jesus is calling for members of his movement to act without pride – like children who have so little status in the 1st century CE culture. In addition to be like a child could also mean: 1) openness, 2) trust in God, 3) spontaneity, 4) Allow oneself to be given to it, and not try to claim it, or 5) learning to say abba again as an adult. It could also be a call to begin your religious life anew, fresh, and open to the possibilities.¹⁴

18:10-14 The Parable of the Lost Sheep

The shepherd is prepared to leave the 99 sheep alone in the wilderness to seek out the one that is missing, then to lose the one. The Father rejoices when the one who was lost is found and rejoins the flock.¹⁵ The parable illustrates God's concern for the faithful who go astray. He appoints guardian angels for them (18:10) and to harm them would be to set oneself against God.¹⁶

The Matthean adaption of the Q parable of the lost sheep, i.e. the straying sinner, also has institutional application for by most standard institutions are successful by the measurement of how they care of their majorities. Jesus' standard is different, he came to save the lost (Matthew 10:6; 15:24), the impractical care for the individual shows his eschatological perspective. It also shows how far he is from traditional church practice today.¹⁷

The point of the parable is how important every single follower/sheep is to God and should be do the fellow disciples. Here the appeal is to the disciples as a group of people, the disciple community should be a caring body, with a corporate concern for the pastoral support of everyone.¹⁸

⁹ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

¹⁰ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

¹¹ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

¹² Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary*, pp. 867-868

¹³ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary*, pp. 867-868

¹⁴ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, *The International Critical Commentary* pp.750-807

¹⁵ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew* pp. 456-477

¹⁶ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary*, pp. 867-868

¹⁷ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 191-193

¹⁸ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

Matthew appears to be a reduced version of Luke, the basic story is the same, but the wording is significantly different. Both have the theme of the effort made to recover a lost sheep and the joy of the shepherd when he finds it. And both contrast the one that is lost to the 99 that are not. Luke is different than Matthew in Matthew the sheep goes "astray" and in Luke the sheep is already lost.¹⁹

The parable evokes OT imagery where God is the shepherd (Pss 23; 95:7; Jer 23:1-4; Ezek 34:11-16). The explanation of the parable in v.14 emphasizes God is the shepherd not Jesus.²⁰

18:15-20 Reproving Another Who Sins

Jesus outlines how to live in a spiritual community. If one Christian sins against another, the offended party, imitating the shepherd who goes out seeking the lost sheep, should first seek reconciliation in private by bringing up the fault (Matthew 18:15, Lev 19:17 "You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself.")²¹

If this attempt fails, the offended should next seek the aid of another, maybe two, and try again. (Deut 19:15 "A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained." If that likewise fails to produce results, the matter is brought to the whole community. If after that, the sinner remains recalcitrant, he or she must be considered outside the community (excommunication). The community's decision has the authority of heaven (18:18-20), for its prayer is in effect Jesus' prayer, and his prayer cannot but be answered (18:20). The Gospel space is made holy by the presence of Christ and entered into by gathering in his name.²²

The next issue Jesus addresses is how a disciple is to act when he or she is aware that a fellow disciple is in spiritual danger, through sin. This is a practical working through of the how to act on pastoral concern for a "little one". It is addressed entirely to the individual disciple who is concerned. The disciple is acting within a community, but the focus is on the individual's attitude and actions.²³ It should be noted that this is not a guide for church leaders. It is for any individual disciple when their individual initiative proves inadequate.²⁴

It is also important to note that the two individuals, the "little one" and the concerned disciple stand on an equal footing and the motive for the approach is personal concern, a concern that the individual brother or sister is at liberty to heed or ignore.

For the *church* (*Ecclesia Matt 16:18*). Here the reference is clearly more local, so that the ecclesia is the gathering of sisters and brothers who are accustomed to meet in that place. No mention is made of officers or leadership of the church. The added force of this third level of appeal derives from the greater number of people who agree in disapproving of the offender's action.²⁵

Jesus seems to be addressing Cain's question "Am I my brother's keeper?" with the answer Yes. In a community of disciples, everyone is a "little one" and everyone must be concerned about and take responsibility for the welfare of the other.²⁶

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (v.18) is closely paralleled with Peter's commissioning, "I will give you the keys of

¹⁹ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²⁰ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²¹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary*, pp. 867-868

²² Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary*, pp. 867-868

²³ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²⁴ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²⁵ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²⁶ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (16:19.) Matthew has now generalized the authority to the community of disciples and the links between heaven and earth which undergird it.

This is the theoretical background which justifies the practical appeal to the ecclesia in v.17. The corporate wisdom of the community as to what and what is not permitted (“tying” and “untying”) represent not only human judgement but the will of God in heaven; and what they corporately declare to “sin” God also disallows.²⁷ The implication is that the keys given to Peter is not his exclusively, they are shared with the community.²⁸

v.20 “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them”, echoes Immanuel “God is with us” (1:23) and is echoed in “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (28:20) It also echoes the OT theme of God dwelling among his people (Ezek 43:7; Joel 2:27; Zech 2:10-11). It reassures that when Jesus is killed, his resurrection will ensure that his mission will not stop. The community of disciples of Jesus will continue on as companions of Jesus. His spiritual presence is among them and is the source of the authority to declare the will of God and to expect God to answer prayers. And that presence is promised not to a formally convened ecclesiastical council, but to whenever two or more of his people meet as his disciples.²⁹ Matthew 18:20 is often compared to the early second century CE rabbinic saying “If two sit together and the words of the Law are between them, the Shekinah rests between them (i.e. God is present with them). (*Avot*. 3:2³⁰)³¹

Forgiveness

In the Hebrew Bible, the need for forgiveness was based on the belief that Israel’s existence depended on its covenant with YHWH. Israel continually sinned and that put the covenant in jeopardy. The people cannot approach God as sinners, so forgiveness was necessary to bring people back into relationship with YHWH. The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-28), also known as *Yom Kippur*, is the nationwide cultic practice of atonement to seek forgiveness for individuals sins. The NT the Greek word for forgiveness is *aphiemi* and the verb’s classical meaning is to *let go* or *to forgive*.³²

Matthew introduced the forgiveness theme in the Lord’s Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount and expands it throughout his Gospel:

6:12-15	9:2, 5-6	12:31-32
12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.	2 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, child; your sins are forgiven.”	31 Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.
14 “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others,[f] neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.	5 For which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Stand up, take your bed, and go to your home.”	32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

²⁷ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²⁸ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

²⁹ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

³⁰ Rabbi Halaftha of Kefar Hanania said: when ten sit together and occupy themselves with Torah, the Shechinah abides among them, as it is said: “God stands in the congregation of God” (Psalm 82:1). https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.3.6?lang=bi

³¹ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp.672-708

³² Mills, Watson E., Editor, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, P.306

18:21-22, 35	26:27-28
21 Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven[i] times.	27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the[e] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
35 So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."	

In Matthew's traditional Jewish perspective, Jesus recognizes that we all sin and we need God's forgiveness to reestablish our relationship with God. Jesus goes on to teach that his followers must forgive others as they have been forgiven, that he has the power to forgive sins (an indicator of God's authority), that people who blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And finally the ritual of the Last Supper is a covenant action for the forgiveness of sins.

18:21-22 Forgiveness

The passage on excommunication is followed by one on forgiveness which functions as a hedge against rigidity and absolutism. Forgiveness, like love, must be limitless. Without forgiveness the community cannot correct the wayward, pray as a united front, and have Christ in their midst. The standard of forgiveness is not indifference to sin. There is a tension between reproof (18:21-22) and love (18:15-20). The two belong together in Judaism. In the Matthean community membership disallows certain acts; the church would cease to be itself if it did not insist that its members acknowledge Christ's standards of behavior.³³

v15-17 are concerned with the spiritual welfare of the offending member. Vv. 21-22 are concerned with the willingness of the individual wronged not to insist on his or her own right for redress. The sin is assumed to be real and culpable, in the first case the impact is on the sinner, in the second case it is the impact on the one sinned against.³⁴

Peter's concern is that surely there must be a limit to forgiveness? In the commentary on the Lord's Prayer, "14 *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others,[f] neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (6:14-15) the principle is clear. But the question is how to live this way and what is enough forgiveness? The answer is effectively infinite "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven[i] times."³⁵(18:22)

Peter's question of how many times to forgive may have a rabbinic source:³⁶

§ It was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda says: When a person commits a transgression the first time, he is forgiven; a second time, he is forgiven; a third time, he is forgiven; but the fourth time, he is not forgiven, as it is stated: "Thus said the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, but for four I will not reverse it" (Amos 2:6). And it says: "All these things does God do twice or three times with a man" (Job 33:29). (Yoma 86b)

Peter is proposing to do more than the rabbis require. Is that enough for Jesus? No Jesus says, seventy-seven times – effectively unlimited. Forgiveness is important in a sinful world where all people are

³³ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 867-868

³⁴ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

³⁵ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

³⁶ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 456-477

sinners. We all need to be forgiven and because people continue to sin against each other we are continually called to forgive again. (v.23)³⁷

18:23-35 The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

The Unforgiving Servant is almost universally recognized as an authentic parable of Jesus, even though it appears only in Matthew. It has an astronomical scale, one is forgiven of 10,000 talents and another is punished over 100 denarii. It is introduced as “18:23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to...” – it is a parable about the kingdom of heaven and forgiveness. The king and the servant are stock Jewish images for God and Israel.³⁸

This parable expands on 18:22 and compares how God’s forgiveness to ours. It is clear that there is no limit to God’s generosity to his undeserving people and that they in their turn cannot claim the right to withhold forgiveness from their fellow disciples. A community of the forgiven must be a forgiving community.³⁹

The parable makes clear that the initiative is with God. It is because he has first forgiven us, that we must forgive others. But the forgiveness we have received will be forfeited if we fail to forgive others.⁴⁰

The concept of the disciple as one who has been forgiven an incalculable debt fit into wider NT writings that “*Christ died for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God*” (1 Pet 3:18) and “*in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*” (Col 1:14). The parable does not explain the role of Jesus himself in achieving that forgiveness.⁴¹

The parable speaks of the totally unmerited grace of God which forgives his people more than they can ever imagine because they are unable to help themselves.⁴²

³⁷ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 456-477

³⁸ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp.750-807

³⁹ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

⁴⁰ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

⁴¹ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

⁴² France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp.672-708

REFLECTION

In this unique chapter in Matthew, Jesus teaches how we are to approach followership, the assurance of God's presence with us, and the absolute requirement to practice forgiveness as we have been forgiven. These are core Matthean themes/insights into being in the spiritual community of followers of Jesus.

Humility:

- "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (5:5)
- ""Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 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)
- "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (18:4)

God/Jesus' presence:

- Immanuel "God is with us" (1:23)
- "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (18:20)
- "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (28:20)

Forgiveness:

- "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (6:12)
- "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (26:27-28)

How do you understand in a Matthean sense and practice humility and forgiveness, and experience God/Jesus' presence in your life as an individual and as part of your spiritual community?

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

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 class 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; 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