

Bible Reading Plan – Matthew, part 2
October 2023

*The leader's lordship
and the call to follow*

October 6 – Matthew 7:13-29

1. I like to call this portion of the Sermon on the Mount 'Two ways, two trees, two foundations.' Jesus shows us that there are only two ways to live – straight and narrow or wide and easy. There are two kinds of trees – fruit producers and pretenders. There are two foundations to build your life upon – the sand and the Rock. In each case, which are you?

2. Verse 23 is one of the most sobering passages in all of the Bible. It shows us that it's possible to *think* you know Jesus without being one of His people. What does 'Two ways, two trees, two foundations' (and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount for that matter) tell us about the difference between people who THINK they know Jesus and people who truly do?

October 9 – Matthew 8:1-17

1. Take a minute to consider the three people who are healed in today's reading. In what ways are they the same? In what ways are they different? What do the differences tell us about Jesus' compassion?

2. The way that Jesus responds to each of these peoples' request for healing reveals something about Jesus' attitude towards disease. What lessons do they teach us? How can we apply these lessons to our own health-related prayers?

2. Is the main point of this passage 'Jesus will heal you' or 'Jesus is sovereign over disease'?

October 11 – Matthew 8:18-34

1. Why is Jesus so bluntly demanding of the people who express interest in following Him? Have we diluted Jesus' call to discipleship in our day?

2. What do the stories about the storm and the demoniacs tell us about who we are following when we follow Jesus?

October 13 – Matthew 9:1-8

1. Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'get up and walk'? Why?

2. Why do we tend to focus more on our physical health than our spiritual well-being?

October 16 – Matthew 9:9-17

1. According to church tradition, this 'Matthew the tax collector' is the author of this Gospel account. Neat to realize that you're hearing his (carried along by the Holy Spirit) perspective when you read this Gospel.
2. Remember the people who wanted to defer following Jesus in chapter 8:19-22? How does Matthew's response contrast with theirs and demonstrate true discipleship? Are you eager to invest in your walk with Jesus or do you keep finding excuses to put it off?
3. What does 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice' mean in this context?

October 18 – Matthew 9:18-34

1. How do the ruler, the woman and the blind men demonstrate 'humble boldness'? How can you exercise that same humble boldness in your prayer life?
2. Do you think Jesus was mad that people 'spread the word about Him' when He told them not to?

October 20 – Matthew 9:32-10:4

1. Verse 36 says that "When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Would He have the same reaction today?
2. Given that churches usually attract people who are like the people who are already there ('like attracts like'), it's easy for churches to become homogenous populations. Look at the wide variety of people Jesus called as His first disciples. What does this say about God's plan for reaching people of all kinds and bringing them together to cooperate as one Body?

October 23 – Matthew 10:5-20

1. What does it mean to be 'shrewd as snakes'?
2. Why do you think Jesus told His disciples to depend upon the hospitality of others? What would this look like in our culture?
2. Have you ever experienced verse 20, where you don't know what to say but the Spirit gives you words to speak?

October 25 – Matthew 10:21-42

1. Jesus makes a shocking announcement in verse 34: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth.” I thought that was EXACTLY why Jesus came! In what ways can following Jesus separate people? In what ways does following Jesus reconcile them?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (v. 37)?

October 27 – Matthew 11:1-15

1. Why do you think John the Baptizer lost hope that Jesus was indeed the long awaited Messiah? (See verse 3). Why would Jesus’ report in verse 5 would confirm His Messiahship?
2. What does verse 11 say about the meaning of greatness in the Kingdom of God?

October 30 – Matthew 11:16-30

1. ‘You can’t win with these people!’ (paraphrase 16-19). Why are some people so dismissive of Jesus?
2. ‘What have you got against them?’ Joel 3:4-7 and Amos 1:9-10 describe why God is upset with Tyre and Sidon; read those passages and you’ll see how much worse it gets for people who saw Jesus in the flesh and ignored Him!
3. Spend some time reflecting on verses 28-30. What kind of rest does Jesus give to those who walk with Him?

November 1 – Matthew 12:1-14

1. The Pharisees here demonstrate for us the danger of perpetuating tradition instead of thinking about how the tradition fits into the bigger picture of God’s story. Do we have any church traditions that are keeping us from truly being the church that God has made us to be?
2. How does Jesus’ attitude towards the man with the shriveled hand contrast with the Pharisees’ attitude towards him? How does that reflect the difference between a good church leader and a crummy one?

November 3 – Matthew 12:15-30

1. Who do you know that needs to hear these words? ‘A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory’ (Matthew 12:20).
2. Do you think that the Pharisees’ actually thought that Jesus’ was using power of demons to drive out demons? (That’s a pretty self-defeating use of power, isn’t it?) Or were they just blindly throwing accusations, hoping that something would stick? Why are we so quick to misrepresent people with whom we have conflicts? Why can’t we just focus on what’s true?

November 6 – Matthew 12:31-50

1. How is verse 35 an ideal rather than a sure thing? What do we do to make that idea a reality in our own lives?
2. I think our culture really needs to hear verse 36. How would your words change if you knew that in the end, Jesus would produce a transcript of every word you’ve ever said and asked you to account for every one?
3. How does the story about the evil spirit in verse 43 illustrate the importance of pursuing growth as a follower of Jesus?