

Suggested Reading

This week you may wish to read the following passages from the Bible.

A Recommended Reading

Matthew 11:1- 13:52

B Read Carefully

Matthew 13:1-52 The Parables of the Kingdom

Matthew 11:1 - 12:50 The Narrative

Matthew 11:2-30 Jesus' mission questioned.

Matthew 13:24-30,36-52 Various Parables

C Background Reading

Matthew 12:15-21 = Isaiah 42:1-4

Matthew 13:10-17 = Isaiah 6:9-10

D Compare this section with:

Matthew 11:1-30 = Luke 7:18-25 & 10:13-15

Matthew Ch 13 = Mark Ch 4.

Prayer

O God, who by the pages of both Testaments
Instruct and prepare us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery,
Grant that we may comprehend your mercy,
So that the gifts we receive from you this night
may confirm our hope of the gifts to come.
Through Christ our Lord Amen.
(From the Easter Vigil)

PFP v6 2/2020

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Henley on Thames



The Mission Sermon

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Matthew 8:1 - 10:42



*Ask the Lord of the harvest to
send laborers to the
harvest.*

Matthew has arranged the narratives and the sermons within his Gospel in a co-ordinated way. While Matthew follows the chronology of Mark, he carefully interweaves the sermons and the narratives together. Often there is a common theme which is developed during each section. Chaps. 8-10: Mission – is a good example.

The Sermon of the Mount is followed by ten miracles. Two of these miracles are intertwined: The raising of the dead girl and the woman with a haemorrhage form one story. Therefore, these ten miracle stories become nine passages. These nine sections are divided into three sections of three miracles. The structure is this: $9 = 3 + 3 + 3$. What is important about this section are the narratives which divide the miracles (+).

Each of these narratives concerns an element of discipleship which is developed during the Mission Sermon.

Following each set of three miracles:

- the first of these (+) sections concerns the hardships of discipleship. To follow Jesus, is a risky, unsettled way of life which demands putting Jesus *first*, over all things. (Mtt 8:18-22)
- the second (+) section describes the Call of Matthew, and Jesus' concern for sinners. (Mtt 9:9-13)
- the third (+) section acts as an introduction to the Mission Sermon with the declaration that *'The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest.'* (Mtt 9:37) Each of these themes is developed during this sermon.

Chap. 10 has been called *'the Mission Sermon'* because it concerns the instructions to the apostles concerning their mission to the Jewish towns. It is not a developed treatise upon the mission of a disciple but rather a collection of the sayings of Jesus upon the general theme of discipleship. The sermon has two themes: the mission to the towns of Israel and the subsequent rejection by the people of Israel (and the Gentiles). Its conclusion is that the apostles are to share in the mission of Jesus, but they will also share his rejection. The Cross and persecution will be a major factor in the mission of Jesus and his disciples.

The Sermon begins with the call of the twelve disciples. They are given authority over unclean spirits and power to cure diseases and sickness. It is at this point that Matthew lists the names of the *'Apostles'*. Simon Peter is *'first'* in Matthew's Gospel in every sense. This group contains Matthew, the Tax Collector and Simon, the Zealot. The former works for the Roman regime; the latter, is a member of a group who are actively and sometimes violently, determined to break its control. The call of Jesus may have transcended the very real enmity between two such individuals.

Their mission is limited to *'the lost sheep of the House of Israel.'* (Mtt 10:6) A notable contrast with Mark & Luke, reminding us of the priorities

of Matthew: their mission is limited to Israel. The lack of baggage underlines the sense of urgency and realisation that this is a short mission. The greater mission (to the Gentiles) begins after the Resurrection. (Mtt 28:18-19)

Persecution was a reality in the life of Jesus and will be in the life of his followers. This is certainly the case for Matthew's readers. The division of families is not an intention, but rather an inevitable consequence of the demands of following Jesus. However, the reward of following Jesus is great indeed. *'The disciple should grow to be like his teacher.'* (Mtt 10:25) The office of the disciple is like that of the ambassador or representative of a person. Jesus fully represents the Father. In a similar way the disciple will represent Jesus, to such an extent that the one who welcomes the disciple welcome Jesus and will be rewarded accordingly.

The conclusion of this sermon is that the disciple is called to be intimately united with Jesus, putting Jesus first above all. He is to share in the mission and authority of Jesus. He must pick up his cross and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. In all things the disciple and the master will be united.

Next Week

The Parables of the Kingdom.

Next week, we will begin with the narrative section (*Chapter 11-12*) followed by the Sermon of the Parables. (*Chapter 13*) Jesus has previously spoken about the rejection of the mission to Israel. The narrative section is filled with questions, dispute stories, and controversies. There is a hardening of positions as Jesus encounters a struggle between the belief and unbelief. This theme will continue until the end of the Gospel.

The parable is one of the distinctive methods of Jesus teaching. Next week we will study this form of teaching in detail. You may wish to compare this Chapter with Mark, Chap. 4. What do the other parables which Matthew includes tell us about this section of the Gospel? Matthew quotes extensively from the prophet Isaiah. You may wish to read these quotes in their proper context and consider how they emphasises the message Matthew seeks to communicate.